

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Before coming in today, I figured out that I have made some 120 interventions, speeches, or whatever, since November last. I have spoken about various matters and I am well aware that people in my constituency watch our proceedings. Those who tell us their opinions and their views are generally retired people who say: "I will tell my son or my daughter to watch what goes on in the House of Commons because it is important and I think that he or she will be interested."

It would therefore be very nice for us to be able to tell them: "The proceedings of the House of Commons will be retransmitted this evening at 7 or 7:30 and you will be able to see the Minister, the Prime Minister or the Members of Parliament speak about the bill which is of concern to you."

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude by congratulating the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell on his initiative. I think that we could go even further and include the committees. I think that we could talk about broadcasting the committee proceedings. I think that in line with the new Standing Orders and the Parliamentary Reform, we will have to find a system whereby the Canadian public will be able to watch on their TV set these proceedings. I think also that the idea of widening the Canadian audience has some merit.

As to what this initiative could cost, Mr. Speaker, I do not think we should try for the time being to assess it in dollars and cents. I think it would be worthwhile, as suggested by the Hon. Member, that we consider the possibility of rebroadcasting our proceedings for the benefit of the people who want to watch them.

I feel that a pilot-project in the area of the national capital could be useful, and I know a great many people in my riding who would like to take part in such an experiment. A pilot-project would not cost much, but might help achieve the Hon. Member's purpose. As I said, we could also consider extending this idea to committees.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate again the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. I think his is a positive and constructive initiative.

[English]

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us this evening is basically to consider the desirability of rebroadcasting House proceedings. The motion, naturally, is framed in a much more wishy-washy, shilly-shallying fashion as is our wont here in the House. It reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of recommending to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation the feasibility of rebroadcasting the daily proceedings of the House of Commons *in toto* during the evening hours.

Translated, that means that it is a good idea to repeat the broadcasting of House proceedings in the evening. Of course, there are many pros and cons on this issue, but I think, on balance, it is a good idea. We know that roughly 100,000 people watch the proceedings as they are currently broadcast

across the country. I have no doubt that there are many more people who would like to watch them but are simply not available during the daytime hours. For some people perhaps it is the only commercial-free broadcasting available, so there are many incentives for watching apart from an interest in parliamentary affairs.

People are entitled to know what is going on in Parliament. People are politically interested and if they want to be involved, naturally it is extremely helpful for them to see what Parliament is debating. Any measure which will make this more possible is positive. Canada is an enormous country and it is very rare for people to come to Ottawa. We would welcome having more people, more school children and more citizens groups coming to see us and meet with us directly. However, that simply is not feasible for large numbers of people so we have to depend very much on the message of Parliament getting out over the airwaves. In so far as this would increase access to our parliamentary debates, it is a highly desirable idea. Certainly the more that people watch Parliament, the more we might expect Parliamentarians to respond to criticisms which I, and I dare say other Members of Parliament, receive from people who are already watching the proceedings and who are rather disturbed at the air of frivolity which often prevails in the House. If increasing the hours of exposure and the telling of the truth, as it really is, to the people of Canada would result in a more serious atmosphere and a more considered deliberation, that would be a very good thing. If the boys' club atmosphere—I am not being sexist but simply accurate—with the "boys will be boys" attitude that largely contributes to the low atmosphere of the House with the catcalling and so on that often happens could be improved as a result of more people watching, I am very much in favour of it.

• (1740)

There are some legal questions involved because this is not our channel but the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's. It may not want to proceed along these lines. There is also the question of whether the time should be used to show committee hearings which is an issue which will be considered. Perhaps there will be some competition between the House itself and committee hearings. Certainly important matters are discussed at committee and it would be advisable to televise committee hearings as well. Therefore, it will be necessary to provide a balance of what is shown on the channel.

We must also address the issue of how we make use of scarce channel space and ask what use we should make of this available exposure. The CBC wants a second channel for regular programming of a somewhat different nature that it may control entirely. However, until it can include women in programming on an equal basis with men I would not want the CBC to have another channel on which it can treat women as second-class citizens.

If anyone is entitled to spare channel space in our broadcasting system it is the women of Canada. While the private networks do not do enough to cover women's issues and events,