

The petitioners are concerned that uninhibited dissemination of the printed word is a corner-stone of democracy, of culture, education, and literature, and a productive society will be negatively affected by the application of the GST to the printed word. The petitioners call on the government to reaffirm the historic principles embodied in tax-free status for the printed word by retaining the zero rate in the GST legislation as it affects the printed word.

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise on behalf of a large number of petitioners from Ottawa, Toronto and other Ontario communities, who do not want to see the GST applied to books, magazines and other reading articles.

At a time when we are talking about promoting literacy, it is just not the time at all, at any time, to be putting a tax on reading. This has never been done in Canada since Confederation. Surely, with the interest that Canadians have in education and the need for the wide dissemination of knowledge today, there should be no tax inhibiting the progress of knowledge and reading material in any way whatsoever.

• (1520)

RADIO LICENCE FEES

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise, pursuant to Standing Order 36, once again to present a petition to the House signed by members of the communities Shubenacadie and Stewiacke, most of whom are volunteers with the volunteer fire departments of those communities.

The petitioners are asking the government to withdraw its increases in radio licence fees, telecommunications licensing fees. They believe that these fees which have not applied to them since 1986, but now do, will place a severe financial burden on these volunteer fire departments. Also, because of the additional cost, volunteer fire departments may be prevented from upgrading their services and equipment.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are asking the government to see the error of its ways and to forthwith reduce and eliminate these unfair licence fees that volunteer fire departments now find themselves faced with.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Sid Parker (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise, pursuant to Standing Order 36, with a petition which has been affirmed as correct.

The petitioners humbly pray that the government will withdraw the GST from the printed word. There are over 250 signatures from various cities in Alberta. The petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to reaffirm the historic principles embodied in tax-free status for the printed word. The petitioners find it deplorable that a government would be bringing in a tax system at this time when we are trying to allow people to have a better opportunity to upgrade their reading skills and so on. They are calling for the government to abandon its taxation of the printed word.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, I rise, pursuant to Standing Order 36, to present to the House five petitions wherein the petitioners call upon the government to abandon the proposed GST on books and periodicals. This tax, if passed, would be an impediment both to improved literacy and our freedom of expression, both of which are principal underpinnings of our democracy here in Canada.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and duty to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Edmonton who point out that they dislike the GST under any circumstances, but they particularly dislike the idea of it being put on magazines, books and newspapers. The petitioners call upon the government to retain a zero rate of GST on those articles.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I, too, have a petition along the same lines signed by numerous residents of the city of Toronto who are opposed to the goods and services tax. They are opposed to the greedy way in which the government has proceeded to levy this tax.

The petitioners support the senators in their efforts to excise from the goods and services tax bill the provisions