

Certainly there is a serious question in my mind concerning the implication that providing services to our continental neighbour will enjoy a higher priority than providing telecommunication facilities to the northern parts of Canada. Until this latter question has been clarified adequately, it will be impossible for members of this party to welcome the changes as outlined by the Minister of Communications in his statement. In sharing our technology and the service that Telesat can give to North America, we want to make sure we do not sell ourselves short. I think that is important.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West):** Mr. Speaker, I and members of my party welcome today's statement on the expanding role of Telesat Canada, a Crown corporation, in the increasingly complex and expanding role of domestic and international communications. We also thank the minister for providing the various parties with advance copies of his statement, as we do the president of Telesat for the trouble he took to inform all parties of the rationale behind the corporation's request for expanded powers. Thus we are in a position to provide something more than an off-the-cuff reply today.

It is important to say that members of my party expressed some concern that the expansion of powers through the amendments to the letters patent tabled earlier this session deleted the previous sections limiting the company to domestic or Canadian users, thereby leaving the possibility that Canadian firms might in future be denied access to channels because of contract commitments made between the corporation and non-resident firms that may offer more lucrative terms. In short, neither the Telesat Canada Act nor the amending letters patent make it explicit that Canadian interests will be served first and that any contracts made to service foreign needs will be temporary and secondary and, further, limited to our unused or back-up capacity. We are grateful, therefore, that the minister in his statement has taken the opportunity to articulate the government's position on this subject by saying, as found on page three of his statement:

• (1420)

As Telesat moves forward to implement the expanded powers I know that its board and its management have every intention of ensuring that Canadian interests, both present and future, will have priority consideration in system planning and use and I know that the tentative agreements already entered into so provide. However, in case there is any doubt I am prepared to state categorically that Canadian interests must have priority and that I have the power to ensure that this policy will in fact be respected.

Therefore we are reassured that the minister has the necessary powers, and I am certain that as long as the minister is in office he will respect Canadian interests. My party, however, would be even more reassured by a statement in the minutes of a meeting of the corporation's board confirming what the minister has told us.

We are pleased by the fact that Telesat at present is roughly 60 per cent publicly owned and we desire it to remain that way. This party opposes the provision whereby the structure is to be one-third public, one-third carriers and one-third private shareholders. We consider that

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the present arrangement is more democratic and more suitable to Canadian needs now and in the future.

We congratulate Telesat on being a Canadian company which has a considerable and virtually unique lead in this new field of advanced technology in global telecommunications. We congratulate Telesat on the successful launching of Anik I at Cape Kennedy last fall and express our best wishes for Anik II this spring. We appreciate Telesat's sympathetic response to Canadian manufacturers in the development of Canadian expertise in this field in the future. We believe that Telesat demonstrates that a mixed private-public corporation can be successful. Telesat is successful, and we in this party want it to continue to be just that.

[Translation]

**Mr. René Matte (Champlain):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's statement seems to contain the necessary arguments allowing us to support him more especially as Telesat officials were kind enough to provide us with the useful information which will enable us to make a better judgment about that new policy.

That enlargement of Telesat services will be all the more beneficial if the income thus gained speed up telecommunication services in this country. We are especially referring to television services in certain remote and even in not so remote areas such as the northern part of my constituency, for example, where people are still waiting for that essential service.

We hope that this policy will benefit all Canadians.

[English]

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### FOOD PRICES

#### APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE

**Mr. T. Lefebvre (Pontiac):** Mr. Speaker, there have been the usual consultations among the parties in the House regarding the membership of the special committee on food prices. I therefore move, seconded by the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Foster):

That the members of the Special Committee on Food Prices be Messrs. Atkey, Boisvert, Cullen, Danforth, Fleming, Fox, Gauthier (Ottawa East), Gauthier (Roberval), Gleave, Graffey, Horner (Crowfoot), Lawrence, Leblanc (Westmorland-Kent), Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway), Messrs. McGrath, Mitges, Mrs. Morin, Messrs. Murta, Penner, Roy (Laval), Saltsman, Scott, Whicher, Whittaker and Yanakis.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Baldwin:** What an army! It is an NDP-Liberal committee.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

Motion agreed to.