

2. How many MP's offices still operate on the system of three numbers without consecutive lines, etc?

3. What steps has or will the Department take to rectify the equipment being used by Bell Canada under contract and, in particular, will it install new equipment to make it unnecessary for Bell Canada operators to cut in on telephone conversations every few seconds to make sure the line is still in use?

4. Does such equipment automatically disconnect when a conversation is terminated and the party hangs up and, if not, for what reason?

5. Are steps being taken to clear up frequent cracks, noises and cross-line conversations which interrupt calls in progress?

Mr. Scott Fennell (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): In so far as the Department of Communications is concerned, the answer to the above question is as follows:

1. Departmental officials are conducting regular reviews and have submitted several proposals to improve members' telephone service. As a result of this action and the efforts of my colleague, Mr. J. R. Ellis and his subcommittee, members' entitlement was expanded in 1977 to include three (3) consecutive lines, ten button instruments, privacy features, handsfree units and add-on conference features. We are continuing to evaluate state-of-the-art switching technology which may be in service within the next few years.

2. To date 137 members have not requested consecutive line service, which is available through the Sergeant-at-Arms.

3. Although some improvements to this equipment have been made, in the case of operator-assisted calls there are certain limitations that cannot be alleviated without incurring prohibitive replacement costs. As a result, operators are obliged to manually check to determine if certain circuits are in use and this often results in a clicking sound. In light of our objective to minimize the number of operator-assisted calls on the government network, new direct dial routes are being established whenever it becomes economical.

4. When a Member originates a call from a Parliament office through an operator, terminates the conversation and hangs up, the member's circuit is automatically disconnected. However, some incoming operator-assisted calls may have to be manually disconnected at the main switchboard depending on the telephone company equipment through which the call was originated.

5. Ongoing quality control is carried out by the Government Telecommunications Agency. Repair problems are referred to the telephone company for appropriate corrective action. These are reviewed to ensure that positive action is taken to resolve reported difficulties.

CRTC—BELL CANADA—BILLING SYSTEM

Question No. 640—**Mr. Cossitt:**

Is the government aware that Bell Canada intends to seek permission to experiment with billing customers in certain places in Ontario and Quebec on the basis of the number of calls made and the amount of time the telephone is in use, rather than the present system of set rates per month and, if so, if this matter comes before CRTC will it be government policy to strongly oppose such a change and, if not, for what reason?

Order Paper Questions

Mr. Scott Fennell (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): In so far as the Department of Communications is concerned, the answer to the above question is as follows:

In making this proposal for a pilot trial of usage sensitive pricing for local service to the CRTC, Bell Canada is seeking to find solutions to several concerns related to the cost of telephone service. For example such a pricing system could be used to provide a "budget" type service to the financially disadvantaged.

The commission has replied to Bell indicating that, in view of the fundamental change in pricing of local telephone service that usage sensitive pricing would represent, a full opportunity should be provided for public discussion of this approach. The commission has also stated that it believes in principle that the pilot trials could provide useful information provided that it is clearly understood that these trials would be conducted without prejudice to the ultimate determination by the commission of the merits of usage sensitive pricing for local service.

It would be inappropriate for the government to take a position on this matter until public hearings have been conducted by the CRTC to determine whether or not such a system of pricing for local telephone service is in the public interest.

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[Translation]

QUESTION PASSED AS ORDER FOR RETURN

Mr. David Kilgour (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, if question No. 85 could be made an order for return, that return would be tabled immediately.

[Text]

PUBLIC WORKS—PROJECTS IN RIMOUSKI

Question No. 85—**Mr. Allard:**

1. Since 1968, did the Department of Public Works finance projects in the constituency of Rimouski and, if so (a) what were the projects (b) what was the (i) total amount (ii) amount in each case (c) what were the areas?

2. Is the department planning to do so in the near future and, if so (a) what will be the amount (b) in which areas?

Return tabled.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: The questions enumerated by the parliamentary secretary have been answered. Shall the remaining questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: I do not believe I asked formally if it was agreeable to the House that question No. 85 be considered an