

Government Orders

other issues and perhaps to reach agreements on separate elements of the package one at a time. This provision is called an alternative dispute resolution and will provide greater flexibility to find solutions to problems.

I am sure members of this House will be concerned about what is termed "essential employees" who carry out duties that must be continued during a strike because they are necessary, essential and in the interests of the safety or the security of the public.

Bill C-26 gives effect to the white paper recommendations that the Public Service Staff Relations Act be amended to provide an independent mechanism to resolve disputes about the designation of positions. These amendments are modelled after the provisions of the memorandum of understanding between Treasury Board and the Public Service Alliance of Canada which was signed on August 7, 1990. Both parties found this arrangement to be entirely satisfactory. The process is designed to have designated positions determined in advance of a round of collective bargaining. This removes the contentious nature of issues, particularly of this issue of designation, from the bargaining context and enhances the smooth operation of the dispute resolution mechanisms available to the parties.

The proposed amendments to the PSSRA do not deal only with collective bargaining rules. They also improve the rights of individual employees. Under the current system the predominant practice has been for the Public Service Staff Relations Board to designate its members as adjudicators. Bill C-26 would permit the parties to select adjudicators of their own choosing, providing a greater flexibility to the parties.

• (1130)

Bill C-26 also provides for the consolidation of employee redress with respect to all cases of termination of employment that do not remain under the PSEA. This means that employees will be able to grieve a management decision to terminate their employment through the full grievance process to third party adjudication.

Many unions have demanded that so-called policy grievances be subject to review by the Public Service Staff Relations Board. We are concerned that this could

work to the disadvantage of the effectiveness of the grievance process. Therefore Bill C-26 proposes a compromise. When both parties agree, a matter relating to the interpretation of a collective agreement which could be the subject of an individual employee grievance to the PSSRB can now be referred directly to the board.

Bill C-26 also proposes other amendments which will enhance the smooth operation of the collective bargaining system. Of particular note is the provision which provides for a basis for master bargaining. When the parties agree, negotiations can proceed to conclude a single collective agreement which is binding on more than one bargaining unit. This is not a new provision but is an important one because it supports the current practice which reduces the probability of conflict.

In closing I would like to mention another provision about the collective bargaining process which concerns the period of notice to bargain. Bill C-26 improves this provision by 50 per cent by stretching it from two months to a three-month notice period which will permit the parties to commence the bargaining process earlier and will enhance the deliberate objective and prepared approach to the entire labour negotiation system.

These new provisions to improve the scope and the capacity for both the government and the Public Service to conduct the bargaining process and to resolve disputes are welcome changes in federal government administration. They will help to set new standards of expeditious and efficient collective negotiation and should significantly reduce levels of conflict and occasions of confrontation. Such results will most certainly contribute to improving staff relations and morale and ultimately to improving service to our common constituents, the citizens of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on Bill C-26, an act to amend the Public Service Employment Act and the Public Service Staff Relations Act. It is obvious to all of us, whether parliamentarians, civil servants or government services users, that it is a good idea to review such a legislation that has been in effect for 25 years with a view to improving it for the benefit of us all.