

*Private Members' Business*

Let us be clear the bill falls squarely within the federal government's criminal law jurisdiction. It does not admit to any exceptions in the application. The government in the interests of all Canadians must ensure coast to coast compliance.

In fairness, many witnesses did draw attention to provisions which if misinterpreted might result in anomalies. In response the minister again appeared before the committee to suggest amendments regarding among other things bona fide inadvertent failure to register, inspection powers and relic firearms. These amendments are fully detailed in the committee report.

I add my voice to the people in my riding and across the country who support the principle embodied by the legislation. It is my pleasure to give Bill C-68 my unequivocal support and I recommend to all members of this House to do likewise.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to the order made Thursday, June 8, in accordance with provisions in Standing Order 78(2), it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings.

[Translation]

Pursuant to the order made earlier today, voting on all matters required to dispose of third reading of Bill C-68 will take place at 6.30 p.m.

The House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### PEACEKEEPING ACT

The House resumed from April 27 consideration of the motion that 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, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in second reading of Bill C-295. As members are well aware, the government has already stated its opposition to this bill in no uncertain terms. Today I will restate the government's main objections and explain why the bill must not become law.

Canada's support for peacekeeping is a reflection of our strong commitment to international peace and security. Our impressive record in this field is recognized worldwide. We have long argued our experience and skills are unmatched. As proof of our expertise Canada is currently at the forefront of

efforts to improve the conduct of the United Nations' peacekeeping operations. We take pride in our peacekeeping reputation and we work hard to preserve it.

Unfortunately Bill C-295 if it were to pass into law would do irreparable damage to this reputation. This is a flawed, contradictory piece of legislation that would seriously undermine Canadian efforts to contribute effectively to peacekeeping operations.

The bill goes beyond consultation and seeks explicit control by Parliament of all peacekeeping activities. This would set a very dangerous precedent, for Bill C-295 would restrict the prerogative and discretion of the governor in council to determine Canada's contribution to UN or regional operations.

Under section 4 of the National Defence Act the Minister of National Defence has responsibility for the management and direction of the Canadian forces and of all matters relating to national defence including peacekeeping. The bill would remove this responsibility not only from the minister but from the government as a whole respecting military operations.

Perhaps the most serious repercussion of giving Parliament direct control over peacekeeping operations relates to the speed with which events unfold in the post-cold war world. The bill which calls for a five-hour debate prior to any mission involving more than 100 Canadian forces members would add another layer to the decision making process. As a result it would limit Canada's ability to respond quickly to UN peacekeeping requests or to changes in the actual peacekeeping mandate.

• (1735)

The need for quick deployment in peacekeeping operations cannot be overstated. We have heard again and again how a more rapid response by the international community might have saved tens of thousands of lives in Rwanda.

Bill C-295 if anything would increase reaction time, making it even more difficult to respond to such crisis. The bill would also hamper current efforts by the ministers of national defence and foreign affairs to improve the UN's rapid reaction capability and to find ways Canada might contribute to such a capability.

In short, the bill sends the wrong message to our partners at a time when we are leading the way in promoting new methods to enhance the UN's ability to prevent and resolve conflict.

If Canada is to remain an effective peacekeeper the authority to deploy and operate peacekeeping forces must stay in the hands of the governor in council. The government has the expertise and experience to decide, sometimes on a moment's notice, whether troops should be deployed and how they should operate. Although it welcomes the advice of Parliament, the