

2. Proceedings of the House of Commons should continue to be broadcast.

“... presumably doing the public's business and allowing the public to see you doing the public's business is part of your mandate.”

Don Newman,
Director,
Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery

CPaC has agreed to broadcast whatever parliamentary programming is made available to them by the House of Commons. This would include the proceedings of the House itself, gavel to gavel, as well as the possibility of committee proceedings. It remains for the House of Commons to determine which, if any, of its proceedings should be televised. It should be a condition of licence that first priority of programming time be *all* programming supplied by the Parliament of Canada. It is agreed by all parties to the CPaC proposal that the broadcast of the House of Commons shall be paramount and the first priority of the service.

The Committee believes that televising of the proceedings of the House of Commons should continue. Canadians want to see their elected representatives at work, and the broadcasting of the House is an essential part of making politicians accountable to the voters. Parliamentary broadcasts have enhanced Canadians' awareness of the political process, and their understanding of the issues that are debated.

Television has undoubtedly had a dramatic effect on the proceedings. The general decorum of Members, their dress, as well as their behaviour, have all been affected and, in the opinion of most observers, improved by the introduction of television. It has also been argued that television has contributed to some less than positive developments. Perhaps the most common complaint is that television has led to the over-emphasis on Question Period. It is also felt that individual Members tend to play to the cameras—that they grandstand—in the hopes of getting a 15-second clip on the evening news.

If there are problems as a result of the presence of television cameras in the House of Commons, it has been suggested that it is the responsibility of Members of Parliament to remedy these, rather than to remove the cameras. A number of Members wrote to the Committee recommending that broadcasting of the House be eliminated; the vast majority of Members, as well as witnesses and others, urged that broadcasting be continued.

The Committee feels that to terminate television coverage of the House of Commons at this point would be a step backwards. It is doubtful that Canadians generally would support such a step. In an era of enhanced coverage of courts and other public proceedings, it is unthinkable that the House of Commons would remove the television cameras.