

Oral Questions

• (1420)

[Translation]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I quoted the McGrath report verbatim, and I also used the Prime Minister's exact words in support of this report. So I am surprised that the Acting Prime Minister continues to refuse to allow a free vote on the GST, even after he was reminded that the Prime Minister had spoken in favour of the right of government members to vote freely without fear of retribution.

So I ask the Acting Prime Minister: Will there be a free vote on the GST Bill, and if not, why? Mr. Speaker, there is no real reason, according to what the Prime Minister said.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, according to what the Prime Minister said and in keeping with parliamentary tradition, budgetary or economic questions that are of prime importance, or questions on motions presented by the opposition on allotted days are always questions of confidence. It is a well-established principle, accepted by the McGrath Commission. The Leader of the Opposition should stop trying to rewrite history.

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*[English]***FISHERIES**

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Rumours are circulating that the aid package for the Atlantic fishery is a paltry \$500 million.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rompkey: That is true. I see the front-benchers laughing. The same front-benchers who provided \$21 billion for farm aid out west, I see them laughing.

Can the parliamentary secretary confirm that the aid package for Atlantic Canada is more than the paltry \$500 million, and in line with the promise of the Prime Minister to be generous and in line with the offer to western farmers? Can he guarantee that?

Mr. Ross Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, first, I can guaran-

tee my hon. friend that the aid package for the Atlantic fishery will be designed, be prepared and be presented to ensure that the needs of the Atlantic Canadian fishery are addressed and that the needs of the people who depend on the Atlantic Canadian fishery are addressed.

The amount of money is not what guides this government. It is the concern for and understanding of the fishery that will guide the policy of this government.

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, if the government would put its money where its mouth is, it would be fine because all it has offered so far is \$130 million to move people to Toronto.

Will the parliamentary secretary guarantee that the government will live up to the promise of the Prime Minister for a generous settlement, which is far in excess of \$500 million?

Mr. Ross Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the mere \$130 million is designed to address the immediate needs of the people in the communities of the Atlantic provinces who have been hurt by the problems that we all acknowledge we face in the fishery.

We have provided not only unemployment insurance, training, mobility, but community funds as well, so that the communities of Atlantic Canada can put together responses in which all of us can participate to address community based solutions for the problems in Atlantic Canada and that we know there is a future for communities in all our provinces. I think that is the wish of all members.

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*[Translation]***GOODS AND SERVICES TAX**

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

The Minister of Finance keeps on saying that his tax will not hurt low- and middle-income people. We all know that it is not going to be so. Not only is the GST credit inadequate, but we just learned that the provinces could consider it as income and tax it. That would be the case in Quebec.

Can the minister confirm that this is what will happen?