

*CRTC Act*

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** The Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader rises on a point of order.

**Mr. Dick:** Mr. Speaker, I think what is happening is that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister would like, if possible, to see himself as the last speaker as the Minister is not here. I understand there are a couple of other Members over on the other side who want to speak. He has not started in debate at this stage and I think that if anyone else wants to speak he or she might want to rise.

**Mr. Orlikow:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Parliamentary Secretary cannot do what he seems to be trying to do. If he does not get up now and no other Member gets up, then the debate is concluded. However, you have made it very clear that he cannot be guaranteed that he is going to close the debate. I think the situation is as simple as that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** Please let us have a clear understanding of what is going on. I have given my ruling concerning the conditions under which the Parliamentary Secretary may close the debate. It is only with unanimous consent, which I asked for, and which was not given. It is now up to the Parliamentary Secretary either to speak on the Bill or not to speak, and the matter is quite clear. If he wishes to close the debate later on, I presume that he may, as any other Member, ask once again for unanimous consent. But that is a matter that we will deal with at that time.

Does the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Communications wish to resume debate?

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** No.

**Mr. Dick:** Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. If I understand it correctly, when you recognized the Parliamentary Secretary earlier, it was on a point of order dealing with whether or not he would be able to close off debate. You have not recognized him, I believe, at this stage for debate because if you had, then of course he could not be recognized a second time at second reading stage. But if he has only been recognized for procedural reasons, then he can stay in his seat and rise in debate at a later stage if he likes.

**Mr. Orlikow:** If there is a debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** I do not think it would be proper for us to get into a full debate on this, but may I point out once again that before the Parliamentary Secretary spoke I had clearly ruled that unanimous consent was necessary if he were to close the debate. I had recognized the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Communications. Unanimous consent was not given. Therefore, it is his right either to speak on the Bill or not. But one thing is clear: it will not close debate.

It was my duty at that time to advise the House of the consequences of the Parliamentary Secretary rising in debate.

Unanimous consent was necessary, and the House has chosen not to permit the Parliamentary Secretary to close the debate.

**Mr. Dick:** Mr. Speaker, will the Parliamentary Secretary then have the right to rise later if he wants to do so in debate?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** Yes.

**Mr. Manly:** Mr. Speaker, I fail to understand how he would have the right to rise later in debate when he has already been recognized for debate at the present time.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** Let us understand clearly that this ruling was prepared because we had foreseen this situation. The Chair intervened before the Parliamentary Secretary addressed this Bill to advise the House of the consequences of his speaking to the Bill and to ask for unanimous consent. The Chair having intervened, the Parliamentary Secretary has not addressed this Bill.

Resuming debate.

**Miss Aideen Nicholson (Trinity):** Mr. Speaker, that was indeed a very interesting interlude.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** For whom? Let me know when you are finished, Aideen, I will be right back.

**Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques):** You should be ashamed.

**Miss Nicholson:** I find that remark extremely offensive and unbecoming to the House Leader, who is normally very courteous.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** It was not intended that way; it was intended as a compliment.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** Order, please.

**Miss Nicholson:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of factors covered in this CRTC Bill, but the one I want to comment on particularly is the increased direct control by the Government. There has been a long-standing policy in this country of trying to keep the cultural life of the country to some extent at arm's length from political decisions. This is a major change in policy which I think needs major examination, particularly when one looks at it in the context of the very deep cuts applied to the CBC and Canada Council which have had such an impact on the cultural life of our country as well as on the ability of young artists and technicians to earn a living.

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We have all been receiving letters and briefs from cultural organizations and interested citizens. There is no need to repeat all of the arguments. One particularly cogent argument came in a copy of an open letter to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) on public broadcasting from the Canadian Association for Adult Education. It reads in part: "Not since the CBC was first established by a Conservative Government more than 50 years ago has public broadcasting been more seriously threatened or been as essential in preserving the upper half of