

*Government Orders*

[English]

The majority of the amendments relate to part III, the labour standards section of the Canada Labour Code. These proposals were developed over two years of consultation with federally regulated employer and employee representatives, the very parties affected by the changes.

Some 700,000 working Canadians will benefit from these changes to federal labour standards. The bill will streamline procedures for modifications to labour standards such as provide for the substitution of a general holiday, clarify the relationship between the minimum labour standards and collective agreements, provide for more effective collection of unpaid wages, provide wage and employment protection for workers injured on the job, allow greater flexibility in the timing of parental leave, and support a pregnant worker's right to remain at work by requiring employers to make every reasonable effort to modify the job or reassign the employee when her temporary health needs so require.

I would like to give further information on the last two points. Provisions that provide for protective reassignment for pregnant and nursing workers and those that allow greater flexibility in the scheduling of parental leave are especially important.

• (1205 )

The amendments concerning the scheduling of parental leave address the difficulties that working families face in balancing their responsibilities at home with those in the work place. Under the provisions of Bill C-101 either parent within the federal jurisdiction will be able to take the parental leave to which he or she is entitled at any time within a year after the child's birth or after the child comes into the employee's care.

The amendment acknowledges that the circumstances and needs of parents differ. It is only equitable to offer some flexibility in the way that parental leave may be taken.

[Translation]

The amendments concerning maternity-related reassignment will protect women's right to continue working. An employer will no longer be able to force a woman employee to take maternity leave simply because she is

pregnant. Under the new provisions, employers must, as much as possible, change the duties of the pregnant woman or reassign her if her doctor considers that essential.

Forty per cent of federally regulated employees are women and, every year, about 6,700 of them take maternity leave. The amendments proposed in Bill C-101 will have a positive impact on many of these women by enabling them to continue to earn a living. By keeping qualified and experienced employees at work, the whole Canadian economy will benefit.

[English]

The amendments to the industrial relations provisions of the Canada Labour Code and the Public Service Staff Relations Act will serve the public interest by providing an additional mechanism which could assist in the settlement of collective bargaining disputes. The provisions would be invoked only when the action is likely to result in the resolution of a collective bargaining dispute where the public interest is affected.

Each component of Bill C-101 received a full discussion in the committee hearings. We had excellent representation from many members of both the government and opposition sides of the House, the Canadian Labour Congress, la Confédération des syndicats nationaux, a number of public sector unions, the chairman of the Public Service Staff Relations Board, and business organizations such as the Canadian Bankers' Association and FETCO which represents the federally regulated employers in the transportation and communications industries.

These were lively and fruitful discussions conducted in a spirit of co-operation that I found very encouraging. Some thoughtful suggestions were put forward by a number of representatives who appeared before us. We listened carefully and considered all of them.

I urge the House to support the bill. As a whole these amendments will be contributing to the efficiency of Canadian work places while promoting great co-operation between employers and employees. The changes will help Canada achieve a more progressive labour-management climate and will promote a more equitable and harmonious work place. This should have a benefi-