

*Government Orders*

The attachment to Canadian programming on the part of our French-speaking audience is established. But the issue is the inability of our relatively small audience base to support budgets commensurate with the production values of imported programs.

English-speaking Canadians are now beginning to turn more to our own dramatic programming when it is available and when the quality compares with imports.

Our challenge is to equip our system with the means to generate Canadian programming which addresses the needs of Canadians to see themselves on our screens, to see our stories and our creators amid the sea of imported products. Meeting this challenge is of critical importance for Canadian creators, for Canadian culture and for Canadian audiences.

To respond effectively to this challenge—the government must call upon all elements of the broadcasting system to contribute to Canadian broadcasting policy. The government believes that Canadians within the private sector must play an increasingly important role in the creation and presentation of competitive Canadian programs.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation will continue to play its central role as the national broadcaster and as a vital instrument of national development. The recent appointments, as I mentioned earlier, of two outstanding Canadians to head the CBC, confirm the government's commitment to public broadcasting in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, we are tabling this bill with the clear impression that we have accomplished an important task. Bill C-36, which the House adopted last September, was the result of a policy review which was unprecedented in terms of its scope and of the extensive public input it generated.

• (1450)

All points of view presented have been considered and all concerns and recommendations have been examined. The public hearings were beneficial to the Bill, which was amended in Committee and in the House before being passed by the Senate.

We believe that it is now time for these legislative measures to become law.

[*English*]

The improvements we have brought to the bill are not fundamental in nature. Its principal objectives remain unchanged.

The bill updates the language of the 1968 Broadcasting Act to recognize and embrace new technologies and to clarify the roles of private and public broadcasters, providing a new legal framework for the regulation of broadcasting. It gives expression to the responsibility of the broadcasting system to reflect the diversity of Canadian society. It recognizes the place and importance of women, cultural minorities, aboriginal peoples and the physically disabled in our society.

One of its important innovations is to recognize the different characteristics of French and English broadcasting in content, in impact and in environment.

The bill strengthens the ability of the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, to regulate and supervise the broadcasting system more effectively and to foster the creation of more and better Canadian programs. It introduces measures which will make both the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the CRTC more efficient, more responsive to Canadians and more accountable to Parliament while preserving their independence from the government.

[*Translation*]

The first objective of our strategy, namely to update the legislative framework in which our broadcasting system operates, is critically important. The present Broadcasting Act is 20 years old and out of date. Its description of broadcasting is based on only one of the technologies presently used to distribute broadcast signals, while its statement of policy no longer reflects the constantly evolving roles and responsibilities of public and private broadcasters.

To meet the challenge of the next century, we have broadened the wording of the Act so that it applies to all broadcasting technologies and holds all broadcasters responsible for implementing Canadian broadcasting policy. We have reached this objective in several ways.

First, the policy statement in Clause 3 of the Bill clearly specifies that radio frequencies are in the public domain and that broadcasting provides an essential public service for maintaining and promoting national