

*Adjournment Debate*

that could be leased and, more recently, purchased by consumers. Today the telephone equipment market is highly competitive and Bell has apparently found that it is expensive to maintain teller facilities in its Phonecentres. According to Bell, this means the general body of subscribers are subsidizing the cost of these tellers that are only used by a small number of subscribers.

I can understand Bell's motives in its efforts to be cost efficient in its operations. However, I have greater sympathy for those subscribers who feel they are inconvenienced by what they perceive to be a lower level of service. For many years the terms and conditions relating to the provision of telephone service have been set out in the company's general regulations. In a comprehensive review, begun in 1983, the CRTC has reviewed the regulations. With the benefit of a thorough public consultative process, the Commission has revised the regulations "terms of service". The terms of service will provide customers with adequate safeguards against possible abuses by companies providing services on a monopoly basis.

One of the old regulations, number 28, specified that subscribers must pay their bills at the company's business offices or at authorized agencies. The new rule adopted by the Commission in March of this year deletes the provision relating to locations where customers may pay their accounts. The Commission was of the view that customers should be able to pay their accounts by mail as well as designated company offices.

The CRTC has a solid record of proceedings and decisions which have maintained a high level of service provided to the public. With respect to this issue, I am advised that the Commission has received several complaints regarding Bell's refusal of cash payments. Furthermore, I understand the Commission has been in contact with Bell Canada to obtain more information and a full explanation for this change. The mechanism for this request is a formal interrogatory in connection with the Commission's proceeding to review Bell's rate of return. This proceeding, which is similar to the one which is conducted when Bell Canada applies for a general rate increase, will afford the general public and interested groups the opportunity to comment on Bell's operation.

Given that the Commission has only recently adopted new "terms of service" for Bell and the formal proceeding on Bell's rate of return is under way, I think it is opportune that the Commission fully investigate this issue and subsequently determine the extent to which provisions should be made by the company to accept cash.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 3(1).

The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m.