

Routine Proceedings

[English]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

VIA RAIL

Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Madam Speaker, I have a number of petitions on the issue of protecting VIA Rail. Members of the House may wonder why these petitions are being presented now that the government has already taken steps to gut VIA Rail across Canada.

My constituents on Vancouver Island managed to defend their little section of VIA Rail by taking the Government of Canada to court and ordering the government to continue the operation of our VIA service as one of the conditions by which British Columbia entered Confederation.

Madam Speaker, I have a number of petitions from Courtenay on Vancouver Island, Parksville, Qualicum Beach and from other centres on Vancouver Island. The petitioners are concerned that the government is now attempting to sabotage the service that it has been forced to operate by raising fares, undermining the quality of service and generally driving passengers away. This gives some idea of how competently the Conservative government has been able to manage VIA in the past. I would appreciate the opportunity to table these petitions which are all duly certified under Standing Order 36.

• (1230)

NORTHERN BENEFITS

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Madam Speaker, like two previous members I have a large number of petitions here from residents of my constituency, the towns of La Ronge, Ile a la Crosse, Cumberland House, Pinehouse and other points in northern Saskatchewan that implore the government to not implement the recommendations of the task force report on northern tax benefits but rather to extend those benefits into the future for those communities, recognizing the very high cost of living in those communities and recognizing the fact that many people will be forced to seek employment elsewhere, robbing those communities of a lot of the professional business talent and so on that they need to develop and keeping in mind that the proposed goods and services tax will inflict a much greater burden on those communities than on other communities. This is one way in which they could be compensated for those additional costs.

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): I have another petition signed by over 700 people from my constituency of Prince Albert, Shellbrook, Meath Park and other points in northern Saskatchewan.

It calls on the government to immediately withdraw the proposed goods and services tax or as it is referred to there, the grab and steal tax. They recognize the impact that it is going to have on their cost of living and the impact it is going to have on the ability of families to pay their bills. They ask that the government withdraw this tax immediately and bring in a fair taxation system that is going to allow Canadian families to pay their bills in the future and not be devastated by the tax burden.

LOW-LEVEL FLIGHTS

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Finally, I have a petition from Edmonton and communities around Edmonton. These people are protesting the low-level flights which have taken place over Innu lands in Labrador. They call on the government to withdraw from the agreements that make those kinds of flights possible, to stop the plans for low-level flights over British Columbia and Saskatchewan, including my constituency, and to redirect NATO and NORAD funding toward enabling Canada's original people to regain control of their lands and of their livelihood, and promoting sustainable development for all Canadians.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to present some petitions from our good friends in northern Saskatchewan to show us that there is unity across this country against the goods and services tax and to show that they are against this majority uncaring government. They want to assure the government that the fight will go on. It is particularly timely now as the budget presented in the last couple of days suggests there are no tax increases. Canadians know better.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Rob Nicholson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.