

## Liberals hit the foreign policy review trail

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While the three political parties hum and haw about whether and how to set up a special parliamentary committee to examine Canada's foreign policy, the Liberals hit the road this week to hold their own hearings across the country.

The Liberals, who are re-examining their positions on a wide range of defence and foreign policy issues, will be seeking public views on specific topics such as Star Wars, arms control and disarmament, Canada's role in international peacekeeping forces and plans to update North America's northern defence system.

"Primarily we are going through some new thinking about our own positions," says Liberal MP Lloyd Axworthy, one of the task force members.

"We think it's an opportunity to talk to a lot of Canadians, get their views on what the Liberal party should be arguing for."

Other permanent committee members include chairman Jean Chretien — the party's external affairs critic — defence critic Len Hopkins and Andre Lizotte, a party vice-president.

The Liberal committee was announced the week before the government released its discussion paper on foreign policy and the three parties locked horns over negotiations about whether the paper could be referred to a special committee of senators and MPs for study.

The opposition parties are threatening to boycott the committee unless it's allowed to study and make recommendations on Canada's participation

in Star Wars research and on a new trading arrangement with the United States before the government decides what it will do.

Decisions on both topics are expected early this fall, months before the committee's originally targeted reporting date of May 31, 1986.

In its meetings in Vancouver and Winnipeg this week, the Liberal task force will be hearing from a variety of academics, politicians and peace groups, including Operation Dismantle, the country's main umbrella organization of peace groups.

But it's already been told it won't be hearing from Arthur Kroeger, the senior public servant assigned by the government to look into the implications of the American invitation to participate in the research phase of the strategic defence initiative, popularly known as Star Wars.

External Affairs Minister Joe Clark has said Kroeger is welcome to appear before a Commons committee after he's presented his recommendations to the government, but that it would be inappropriate for him to appear before the Liberal committee.

The Americans originally hoped their allies would respond to the Star Wars invitation by Sunday but Canada has already indicated it won't be in a position to answer for three or four months.

The Liberals have never actually said they would turn down the American invitation if they were still in power. But they have instead expressed general reservation that participation in the research phase would increase the chance Canada would be involved in any future development of



Lloyd Axworthy

American space defence programs.

The Liberal committee will also be studying the nuclear freeze issue. The party rejected the idea in last summer's election campaign, but shifted its policy late last year by joining the New Democrats in calling for an immediate, mutual and verifiable freeze on nuclear weapons by both the United States and Soviet Union.

The committee will also hold hearings in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Halifax before reporting its findings to Liberal Leader John Turner. There is no fixed deadline.