

*Private Members' Business*

specifics of the mission being debated. In other words, it would not respond to the problem for which this is allegedly a solution.

Other avenues are already available to parliamentarians to express their views on the subject. The government will continue to ensure those views are taken into account when cabinet decides on Canada's contribution to peacekeeping.

Given the nature of conflicts in the current international environment and the speed at which crisis situations degenerate into open confrontations, debating each mission might also hinder the government's ability to rapidly reply to a UN request and deploy Canadian troops in a timely fashion. This is precisely the opposite of what the government is currently promoting and urging the UN, to be more timely and more effective in responding to crises. Both the defence review and the foreign affairs review drew attention to this issue.

Bill C-295, if implemented, would ask the Minister of National Defence to specify the objectives, duties and role of the mission as well as to define its area of operation. These aspects are currently defined by the UN Security Council after careful consideration and discussions with troop contributors. This is the sole competence of the UN.

Should individual countries decide to redefine missions, objectives and operational requirements this situation would lead to constant stalemate in UN planning and deploying. When an operation does not meet Canadian approval, Canada does not contribute. This was the case for instance in the latest UN verification mission in Angola.

Canada and other like minded countries have invested personnel and financial resources in order to ensure the UN fulfils its task in an efficient manner, observing the criteria and conditions which are necessary for countries contributing troops to participate in peacekeeping missions.

We continue to play a leading role in the establishment of a better decision making process in the UN. Recently we have succeeded among other things in obtaining a better consultation mechanism between the security council and the contributing countries at the early stage in the process of mission planning. We intend to continue to press the UN and the security council on this issue.

The bill also stipulates that the Canadian forces in peacekeeping operations shall be under direct command of a Canadian officer. This has always been the case. We do not need further legislation to ensure that provision.

The bill further allows for this Canadian officer to be placed under United Nations command. The government strongly opposes this suggestion. Currently, Canadian soldiers are under UN control, but the ultimate command of the troops remains with Canadian authorities. Such a practice prevents the UN field

commander from using Canadian troops for tasks that have not been agreed to by the government.

Such a far reaching commitment appears to contradict the intent of the rest of Bill C-295 and demonstrates this proposal is not clearly thought out. I respect the author of the bill just tried to correct that with unanimous consent, but I think it shows how ill thought out the bill was.

Let me underline again the commitment of this government to open debate on peacekeeping issues, especially in times of scarce resources. It is important to reach a broad consensus about where and how Canada should contribute to the needs of the international community. The foreign and defence policy reviews and the debates in the House are tangible proof of the seriousness of the government about the issue.

• (1800)

However, Bill C-295 is a step in the wrong direction. The idea of providing greater parliamentary control over the Canadian contribution to UN peacekeeping is exerted at the wrong end of the decision making process.

The adoption of this bill would not shake the overall Canadian attitude toward peacekeeping operations. It would rather have the effect of confusing the decision making processes and limiting Canada's ability to respond in a timely fashion to UN requests.

Canadians remain supportive of our contribution to peacekeeping, as was demonstrated during the foreign and defence policy reviews and in several polls taken over the years. Canada should build on this past experience rather than move in the direction of this bill.

**Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak to Bill C-295, an act to provide for the control of Canadian peacekeeping activities by Parliament and to amend the National Defence Act in consequence thereof. Bill C-295 is the peacekeeping act.

In commencing my remarks, I would like to address some of the concerns expressed by the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke as well as those of the parliamentary secretary.

Careful examination of the bill reveals that their concern of the ability of the governor in council to react rapidly is ill founded, in fact, specious. If we read the bill, it says that less than 100 people can be deployed for an indeterminate amount of time. More than 100 people can be deployed immediately without reference to Parliament for up to 30 days.

If Parliament does not agree that Canadians should have a say in whether or not their people are committed to peacekeeping operations and 30 days is inadequate, then Parliament, in my estimation, is not doing its job.