

Private Members' Business

Everybody knows it. We talk about education and training and the government cuts EPF. It says: "Yes, we have increased it and so that is good." It has not been increased in real dollars and our universities are in a terrible state of affairs. Everybody knows it. Medicare is threatened. I could go on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being five o'clock p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 30(6) the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

MEASURE TO AMEND

Mr. Bill Attewell (Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville) moved that Bill C-304, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (Canada Post Corporation), be read the second time and referred to Legislative Committee A.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to discuss my private member's Bill C-304, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (Canada Post Corporation). The goal of my bill is to ban all future strikes by Canada Post employees.

This will be achieved by declaring Canada Post an essential public service so that strikes will be prohibited and strikers will be fined for their illegal actions should they choose to ignore this legislation and go on strike.

Canadians are no longer willing to be held hostage by striking Canada Post employees. Their strike this past summer caused severe financial harm and frustration to Canadians across this country. The residents of Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville were very angry during the recent strike at Canada Post because their daily lives and their businesses were interrupted.

Many residents wrote to me. Ben Edwards of Markham wrote:

The cost on jobs, the economy and our international reputation as a progressive industrialized country is at stake. We are the only country that I know of that continually allows essential services to be constantly disrupted time and time again.

Mr. Edwards is right. Strikes at Canada Post cost Canadians. They cost people, businesses and our international reputation. Canada Post expected to earn a profit for the fourth consecutive year but instead, largely because of the strike, President Donald Lander expects a loss of over \$100 million.

Throughout the world most industrialized nations are struggling through a global recession. Employed people in these countries are elated to have secure jobs. Yet in Canada, at the height of this recession we watched bewildered as unionized Canada Post employees walked off the job demanding higher wages and more job security. This is a group of employees with very secure jobs and an average hourly wage of over \$14.

Maureen Hyman, a local businesswoman, wrote to me expressing her frustration and asking the government to take effective action. She wrote:

We have struggled in our family business to keep it alive through this crushing recession—and now, just when we thought we saw a glimmer of hope on the commercial horizon, we have been shot down by the Post Office. Only the federal government has the power to do something about it.

I am here today debating my private member's bill because only the federal government can act to put an end to these disruptive, damaging and unnecessary strikes. The most effective way to end these strikes is to adopt legislation to outlaw strikes at Canada Post.

In my riding, as in most ridings throughout the country, seniors, people collecting welfare, charitable organizations, and small businesses were hardest hit. These groups are the ones who depend on mail for the money that helps them get through each day. They deserve to have a postal system that is dependable, reliable and unfailing. Instead, the seniors who could not afford to wait for their pension cheques lined up in excruciating heat to pick up their money so they could buy food and pay their rent.

Today, Wayne Baker, a constituent from Markham who is the president of Older Adults in Action, said: "Pensioners get the most aggravation because of these strikes because they have to take buses to pick up their