

*Oral Questions*

that collects \$18 billion from the Canadian consumers today. The GST will replace that tax.

My hon. friend talks about the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I have letters from members of the CFIB who have listened to the rhetoric of their president—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** —but they have not heard about the information that is in this document. They are interested in knowing right away about this document, about the ways that the GST will affect them, how it can help in their businesses and how it can affect their record keeping—all of those matters which are important to its implementation.

These people want to get the information so they can plan and prepare so that they can be ready for it when January 1, 1991, comes around and the GST is implemented.

[Translation]

**Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. On the front page of today's *Montreal Gazette*, there is a photo of 775 seniors lined up, at 7:30 a.m. yesterday, to receive food from a food bank. Seven hundred and seventy-five seniors! Mr. Speaker, this is national disgrace! And at the same time, the Minister is trying to convince seniors that the GST is good for them. Seniors deserve to live out their old age in dignity, not in food bank lineups. What is the Minister prepared to do for senior citizens?

• (1430)

[English]

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I think that I am quite safe in saying that those 775 senior citizens to whom the Leader of the New Democratic Party refers will be better off after the GST than they are today.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** I would like to ask my hon. friend whether she has taken the time to tell senior citizens that food in food banks is not subject to tax.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** Basic groceries are not subject to tax. Meals on Wheels is not subject to tax. Meals in nursing homes are not subject to tax. No tax will be charged on health care, on dental care, on residential rents, on prescription drugs, nor on medical devices.

All of that, plus the fact the GST credit will help those very people is the reason that I say they will be better off. They will be receiving the GST credit four times a year, by cheque. Seventy-five per cent of senior citizens will be better off after the GST than they are today.

**Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure that Canadians will look forward to seeing the headlines tomorrow and will rejoice when they see that food banks will not be taxed by this government.

Let the minister tell the over 15,000 old age pensioners who go to food banks across this country every month that they will be better off under the goods and services tax. Let him prove that the increased inflation caused by the GST, under the minister's own admission, will not hurt pensioners and those on low incomes. Let the minister prove that the poor will be better off with the goods and services tax.

Will the minister now withdraw this tax and stop trying to convince Canadians who don't believe it that this tax will be good for them?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated in income tax reform how we took 850,000 off the tax rolls so that they were paying no tax whereas previously they were. We are following this very same approach with sales tax reform.

I have listened to my hon. friend say on a number of occasions that senior citizens will not be better off. I have demonstrated in the brochures and in the technical paper that I have produced in connection with the GST that these people will be better off.

Those figures were not produced by me. They were produced by public servants who are working in the best interests of this country and who are doing this work to the best of their ability.

Those figures point out that 84 per cent of senior citizens will receive the credit. If the hon. member cannot prove that that is wrong, then she should not