

*Government Orders*

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I might point out to hon. members that nothing contained in the legislation prevents the parties from agreeing to amend any provision of the collective agreement binding upon them, with the exception of the term of the agreement, and any efforts which they are so inclined to undertake have of course my full support.

While both of the parties have expressed a preference for a negotiated settlement of major issues in dispute, there remains the cold, harsh reality that they have been unable to do so for over two years.

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[*Translation*]

While both of the parties have expressed a preference for a negotiated settlement of major issues in dispute, there remains the cold, harsh reality that they have been

unable to do so for over two years. Furthermore, this dispute has caused the parties, their employees, the Canadian business community and the public considerable uncertainty. It is time to bring the dispute to a fair and equitable conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, I know other hon. members will wish to speak to this bill so I will be brief in my concluding remarks. Some 25 months have passed since the expiration of the previous collective agreements covering these employees. Extensive conciliation and mediation assistance has been extended to the parties throughout the bargaining process.

All efforts to find a solution to the dispute were exhausted by Judge Gold. The parties have proven incapable of resolving their differences at the bargaining table. Once again, the Canadian public is faced with the prospect of a protracted and damaging test of economic strength between the Corporation and CUPW and the resulting disruption to postal services.

While I am disappointed that the parties have failed to achieve a new collective agreement, I do not question the sincerity of their efforts at the bargaining table. Nor do I question the process itself—I remain a firm believer in the collective bargaining system despite its occasional imperfections. Having said that, the government has an overriding responsibility to the Canadian public to bring this lengthy dispute to a fair and equitable resolution without further delay.

The legislation ought to be seen as a mechanism which will not only ensure the continuation of postal services but will also allow the parties to conclude this chapter and build on the progress which they have made towards an improved relationship. I would therefore urge all hon. members to support the proposed legislation.

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