

Oral Questions

dians, or will there be an embargo on the cheques as long as the GST has not been adopted by the Senate?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the GST credit cheques. After royal assent, it should take about two or three weeks before the cheques can be sent to low-income Canadians so they will have them before Christmas. The Senate must adopt the bill as soon as possible.

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RAILWAY TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. For several months, CN and VIA management in Montreal have been working together to phase out railway passenger transportation in the ridings of Abitibi, Roberval and Témiscamingue. Is the minister going to go so far as to accept the recommendations of these people who have no consideration for isolated areas?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, my predecessor announced a special study to examine cost-benefit options for transportation for genuinely isolated communities. I am waiting for the results.

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[English]

MANITOULIN AIR SERVICE

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Manitoulin Air Service has announced that it will stop its regularly scheduled air service between Elliot Lake, Manitoulin Island, and Pearson International Airport, Toronto, November 1 because the government is imposing massive new landing fees amounting to \$56,000 per year.

Why is the government destroying this vital air service between northern Ontario and Pearson International Airport in Toronto?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend will realize that under deregulation there has been a great expansion in the number of routes

over the past five years and in the number of flights taken; some 20 per cent in the north, I believe.

In the course of trying to operate our facilities as efficiently as possible, we have undertaken some cost recovery. The cost recovery which he speaks of is part of that program. It is happening all across Canada, in an effort to run the operation as efficiently as we can. For that reason there is cost recovery.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, the minister should know that good air service is vital to the economic survival and development of northern Ontario. In Elliot Lake we have already lost 2,400 jobs this year in the uranium mines. We want to diversify that economy.

In view of this need in northern Ontario, will he roll back these new landing fees and maintain this vital air service?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario and Quebec are interested in service. I can tell my hon. friend that service in Ontario and Quebec increased by 16 per cent over 1988. There is an increase of 24 per cent for non-jet weekly flights.

It is the function of cost recovery and user pay to operate the system as efficiently as possible. That is exactly what we are doing.

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PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same minister and is with regard to the privatization of terminals 1 and 2 at Pearson Airport.

Given that this government's airline policies of deregulation and privatization have been a dismal failure, why did the minister try to privatize the two terminals at our largest airport in the country only after three unsolicited private bids were deposited with this government rather than conduct a full public hearing process that would have truly determined if privatizing the terminals was in the benefit of the travelling public and the Canadian taxpayer?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend will know—and I am sure he did not mean intentionally to mislead the House or the public—that we are privatizing or turning over to private enter-