

Oral Questions

who know what the impact of the GST is going to be on them? Will the minister, please, at least listen to Canadians, especially to northern Canadians who are going to suffer most under his tax?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member completely neglects the impact of the GST credit on people who are living in the north. Many people in the north will receive the benefits of the GST credit, which will put them in a better position after the GST is in place than is the case now.

I say to the hon. member that if he is interested in helping those people, he will go down the hall and speak to the senators because the senators are clearly not listening to Jean Chrétien. They are ignoring Jean Chrétien. The senators down the hall are holding up the introduction of the GST with the GST credit.

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CONVENTIONAL FORCES IN EUROPE AGREEMENT

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister.

Today, the countries of NATO and the Warsaw Pact have concluded an historic agreement to significantly cut military forces in Europe and have virtually ended the cold war.

As a result of this treaty, I would like to ask the minister what will be the impact on Canada's military and foreign policy. In particular, what are the government's plans to redeploy Canadian forces in Europe, either to bring them home or to give them a new role as a result of these significant changes?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to my hon. colleague's question. Again, it is recognized that the signing of the CFE treaty is indeed an historic event. I was there when they started this discussion a year and a half ago. We were all delighted at the outcome.

I think the hon. member also realizes that the reductions provided for in the first CFE are primarily on the eastern European side. On the NATO side, they are not as considerable at this point in time. Although all the

details are not known, we do not expect that it will actually affect our Canadian troops in Europe.

Nevertheless, we have already decided that we are going to be reducing our forces by about 1,400. We will be looking, as we proceed, with CFE-IA as to what the potential impacts on Canadian military participation in Europe might be. I would also like to advise my hon. colleague that one role that Canada will be playing as a result of the CFE agreement is in the area of verification. We have taken an active part and we look forward to participating in what we think can be very important long-term benefits for the security of Europe through that participation.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, in 1987 the government produced a white paper on defence policy which was based on a cold war scenario.

As a result of today's treaty and other changes in Europe, when will the government officially withdraw this white paper and put in place a process to develop a new defence policy consistent with today's agreement and other emerging threats to world security? When are we going to have some changes in this defence policy consistent with today's world?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, we all know that the world has changed dramatically in the past year. These are changes that I do not think anyone could anticipate. That obviously has impacts on our military strategy for the future.

That is why we have been undertaking a very intensive defence policy review and will be continuing that work and, hopefully, bringing it to a conclusion in early 1991.

My colleague will recognize that events in the Persian Gulf have an impact on this. We have to consider our military strategy with respect to Canada and its relationships in the total world, not just in Europe. That work is proceeding and we look forward to discussions with the defence committee and other colleagues, hopefully in the new year.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, section 281 of the National Defence Act calls for a provincial inquiry in a report to the Secretary of State whenever Canadian forces are requisitioned by a province to deal with riot or civil disturbance.