

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: When shall this bill be read the second time?

On motion of Senator Frith, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading on Friday next, September 25, 1992.

[Traduction]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Hon. Jacques Hébert: Honourable senators, I have the honour to present petitions signed by 189 residents of the Northwest Territories who object to the goods and services tax.

Most of these petitions come from Spence Bay, Yellowknife and Gjoa Haven.

Honourable senators, I have the honour to present petitions signed by 505 residents of Saskatchewan who object to the goods and services tax.

Most of these petitions come from Nipawin, Regina, Indian Head, Prince Albert, Battleford, Cochin, Elrose, Swift Current, Carrot River, Duck Lake and La Ronge.

Honourable senators, I have the honour to present petitions signed by 509 residents of Alberta who object to the goods and services tax.

Most of these petitions come from Calgary, Okotoks and Banff.

Finally, I have the honour to present petitions signed by 520 residents of Nova Scotia who object to the goods and services tax.

Most of these petitions come from Sydney, Inverness, Port Hastings, Troy, Dartmouth, Margaree Valley, Port Hawkesbury, New Glasgow, Chéticamp, Petit De Grat, Arichat, Pictou, Cleveland, Grantville and Evanston.

[English]

There is a grand total of 1,723 fed-up Canadian citizens who have had their fill of nearsighted and mean-spirited taxes such as the GST. Incidentally, for Senator Murray's information —

Senator Simard: Is this in the petition? —

Senator Hébert: I am answering —

Senator Simard: Just read the wishes of the petitioners. We do not want to hear that.

Senator Hébert: He does not want to hear what the people have to say. Incidentally, for Senator Murray's information, this petition is hot off the press. I know that Senator Simard does not want Senator Murray to listen to me or to hear an answer to a question he was asking me yesterday about the dates. This petition is dated August 5, 1992, less than 50 days ago.

QUESTION PERIOD

AGRICULTURE

WESTERN GRAIN CROP—ASSESSMENT OF STORM DAMAGE—GOVERNMENT ACTION

• (1410)

Hon. H.A. Olson: Honourable senators, yesterday, I asked the Leader of the Government if any action had been initiated to assess the damage done to the grain crop in Western Canada.

In reply to that simple question, the minister recited a whole list of programs that were available early this spring. I am happy to say that the Prime Minister was in Saskatchewan yesterday. A newspaper article about his visit states:

After a meeting with Saskatchewan farmers, Mulroney said the federal government may have to put an emergency aid package in place for the province's farmers similar to that given Newfoundland fishermen earlier this summer.

The Prime Minister is quoted as having said:

For me to satisfy the purists and say I can't deal with the problem of the farmers of Saskatchewan because I might offend the sensitivities of some political commentators, this is not really serious.

We will deal with problems that are there, problems that are urgent.

Will the minister be more forthcoming today and tell us whether or not there is to be some sort of program? My question is simple. Is anything being done to assess this situation? Will the minister be as forthcoming as the Prime Minister was and say that something might be done about it? Or will he just say, "If you didn't apply before May, you get nothing," which is what he said yesterday.

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, with regard to that last comment, let me repeat that those farmers who choose not to have crop insurance make a business decision based on their own long-term production and financial situations.

With regard to the statement of the Prime Minister yesterday, as he indicated, the crop situation is being monitored closely as the harvest progresses.

Senator Olson: That is not what the Prime Minister said. According to the quotation I read, he said that he will put in an emergency aid program, regardless of what the purists have to say. I do not know whether the Honourable Senator Murray is a purist or not.

Can the government leader not be forthcoming and tell us a little bit of what they are doing and how they are doing it so that the people who will be affected by any sympathy from