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Celebrating August 9, National Peacekeepers Day in Canada

**Canada and UN peace operations:
Unmet promises, delayed commitments ...
and a possible diplomatic train wreck!**

Ottawa and New York – August 9 is National Peacekeepers Day in Canada, a time to mark this country’s impressive history contributing to peace and stability around the world, and also to remember those Canadians who have lost their lives serving overseas on United Nations Peace Operations.

However, as reported in the just-released [2017 Canada and UN Peacekeeping Fact Sheet](#), Canada now ranks 71st among contributors of military and police personnel to UN peacekeeping. According to WFM – Canada President Walter Dorn, “Our contributions are at a historic low. The Canadian military now provides only 30 military personnel to UN operations – less than half the ten-year average that the previous (Conservative) government contributed over its ten-year term – and that was a government that disliked peacekeeping!”

This year’s National Peacekeepers’ Day is all the more significant as 2017 marks 60 years since Lester Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, recognizing his diplomatic role as the originator of the UN’s first peacekeeping force, the 1956 Suez peacekeeping mission. In his [now-famous acceptance speech](#), Pearson spoke of the necessity for governments to do more diplomatically and militarily in the cause of peace. "We made at least a beginning then. If, on that foundation, we do not build something more permanent and stronger, we will once again have ignored realities, rejected opportunities, and betrayed our trust."

After the 2015 election, a signature activity of the new Liberal government’s commitment to multilateralism was to “renew Canada’s commitment to United Nations peace operations,” as the new Prime Minister stated in the mandate letter to his Defence Minister. But [recent reports](#) have

documented Canada's rejection of numerous requests from the United Nations, as well as the antipathy among some elements of the Canadian Forces leadership for UN-led operations.

According to Dorn, "There is at the United Nations still some puzzlement regarding what Canada stands for. Prime Minister Trudeau has certainly raised Canada's profile. But those of us who look at real commitments from member states and see the inexplicable delays on peace operations, are left wondering what's really going on in Ottawa."

The 2017 WFM – Canada Fact Sheet also reports the increased support for UN operations among many of Canada's NATO allies. Increased western support for peacekeeping was a key objective of U.S. President Obama when he convened the 2015 Leaders Summit on Peacekeeping at the United Nations. Subsequently, soon after the 2016 UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial meeting held in London, [Canada announced](#) that it would contribute up to 600 military personnel, 150 police and \$450 million to UN peace operations – a pledge that led to Canada being asked to host the 2017 meeting, scheduled for November 14-15 in Vancouver.

Canada's Department of National Defence expects [upwards of 500 delegates from 70 countries to attend that pledging conference](#). Yet a renewed commitment of Canadian personnel to UN peace operations is as far off as ever.

Says Dorn, "It remains to be seen whether this government will finally make good on its promises to re-engage in UN peace operations. Or will Canada, a country that has aspirations of being elected to a two-year term on the UN Security Council, stand before the world this November hosting a peacekeeping pledging conference while renegeing on its own pledges?"

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Dr. Walter Dorn, National President, World Federalist Movement-Canada, (929 376-7313) Walter.Dorn@rmc.ca. Prof. Dorn is a faculty member at Canada's Royal Military College. During a 2017 sabbatical, he has been working in New York to implement recommendations from the UN Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation in Peacekeeping, on which he served.

A copy of the 1956 speech by Lester Pearson upon receiving the Nobel Peace Prize is [available here](#).