

Press reports had raised U.S. concerns that the Budget might contain references to a Canadian withdrawal from the Space Station Program. Hence, the Government felt that the word "withdrawal" (which had already been included in the printed version of the Budget Speech) and even though qualified by the word "orderly," could be misinterpreted in the context of the international agreements relating to the Space Station. On this basis, it was decided to avoid any possible misunderstanding of Canada's position and to use the word "reduction" in the Minister of Finance's actual speech in the House.

The Government remains committed to the Space Station Program. The current Long Term Space Plan maps out the Government's strategy for the next 10 years, and will help ensure that this sector becomes an enabling instrument for Canada's transition to a knowledge-based economy.

Note: the expression "withdrawal from current commitments" was translated in the French version of the printed Budget Speech by the one word "désengagement."

THE ENVIRONMENT

AUTOMATION OF WEATHER STATIONS— RELIABILITY OF TECHNOLOGY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

(Response to question raised by Hon. Pat Carney on March 2, 1995)

Recent budget cuts at Environment Canada call for elimination of all human weather observations by April 1997. EC is proceeding with planned closures of local weather stations while continuing to respect the moratorium on commissioning of new aviation-related Automated Weather Observation Stations (AWOS) by installing new AWOS Systems only where they will have no impact on aviation requirements.

Transport Canada Aviation and Environment Canada have embarked on an action plan, in cooperation with the users, to correct AWOS deficiencies and to demonstrate its satisfactory performance such that it will meet aircraft operations/efficiency requirements and aviation user expectations at Canadian airports by July 1996. Notwithstanding the acknowledged deficiencies related to aviation purposes, the AWOS meets the requirements for public weather information and provides the essential elements to conduct an aircraft instrument approach (windspeed and altimeter setting). Similarly, the integrity of

aerodrome forecasts is not affected by current AWOS observation deficiencies since a variety of data sources are used in the production of forecasts.

Transport Canada is committed to providing a safe operating environment for aviation users and is confident that current efforts will yield an AWOS that will satisfactorily meet all aviation needs.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

CANADIAN AIRBORNE REGIMENT— REASONS FOR DISBANDMENT

(Response to question raised by Hon. Duncan J. Jessiman on March 22, 1995)

Following the regrettable events which took place in Somalia in 1993 involving some members of the Canadian Airborne Regiment, the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Commander of Land Forces, in June 1994, made a recommendation to the Minister of National Defence with respect to the future of the Canadian Airborne Regiment. The Minister was reluctant to make a decision concerning the Regiment's future until a public inquiry, subsequently announced by the Minister in the fall of 1994, had reported on the events surrounding the Regiment's deployment in Somalia.

However, once the Minister learned of further disturbing incidents involving members of the Regiment — one in Rwanda in the fall of 1994 and two which were filmed on video, the first in Somalia during the Regiment's tour of duty in 1993 and the second in Petawawa in 1994 showing a hazing ritual in which members of the Regiment engaged in racist, violent, and degrading acts — he became concerned that the conduct of some members of the Regiment might have denigrated the reputation of all members, past and present, of the Canadian forces. While measures were taken to address individual issues, the Minister came to the conclusion that the problems of the Regiment were systemic. The cumulative effect on the public's confidence in the Regiment demanded that the Government act quickly to restore the reputation of the Forces.

Therefore, on January 23, 1995, the Minister of National Defence announced the disbandment of the Canadian Airborne Regiment and the reassignment of its members to their home units.