

Supply—Secretary of State

hope under present technological advances to reach 100 per cent of the homes of Canada. So, that is an ideal which we are not going to reach in the foreseeable future, or at least while I am responsible for the C.B.C. We do reach a figure somewhat less than that, though it cannot be too much less than that because we are already able to reach through radio something like 96 per cent of all homes, and through television something like 92 per cent of all homes. So, we do not have far to go.

I have asked the C.B.C.—and the C.B.C., as members of the committee can imagine, is eager to comply—to give the government an estimate of the cost of doing something similar to that suggested by the hon. member for Churchill, namely, to put aside a fund so that the last big step toward the outer limit of practicability can be reached in an orderly way. Then, the C.B.C. can lay out its priorities and make a start toward providing a national service which is received, if possible, in every Canadian home. Unhappily, I cannot tell members of the house at this stage when this will come to pass. Hon. members will realize that I have been responsible for this portfolio for only a little over two months, and that the estimates currently before the committee do not contain money for this capital expansion. Nevertheless, it will not be too many weeks before this committee will have an opportunity to see another set of estimates for this department, and will have an opportunity as well to discuss the affairs of my department before a committee of the house. I should hope at that point we shall be able to give further information to hon. members.

One hon. member was kind enough to say, in passing, on the question of the extension of services with respect to programming that he thought he saw an improvement within the last few weeks. Even though I am pathetically eager to find any kind of approval, and there was little enough this evening in any remarks of hon. members toward my stewardship in the last couple of months, unhappily I cannot claim responsibility for any improvement in programming. As has been said many times before, programming is the responsibility of the Board and the management. My responsibility is to act as a conduit pipe between the corporation and Members of Parliament.

An hon. Member: Some pipe.

Miss LaMarsh: I hope that there would be a steady improvement of programs. It may be

the case, if programs appear to have improved to my hon. friend, that they may appear at the same time to be anything but an improvement to someone else in another part of the chamber. I was asked a number of questions by hon. members, for, I believe, Burnaby-Richmond, Dollard and finally by the hon. member for Sainte-Marie. The first question I was asked by the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond concerned consolidation of services in the three largest cities of Canada, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

As all hon. members know, these questions were specifically referred to the Fowler Committee which has been studying the matter for a considerable period of time. This is part of the general, over-all study. I cannot tell hon. members when they are likely to receive a white paper or an indication of the government's assessment of the Fowler Report on broadcasting in Canada. I, myself, have very recently come to this field; and having soaked myself for about two months in all the lore of broadcasting, and in learning all the information that I have been able to reach in that department, I feel that I have only scratched the surface.

Broadcasting is perhaps one of the most important things in the field of communication. Certainly, the impact of television on Canadians is tremendous.

I hope that within the confines of this calendar year we will be able to pass through the stages of a white paper, a committee study by a parliamentary committee, and perhaps even the formulation of legislation. I would explain to hon. members that I would not want them to feel that I am to be bound by such a timetable, since it takes a long time to discuss and lay out the framework of broadcasting. However, such questions as the consolidation plans I think can be decided on an ad hoc basis. They are being discussed by the cabinet at this time.

I should like to make very clear, however—and this might be of interest to the deputy chairman of committee in whose constituency the premises exist—that the government fully intends to go ahead with construction plans for the C.B.C. Montreal consolidation on the site which has been expropriated by the City of Montreal.

● (10:20 p.m.)

There has never been any suggestion otherwise. That is the site where construction will commence. But I do think it would be fool-