

Oral Questions

the president of Power DirecTv issued an ultimatum to the government saying: "If you do not take any action by April 24, we will have to cancel our plans". This means that the federal government intends to overturn a CRTC decision by order in council.

Can the heritage minister tell us whether there is any justification for his government's eagerness to bulldoze the CRTC on the issue of satellite TV other than to please the government's friends who are legion at Power Corporation?

• (1440)

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, it is a concern we also have regarding the information highway.

On numerous occasions, we have stated that we favour a competitive system. It is not very clear whether Bloc members are for or against competition or for a transparent satellite broadcasting licensing system; however, it is clear that nearly all the comments on the report presented to the government on April 6 have been positive. Probably the most significant critics came from Power Corporation, which was not very happy with the report.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the heritage minister.

How can the minister deny that there is now a possibility for Power DirecTv to do like Expressvu and broadcast via satellite? This is to abide by the CRTC's ruling.

Why then prevent Expressvu from broadcasting and make it go through a different process just for the sake of pleasing Power DirecTv?

[English]

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member, when she thinks about it, will realize that it is better to have a process in place such as that for licensing other concerns which is transparent, open to public discussion and debate, and open to appeal, rather than the indirect method of an exemption order that was applied by the CRTC in this case. One of the reasons we referred the matter to the panel of experts was in order for them to look at the question of what the process was and whether it was an adequate process.

I think in the end the hon. member will agree that the application for licensing, if indeed we introduce the order proposed by the panel of experts, is one which will give an opportunity to everyone meeting certain qualifications which are very consistent with those that apply to cable television operators for example. It will provide funding for Canadian culture and other endeavours to be pursued by everyone interested in providing this kind of service.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry.

A month ago Bell Canada announced the elimination of approximately 10,000 jobs. Recently we were informed of financial difficulties at Unitel which could lead to more layoffs. In light of these developments, what is the government's position on competition in the Canadian telecommunications market?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I want to restate the commitment the government has in this sector broadly to competition as being the best means of ensuring that we have the lowest prices, the broadest possible choice, and the greatest range of innovation.

This is a sector which perhaps of all sectors is one of the most globally competitive. It is one of the ones that is most important as a component to costs in Canadian business and therefore a competitive structure is one that commends itself to us.

At the same time of course we share the concerns that I am sure the hon. member is representing in realizing that a lot of firms are going to go through adjustment periods and perhaps in many cases will be downsizing. I believe it is a temporary phenomenon. In time the number of jobs created in the information technology sector is going to far outweigh the number of jobs that are lost in the short term adjustment period.

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IMMIGRATION

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, an unbelievable lawsuit has been launched against the Government of Ontario by sponsored immigrants. They are suing Ontario for deducting \$100 from their welfare cheques despite the fact their sponsors have reneged on their signed guarantee of full support.

Will the immigration minister be supporting the province of Ontario in its defence, especially in light of the \$700 million that this abuse costs Canadian taxpayers?

• (1445)

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a little late and should talk to the immigration critic.

In the immigration levels we put before the House last November we were very clear about the plan with respect to family sponsorships.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, being very clear and doing something about it are two different things.