



October 11, 2026

Canada Should Expand, Not Retreat from, UN Peacekeeping

The Canadian Pugwash Group is deeply concerned by the Government of Canada's decision to wind down several of Canada's remaining contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

At a time of proliferating armed conflict, mounting civilian suffering, and growing pressure on international law and multilateral institutions, Canada should be strengthening its commitment to cooperative international security.

We urge the government to reconsider this decision and develop a renewed and meaningful Canadian contribution to UN peace operations.

1. Peacekeeping works.

UN peace operations monitor ceasefires, protect civilians, support peace processes, assist with disarmament, and help societies make the difficult transition from war to peace. Their record is imperfect, but imperfection should not be confused with ineffectiveness. A substantial body of research shows that UN peacekeeping reduces the likelihood of renewed conflict and saves lives. Even the deeply constrained UN mission in Rwanda, led by Canadian General Roméo Dallaire, helped save more than 20,000 people during the genocide.

2. Peacekeeping is an investment in prevention.

Preventing and containing conflict is both more humane and more cost-effective than responding after violence has escalated. Research indicates that adequately resourced peace operations can substantially reduce the risk of major armed conflict, at a fraction of the cost of large-scale military interventions. At a time of intense pressure on international institutions and public resources, Canada should be investing in the capacity to prevent wars, not diminishing it.

3. The answer to the limitations of peacekeeping is improvement, not retreat.

Peace operations face real challenges, including inadequate resources, delayed deployment and increasingly complex conflict environments. Canada should help address those shortcomings. It could champion stronger rapid-deployment capabilities, multinational standby arrangements, better

training of peacekeepers, including on protection of civilians, effective field technologies, and ultimately a reliable UN standing capacity able to deploy trained civilian, police and military personnel rapidly when crises emerge. Canada should create a centre where civilians, police and military can train together. The Pearson Peacekeeping Centre (1994-2013) served as a model for the world, still well remembered by the thousands who took its courses.

4. Canadian security policy must remain broader than military spending and alliance commitments.

Canada is embarking on a historic expansion of military spending while placing increasing emphasis on continental defence and NATO commitments. This should not come at the expense of Canada's commitment to the United Nations and multilateral approaches to peace and security. Nor is it fair for wealthy countries such as Canada to retreat from peacekeeping while developing countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, shoulder a disproportionate share of its responsibilities and risks. Peacekeeping remains an indispensable tool for prevention, de-escalation, protection of civilians, mediation and negotiated settlement – all urgently needed in today's fractured international environment.

5. Canada should once again lead in peacekeeping.

Canada played a formative role in the development of modern peacekeeping. That history should not merely be invoked nostalgically but rather should inform what Canada chooses to do now. At a moment when multilateral institutions are under severe strain, Canadian leadership should mean strengthening the international community's capacity to prevent violence, protect civilians and sustain peace processes.

The Canadian Pugwash Group calls on the Government of Canada to reconsider the planned drawdown and develop a renewed Canadian peacekeeping strategy backed by meaningful expansion of personnel, resources and diplomatic leadership. This is a moment for Canada to recommit to multilateral peace and security – not retreat from it.

Contact:

Cesar Jaramillo, Chair, Canadian Pugwash Group cesar@sanepi.org

Peggy Mason, CPG Vice-Chair pmason@rideauinstitute.ca

Walter Dorn, CPG Director walter.dorn@rmc.ca