

*Private Members' Business*

cheques only to find that they aren't ready and they have to return the next day and try again".

He said that at least 80 per cent of the seniors he knows support my bill to declare Canada Post an essential service. Many charities also suffered a severe drop in donations. Art Brooker of the Christian Blind Mission in Stouffville called me during the strike to let me know how quickly donations had dropped off. The impact of the strike on charities like the Mission was very serious. Thousands of businesses were hard hit when their cash flows dried up.

Canada Post enjoys the privilege of being a monopoly. With this privilege Canada Post has an obligation to meet the needs of its customers—Canadians from sea to sea, including every Canadian business and organization. As a result of the fact that Canada Post is a monopoly, corporation workers are in a position to inflict economic harm and anxiety on innocent Canadians. Bill C-304 will protect hundreds of thousands of Canadians who suffered unnecessary anguish, frustration and economic hardship during the most recent strike and the other postal strikes that we have endured over the past several years.

In the fall of 1981 Canada Post was incorporated. One of the major contributing factors to the decision to make Canada Post a Crown corporation was a series of strikes that denied postal service to Canadians. It is clear that this change in status has not eliminated the problem of costly strikes. In fact, Canadians have endured three postal strikes since 1987.

The interruptions in mail service that characterized the 1970s, 1980s and now the 1990s can no longer be tolerated. The effects of these strikes have been devastating. I am not talking of a season's greeting card that arrived late. I am talking about the real hardships suffered by seniors who could not afford to buy groceries and had to arrange with their landlords permission for late rent payments.

These kinds of experiences are emotionally devastating for people on fixed incomes. The basic necessities of life, as we all know, are not negotiable.

I am also talking about businesses whose entire operation relies largely on the postal system. Businesses such

as publishing houses, charities and small direct marketing companies are particularly hard hit by strikes. During the strike, John van Velzen, who is president of a direct marketing company in Markham, wrote:

Our industry, which is Canada Post's largest customer, is virtually shut down during the labour difficulties at Canada Post. This will have a serious negative impact on employment in your riding.

What upset me most during the strike last summer was that so many people and businesses were struggling and continued to struggle after enduring a deep recession and the last thing they needed was a crippling postal strike. Canadians deserve better than this.

My legislation will ensure that Canadians can count on more consistent service from Canada Post than we have been getting over the past several years with numerous strikes.

An important aspect of this bill is that within 15 days of receiving written notice from the union or the Canada Post Corporation over a dispute the minister responsible for Canada Post will appoint a conciliation officer, commissioner or a conciliation board to address the needs and demands of Canada Post's employees and management.

I want to make it clear that this bill is not aimed at Canada Post employees. The men and women who work at Canada Post are very hard-working people who take their responsibilities seriously. This legislation is for Canadians.

The following inclusion in the Canada Labour Code is of utmost importance. This section reads:

No employee of the Canada Post Corporation shall declare or participate in a strike. The trade union representing such employees shall not declare or authorize a strike and the Canada Post Corporation shall not declare or cause a lock-out.

This legislation is also in the best interest of postal workers and Canada Post. A formal process used to avert a strike will benefit employees and employers who also suffer lost wages and revenue during strikes.

When it comes to delivery and other services, with the exception of strikes, Canada Post is becoming very efficient. In November 1990 *Canadian Business Magazine* wrote:

On a national basis, 97 per cent of the mail within the same urban centre is delivered within two days.