

• (1750)

Do not forget that Canada's policy on peacekeeping missions must include a mechanism by which the peacekeepers' mandates can be adapted to the circumstances of the conflict. Unfortunately, the Reform Party is silent on this issue.

The fact remains, nevertheless, that Parliament should be in a position to periodically review the situation and the context of peacekeeping missions, in order to make decisions on whether or not to commit Canadian troops, or whether to extend or shorten their mandates. This is why we will throw our support behind Bill C-295, despite the reservations that I have already expressed.

In this month celebrating the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, it is clear that the international community and the government have to seriously review the UN's peacekeeping operations.

[English]

**Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government in its election platform made a commitment to better involve parliamentarians in the decision making process on foreign policy and defence issues. To that effect, House and Senate members have had the opportunity to participate extensively in the review of Canada's foreign and defence policies.

A number of debates have been held in the House over the last 16 months on several aspects of our international relations. These debates have allowed members to express their views specifically on Canada's peacekeeping policy and operations. This is why I thank the hon. member from the Reform Party for bringing in Bill C-295. It gives us another opportunity to give our views on our peacekeeping forces abroad.

The concerns raised in Bill C-295 are in part similar to those expressed in previous debates. They show that a more open and accessible decision making process in the field of defence and foreign policy is necessary. The government subscribes to the intentions which have motivated the tabling of Bill C-295. It is after all the responsibility of this government to ensure that Canada's contributions to peacekeeping operations remain efficient and useful and that they respect the financial situation of the country.

Bill C-295 generally calls for rigid procedures which would run counter to the need for the case by case flexible approach that has made Canadians successful peacekeepers in the past. Moreover the adoption of Bill C-295 which in its general outline borrows heavily from the American approach to peacekeeping would send a very negative signal to our partners and to the international community at a time when Canada is promot-

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ing new ways of improving the efficiency and the relevance of the UN in the field of conflict prevention and resolution.

The end of the cold war has seen a return to violent ethnic and nationalistic conflicts in many parts of the world. This reality coupled with the new co-operation among the members of the security council have changed the peacekeeping equation. Missions have increased in number and grown in size and scope putting severe pressure on the financial capability of the UN and member states.

Ten years ago Canada's share of the total UN cost of peacekeeping was \$8 million. In 1995 Canadian assessment alone will be in excess of \$150 million, not including the incremental costs of the Department of National Defence. This is admittedly a burden but it is also an investment in peace at costs far lower than were we to allow conflicts to continue unabated and uncontained.

Canada remains one of the strongest advocates of reinforcing the UN's conflict prevention and conflict resolution capability. We have been working with like minded countries at the UN to bring about reforms that will provide the organization with the political, financial and military tools it needs to fulfil its growing responsibilities.

Canada is conducting a study on a UN rapid reaction capability which will provide recommendations on how to make the UN more efficient and more timely in case of conflicts. We are also organizing with our partners peacekeeping seminars in the context of the ASEAN regional forum and the OAS. We are working with the OAU to improve the capability of African countries to better contribute to peacekeeping operations and preventive diplomacy.

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On April 24 the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre officially opened providing the international community with a world class training facility in this vital field. Canada's credibility and efficiency in the field of peacekeeping came from its commitments to the UN and its reliability in time of crisis. Canada has contributed with distinction in most operations in the history of peacekeeping because of the foresight of its leaders, the flexibility of its policies and the courage and skills of its troops.

Bill C-295, despite the well founded intentions of its author, would prevent the government from meeting these conditions. More specifically, Bill C-295 calls for a five hour debate prior to any mission that involves 100 or more members of the Canadian forces. Given the complexity of the situation on the ground and the sensitive nature of the negotiations that take place between the UN, the parties to the conflict and the troop contributors, a public debate on a given operation would take place in the shadow of diplomatic activities. It would likely lead to general reflection on peacekeeping without addressing the