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## HST's reception

### Ontarians are paying attention

#### The Windsor Star

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Premier Dalton McGuinty recently speculated that most Ontarians still aren't aware of his government's plans to harmonize the eight-per-cent provincial sales tax with the five per cent GST, an initiative that will extend the PST to a host of new goods and services.

"As we get closer to July of next year (when the new tax will be implemented), then they're going to stare into the the face of it and better understand what it's all about," said the premier.

However, early indications are that Ontarians are quite aware of the harmonized tax -- and don't like it. A poll by Nanos Research found that two-thirds of Ontarians have a negative view of the 13 per cent tax, while only 23 per cent see it as a positive move. Ten per cent had no opinion.

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The results were part of a nationwide poll that found, overall, 48 per cent of Canadians are wary of harmonization, and 34 per cent approve.

"It's pretty clear that Ontarians are concerned about the potential negative effects of harmonization," said Nik Nanos CEO of the polling company.

Another group that's concerned about the HST is the Retail Council of Canada, which is worried that the

province will either embed the new tax in price tags or force retailers to display the amount of the blended tax directly on price tags. The council is worried mixing the tax with price tags will make goods look far more expensive -- hurting businesses when they are facing Internet and cross-border competition.

"That puts Ontario retailers at a competitive disadvantage compared to their closest neighbours," according to Mark Beazley, communications director of the Retail Council. But while transparency should always be an issue with any tax measure, the central issue with the HST is that it is the wrong tax at the wrong time.

Here's a list of some of the items that will cost more: gasoline, home heating fuel, electricity, natural gas, home renovations, home TV service, Internet service, phone service, lawyers' fees, accountants' fees, tailoring, newspapers and magazines, mutual fund fees, train and plane fares, snow removal, meals under \$4, green fees for golf.

Despite what the premier may think, people are paying attention to what they see as expensive, new tax increases they weren't told about the last time they voted.

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