

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I did not see the particular statement referred to me by the hon. member but several similar statements have been made in the last few weeks. I want to point out to the hon. member that the funds allotted to the Medical Research Council have not been frozen as such. In fact, they were increased by over \$1 million.

Still, many researchers in particular consider that increase inadequate, and I am endeavouring to find ways of recovering funds elsewhere to give greater assistance to medical research. I find myself in a quandary but I have already advised researchers that the government does consider this a serious matter. I do hope that we will be able to improve the situation.

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[English]

COMMUNICATIONS

POSSIBILITY GOVERNMENT TELEPHONE COMPANIES WILL BE PROHIBITED FROM OWNING CABLEVISION STATIONS—DISCUSSIONS WITH MANITOBA AND SASKATCHEWAN

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Communications. In her recent discussions with her provincial counterparts did the minister give any indication of a change in federal policy which prohibits government telephone companies from owning cable T.V. plants?

[Translation]

Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Minister of Communications): No, Mr. Speaker, in my conversations with provincial ministers I certainly did not mention any changes in policy in the way indicated by the hon. member.

[English]

Mr. Nowlan: I am interested in the hon. minister's reply, Mr. Speaker. Specifically, however, did the minister have any conversations with the ministers of communications of Saskatchewan and Manitoba about this subject at the time it was before the CRTC and both governments were applicants before that body? If there were discussions, especially before the decision of the CRTC, would the minister not think this might infringe upon the integrity and/or independence of the CRTC?

[Translation]

Mrs. Sauvé: No, Mr. Speaker, I did hold discussions with the Saskatchewan and Manitoba ministers on the technical equipment ownership issue. Since the telephone companies in these provinces are owned by provincial governments, they would like to make the best of this ideal tool to proceed with a rational and economical development of cablevision.

They advised me also of their views on a more efficient way of using this tool if all the matter of ownership were left to telephone companies. We have discussed that problem. I did not make any commitments in resolving this problem although I understand perfectly the rationale of the proposal of the two provinces and to which I give full consideration.

GRAIN

STABILIZATION PLAN—NUMBER OF FARMERS NEEDED TO MAKE PLAN OPERATIVE AND NUMBER OPTING OUT

Mr. Peter Elzinga (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board but in his absence I will direct it to his parliamentary secretary. It is supplementary to the question put on Monday by the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek. Could the hon. parliamentary secretary give the House some figures as to the percentage or number of farmers opting out of the western grain stabilization plan and could he also tell the House what numbers are needed to make the plan operative?

Mr. Ralph E. Goodale (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I cannot give an accurate figure to a precise digit, although my information within the last couple of days is that it is substantially below the 10 per cent we had allowed in our general calculations when preparing the legislation. We anticipate that in the long run close to 90 per cent of western farmers will wish to participate. We welcome assistance from all members which would help to bring the tremendous value of this legislation to the attention of western farmers.

Mr. Elzinga: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The parliamentary secretary did not share with the House the information on the numbers needed to make the plan operative. As already over 10,000 grain farmers have declared in writing their intention to opt out of the plan, would he inform the House if the government plans to make available to farmers the same proposal that will be available to the government; that is that the contribution will only be on paper as recommended in Bill C-87?

Mr. Goodale: Mr. Speaker, on the general question of how many producers are required to make the plan operative, of course it is designed to work with any number of producers but the more that participate the greater will be the general stability for the grains economy. For those who participate, however, the program will be perfectly effective and supportive. On the question of the provisions contained in Bill C-87, I would remind the hon. member that the bill simply allows the contributions of the government to the grain stabilization fund to be deferred until the money is needed; when it is needed it will be paid into the fund with interest.

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CANADA ELECTION EXPENSES ACT

LEGALITY OF PAYING FOR PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS OUT OF FUNDS RAISED UNDER ACT

Mr. Norman A. Cafik (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. It concerns the use of private investigators by political parties. Would the minister check into the legality of paying for such Nixonite tactics from funds raised under the Canada Election Expenses Act?