

Routine Proceedings

ration. The statute under which it operates gives the corporation the legal capacity to establish and operate external telecommunication services with the telecommunications services of other nations. "External" in this context means between Canada and any place outside Canada.

In the satellite communication field the position of the COTC takes on special significance by virtue of the corporation being the signatory for Canada to the Intelsat operating agreement, thus providing Canada's representative on the board of governors of that organization. The future of international communication is complex; it will require the careful attention of all concerned to ensure that Canada's interests are being served. This in turn demands that the COTC be a strong entity, one that Canada can regard as her primary instrument in this important field.

I am sure hon. members will agree that if, as planned, Telesat expands its role to embrace international services, even though these may seem small by comparison, there should be appropriate recognition given to the position of the COTC. In my capacity as the minister responsible, I intend that this will be done.

[Translation]

In summary, this new Telesat development, coming on the heels of considerable success in promoting its Canadian services, should be a very stimulating one for Canada. Not only will Telesat benefit, but there may well be new opportunities for Canadian engineers and manufacturers. The opportunities for effectively using satellite communication in and around a country such as ours are virtually unlimited.

[English]

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am not responding to the minister's statement. That response will be made in due course by the hon. member for Annapolis Valley (Mr. Nowlan). My point of order is that I wish to bring to the attention of the House and to the attention of members of the ministry that Standing Order 15(3) provides that on motions a minister may make an announcement or statement respecting government policy but any such announcement or statement should be limited to facts. I am not going to be critical of the minister; he has simply done what other ministers have done. But I point out that this statement deals with the reasons behind the letters patent that have been filed and, as the minister said, this may be the subject of debate in the House.

There is an opportunity, within 30 sitting days after the letters patent have been filed, for the House by way of resolution to debate and discuss this issue. The minister has given reasons why, in his view, these letters patent should have been presented and why the course the government has undertaken is a fit and proper policy. Under those conditions it would be quite possible to embark on a debate at this time. I do not know what the hon. member for Annapolis Valley will say. I hope he does not involve himself in debate to which there could be responses. And so it could go, down the line. However, I think I am entitled to bring this matter to the attention of the ministers and the members who respond so that there will be proper use made of this Standing Order.

[Mr. Pelletier (Hochelaga).]

Mr. Speaker: Before calling on the hon. member for Annapolis Valley I might say that I appreciate the point made by the hon. member for Peace River. I thought yesterday that there was, to some extent, an abuse of the provisions of the Standing Order, not necessarily on the part of the minister but rather on the part of those who responded to the minister's statement. This might be an opportunity to bring to the attention of both the ministry and hon. members who respond to statements by ministers that under the terms of Standing Order 15 their statements must be brief. My recollection is that after a seven or eight minute statement made by a minister yesterday there were comments in response which were much longer. I was of the opinion that the statements were too long but, because it was such an important matter, I felt I should not intervene and I did not. I appreciate the point raised by the hon. member for Peace River. I think ministers should limit the length of their statements under the terms of Standing Order 15, and I would hope that members who speak in response to those statements will also be brief.

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Mr. Speaker, I certainly intend to be brief. I am glad we can honour your direction to be brief. I usually am brief.

I thank the minister for giving notice of his statement. We on this side of the House are glad to hear some communication from the Minister of Communications (Mr. Pelletier), who has been one of the more reticent ministers in the House. While some statements may be long and verbose in terms of the rules of the House, we on this side would like the minister to give more shorter and terser statements from time to time rather than sit in the vacuum of silence he has maintained for such a long time.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Oh, oh!

Mr. Nowlan: I do not know whether the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) wants to make his statement on the budget now. We are waiting for that, and it will be terse.

The letters patent tabled by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Gray) on January 4 in favour of Telesat Canada represent a substantial modification of the objectives laid out in the Telesat Canada Act. The minister's statement sheds little light on the obvious implications of modifying section 5 of the Telesat Canada Act which limits the company to establishing satellite telecommunication services between locations in Canada. The possibilities of Canadian operated satellites being able to cover contiguous parts of the North American continent have always been evident.

There is some doubt in my mind concerning the propriety of effecting such an important and substantive change in the legislation passed by parliament in this way. As it stands, the letters patent tabled by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs will become effective on the 30th sitting day after they have been laid before parliament. At this time, careful consideration must be given to the implications of the changed orientation of Telesat services and it may therefore be necessary for the House to debate fully whether such letters patent should be annulled.