

Two proposals to make Canada a NWFZ were put forward in the House of Commons in 1985. Private Member's Bill C-218, was introduced by NDP member Les Benjamin in December 1984.¹ The Bill proposed to prohibit the development, testing, manufacture, import, transport or storage of any nuclear weapon or components thereof within Canada, its coastal waters and its airspace. On 10 October 1985, Neil Young, also of the NDP presented a motion to declare Canada a nuclear arms-free zone. On 5 March 1986 Jim Fulton (NDP) introduced for first reading Bill C-264, an Act to declare Canada a nuclear weapons-free zone.

Current Canadian Position

In response to the second reading of these Bills, Gerry Weiner, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, emphasized the importance that the Canadian Government attaches to its NATO membership. Although there are no nuclear weapons stationed on Canadian soil, and overflights and port visits of nuclear armed vessels can only occur with Government permission, Canada continues to participate fully in NATO and to believe in the nuclear deterrent on which it is based. He said:

The idea of a nuclear weapons-free zone for Canada...would be realistic only if the Canadian Government were prepared to withdraw from the Alliance....The Canadian Government continues to believe that our defence partnership, co-operation and defence production sharing arrangements with our allies make a greater contribution to preserving peace and security than would our withdrawal into the uncertain isolation of a nuclear weapons-free zone.²

Mr. Weiner went on to ask whether withdrawing from NATO would enhance the prospects for peace and diminish the chance of nuclear war:

¹ Commons Debates, 13 December 1984.

² Commons Debates, 18 March 1985, p. 3133.