

Government Orders

All these changes clearly benefit Canadian workers and testify to the federal government's commitment to investing in the human resources of this country.

These changes will greatly enhance the harmonization of labour legislation in this country. The Canada Labour Code will be more compatible with provincial labour standards will be increased, and employees across Canada will be entitled to similar levels of wages and benefits.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, these very substantial changes are intended to streamline federal labour legislation and help Canada prepare for the challenges of economic globalization. I would now like to offer some examples that will illustrate the tremendous progress we will all be able to make as a result of this bill.

[English]

As an example let me briefly describe our amendments with regard to collective agreements and minimum labour standards. These modifications will exempt unionized work places from annual vacation, general holidays, bereavement leave or minimum wage standards where the collective agreement meets or exceeds the legislated standard.

Currently the complainant, subject to such a collective agreement, may call on both the grievance process and Labour Canada for redress. The new amendments will ensure that only the collective agreement prevails for those employees who have access to a third party grievance process. This will eliminate unnecessary duplication.

At the outset I referred to proposed changes in the industrial relations area of the Canada Labour Code and the Public Service Staff Relations Act. The changes will protect the public interest by providing an additional mechanism which could assist in the settlement of collective bargaining disputes in federal jurisdiction. These amendments will allow a vote to be directed among employees in a bargaining unit on an employer's last offer when the public interest is affected.

Housekeeping amendments to the Canada Labour Code will also be made to redress certain discrepancies between the English and French texts. This will ensure clarity and uniformity in the provisions.

In conclusion, I think it is clear from the outline I have provided hon. members that the amendments before this House will have an extensive and beneficial impact on efficiency in the work place while promoting greater co-operation between employer and employee.

These amendments will also help propel Canada into a more progressive economic climate and foster a more equitable and harmonious work place environment. I trust that with the support of both Houses and the support of my colleagues from the opposition parties we can get this piece of legislation through the House quickly.

Mr. Gilbert Parent (Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold): Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the Minister of Labour on introducing Bill C-101 and making so many necessary changes to the Canada Labour Code.

I have some amendments and suggestions to make to what the minister is proposing, as will my Liberal colleagues who will be speaking on this bill. I have already sent them to him for his perusal. Over all my party and I are prepared to support the bill in the anticipation that our recommendations will be received in the same spirit as we give this support.

The federally regulated enterprises to which the code applies include privately and publicly owned industries engaged in interprovincial or international rail, road and pipeline transportation, shipping and related services, air transportation, interprovincial and international communications, broadcasting, banks and various Crown corporations.

I will deal specifically with sections of the bill which I think can be improved. Clause 42 would amend the Public Service Staff Relations Act, also known as the PSSRA, by adding a heading and a proposed subsection 19.1. I am suggesting that this clause be amended by striking out lines 6 and 7 on page 28 and substituting the following: "that it is in the interests of the employees of the effective bargaining unit that those employees be—."

After line 20 on page 28 the following should be added: "1.1 For the purposes of determining the interest of the employees under subsection .1 the minister may take into consideration the following: (a) whether the rules of the trade union give the employees an opportunity to vote, to accept or reject an offer of an employer, and where there are no such rules whether this is likely to be prejudicial to the employees; (b) whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that a significant number of employees wants a vote to be held, and (c) whether a vote is likely to end a labour dispute that in the opinion of the minister has lasted for an inordinate length of time."