

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT, BRASILIA, BRAZIL—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Dan Hays: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table the report of the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Environment and Development held in Brasilia, Brazil, between November 23 and 27, 1992.

[Translation]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Hon. Jacques Hébert: Honourable senators, I have the honour to present petitions signed by 250 citizens of the province of Alberta who oppose the GST. These petitions come mainly from Sherwood Park, Edmonton, Leduc, Peace River and Millet.

I also have the honour to present petitions signed by 46 citizens of New Brunswick who oppose the GST. These petitions come mainly from Tracadie, Haut-Sheila, Moncton, Saint John, Kingston and Clifton Royal.

This makes a total of 296 protestors who no doubt no longer lodge their complaints with the present government but with the next which, I am sure, will listen and pay greater attention to them.

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

AID TO RUSSIA—STATUS OF PARTICIPATION OF G-7 COUNTRIES

Hon. H. A. Olson: Honourable senators, I want to thank the Leader of the Government for his swift action with respect to the question I asked him yesterday concerning the resumption of wheat shipments to Russia. Within an hour of our discussion here in this chamber, I heard the Prime Minister announce that the government had decided to resume wheat shipments to Russia.

Senator Barootes: It was your suggestion.

Senator Olson: I understand that, and that is why I am so grateful.

Senator Frith: I wish he had listened more when he wasn't a lame duck.

Senator Olson: Now that the Prime Minister has announced that Canada will immediately resume shipments of

wheat to Russia, can the Leader of the Government tell us whether the Prime Minister has received any favourable response to his admonition to other countries that had done the same thing — that is, halt shipments — because Russia was behind in paying its debts? Has the Prime Minister received any favourable response to that action?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, we continue to believe that the countries of the G-7 will have to do more to help Russia through this period and, indeed, in its longer term adjustment to a democratic political system and market-oriented economic system. In that respect, the Prime Minister has had discussions within the past couple of days with President Clinton, President Mitterand and Chancellor Kohl. These discussions are proceeding on an informal but urgent basis.

• (1340)

Meanwhile, the summit in Vancouver seems still to be going ahead between President Yeltsin and President Clinton.

Senator Olson: As the minister has stated, like the Prime Minister, most Canadians continue to believe that we ought to be responding to those needs. Canada has made a decision to make such a response because of the seriousness of the situation and in case there is political instability arising out of what is happening in Russia.

Have we had any positive indication on this matter from other countries? According to Canada's Prime Minister and many people in Canada, including myself, it is urgent that those needs be met, otherwise there could be very serious difficulties. Have we any indication that the Prime Minister's urgings are meeting with any success?

Senator Murray: First of all, I do want to emphasize today, as I did yesterday, that Canada has been at the forefront in providing assistance unilaterally, next only to Germany and Italy on a per capita basis. We have provided more assistance than any other country to Russia — and indeed to the former Soviet Union.

With regard to the question asked by the honourable senator, I can speak to process rather than substance. A strong indication of the urgency and importance that is attached to this matter by the G-7 countries is the fact that several of them, notably France and Germany, are calling for an emergency meeting of the G-7 heads of government to deal exclusively with the situation in Russia. While it has been determined that it would not be possible to enlarge the Vancouver summit for that purpose, consideration is being given to a summit of the G-7 leaders.

In the meantime, because a meeting of G-7 finance ministers is already planned, there is some thought of having a special meeting on the margins of that gathering to address the Russian situation. I underline the fact, however, that there is a strong sentiment in a number of G-7 countries, including Canada, that this is a matter that must be addressed and resolved by heads of government.