

Oral Questions

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

For months, the Minister of Transport's replies to questions on air traffic have focused exclusively on the concept of safety. This week, he added bilingualism to his department's concerns in the management of air navigation in Canada. But the minister's bilingualism does not even seem to apply to all of Quebec.

Will the minister acknowledge, once and for all, that the portion of Quebec not served in French at this time could receive such service from the Quebec City terminal control unit, which the minister stubbornly wants to shut down next month?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, if someone is being stubborn in the House today, it is certainly not the Minister of Transport. We are trying to explain to our friends in the Bloc Québécois that we are committed to ensuring the safety of the air navigation system in Quebec and the rest of Canada.

We are doing our best, with the technology that is available to us, to provide this service with every means at our disposal. The hon. member knows full well, if he has done his homework, that the only situation where communication over Quebec territory is not provided in French is in the Magdalen Island region, for aircraft travelling at 29,000 feet.

We will continue our efforts to provide service over Quebec in the language of the pilot's choice. We will continue to do so with every means at our disposal, and I hope the hon. member does not want to create the impression, among people travelling in Canada, that situations exist in which safety is in any way compromised, because he certainly risks creating that impression by continuing to raise such questions.

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert): Mr. Speaker, does the minister not feel that his department's bilingualism policy should require that radar control services be available in both official languages throughout Canada, and particularly in provinces with large francophone communities, such as Ontario and New Brunswick?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, although I alluded to the Bloc Québécois's interest in bilingualism in previous questions, it is now clear that the issue being raised is not one of safety, or of protecting the interests of people travelling in Canada; it is just petty politics again. Stick to your knitting, and I will stick to mine!

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

• (1455)

The Speaker: Order. Dear colleagues, I would ask you again—there are only a few minutes left—to address the Chair at all times. The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

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[English]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that last night they loved each other and today the romance is over. What happened?

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Promising to scrap the GST was one of the major campaign strategies used by the Liberal Party during the last election to get elected. Canadians heard about their people and heard about their plan, but what about their promises?

With Parliament recessing for the summer, can the finance minister explain to all taxpayers without referring to the red book and without blaming the separatists, simply put, how his party can promise to kill a tax and then turn around at the same time and keep it under another name and still hold a straight face?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, what we committed to do was to bring in a tax that was less cumbersome administratively, was fairer to Canadians and was much more simple in terms of small and medium size businesses. That is exactly what we are going to do.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, the honeymoon for this government is over. It is time it be held accountable. The finance minister in opposition said he would abolish the GST. Today he stands up and defends the GST which he calls a replacement tax.

Will the finance minister depart from his usual double talk, like he just did which quite frankly is insulting to the Canadian taxpayer and admit that he, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for International Trade will have to break their promise to abolish and kill a GST type tax?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, if anybody wants an example of double talk, it is the minority report of the Reform Party on the GST.

They said: "We don't have to bring in an alternative because we are going to eliminate the deficit within three years", and then given time after time in this House, including a prebudget debate, they have refused as we have asked for them to lay their plans on the table. The time has come for them to put up.