

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX—UNDERTAKING OF PRIME MINISTER
ON DEADLINE ON REPLACEMENT— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Lowell Murray: Honourable senators, by way of supplementary, it is good to know that the Minister of Finance is so encouraged by the progress being made on this matter, because he is facing a deadline. The deadline was set by the Right Honourable Prime Minister quite recently when he undertook that Mr. Martin would bring in a replacement tax for the GST in his next budget, expected in February. Would the Leader of the Government confirm that undertaking now?

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I would not begin to speculate, even in the broadest way, about what might or might not be in the upcoming budget. Suffice it to say that the Minister of Finance is working away. From the moment that he took on the job, he has been of the view that he had a couple of alternatives with respect to the GST and its replacement. He could either do it fast, or he could do it right. He is working along the latter track. Although an agreement with the provinces is not yet in sight, I would repeat that he is expressing encouraging progression.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I was not asking my friend to speculate on what might be in the next budget. I was asking her to confirm the undertaking given by the Prime Minister with regard to the GST. She may wish to consult Mr. Chrétien on this matter.

OLD AGE SECURITY—UNDERTAKING OF PRIME MINISTER
DURING REFERENDUM—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Lowell Murray: While the honourable leader is doing that, would she also confirm the undertaking which the Prime Minister gave during the recent referendum to the effect that, in the forthcoming budget, Mr. Martin would not be taking any action which would negatively affect old age pensions?

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have gone as far as I want to go with respect to the progress being made on the GST. I wholeheartedly support the Prime Minister and his views in relation to having a replacement for this tax as quickly as possible.

On the question of seniors, I believe the Prime Minister and others have made it very clear that nothing will be done to cause any concern to seniors currently receiving pensions.

• (1500)

As my honourable friend knows, the five-year review is proceeding on the Canada Pension Plan. The last budget of the Minister of Finance indicated that a public paper would be produced, after public discussion had taken place, on the question of the sustainability of the Canada Pension Plan. We want to guarantee for seniors the future security they deserve. During the referendum, the Prime Minister and others commented on the security of current pensioners. I have no reason to believe that there is any change at all.

Senator Murray: My honourable friend referred to the Canada Pension Plan, which is a separate issue. For greater certainty, when she is asking the Prime Minister's Office for confirmation of this undertaking, my understanding of his commitment is that it was with regard to the recipients of the Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement.

Senator Fairbairn: I believe my honourable friend is correct.

[*Translation*]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM—MEETING BETWEEN
REPRESENTATIVES OF FEDERAL AND NEW BRUNSWICK
GOVERNMENTS—REQUEST FOR TABLING OF DOCUMENTATION

Hon. Jean-Maurice Simard: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government. I am asking her, in fact, to table all documents exchanged between the Government of New Brunswick and the federal government regarding the reform of unemployment insurance or employment insurance, which is the term used in the document tabled last week by the minister, Mr. Axworthy. Could the Leader of the Government undertake to table these documents within a week, preferably before the Christmas break?

I especially request the tabling of the documents submitted and discussed by the New Brunswick government during Premier McKenna's meeting last week with Prime Minister Chrétien and the federal and provincial ministers to address the New Brunswick government's fears relating to the content of the proposed reforms, which, in Mr. McKenna's opinion, would have a negative impact on New Brunswick's seasonal workers in particular, and on Atlantic Canada in general.

[*English*]

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have absolutely no knowledge of the documents of which Senator Simard speaks. I can certainly look into his question. The premiers of the Atlantic provinces have been very helpful in expressing their views and offering their advice. If there is anything further I can do to with my friend's request, I will do it.

THE ENVIRONMENT

REVIEW OF CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT—
REPORT OF COMMONS COMMITTEE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Janis Johnson: Honourable senators, on June 20, 1995, the fifth report of the Standing House of Commons Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development entitled, "It's About Our Health — Towards Pollution Prevention," was presented in the House of Commons by Charles Caccia, the