

*Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*

representatives in action. There is also a demonstrable need for the enhancement of coverage of proceedings in this House of Commons, especially when—and I say this to my colleagues—a much larger audience might be able to tune in.

One of my long time friends and one of yours, Mr. Speaker, as you view this debate is Mr. John Warren, the host of the English language parliamentary broadcasts.

[*Translation*]

I am sorry, I have never met the host of the CBC French service, Mr. Gilles de Lalonde, but on behalf of all French Canadians, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate him for his commentary and his rapport with the viewers of this service.

[*English*]

Both of these gentlemen directly and indirectly have pointed out to me that more than 100 letters are received each week by the CBC on this parliamentary service. Among those letters are letters from places like Franklin College, Franklin, Indiana; Albany, New York; Portland, Oregon; Sir Thomas Moore Comprehensive School in Hamilton, the University of Saskatchewan and dozens and dozens of others all seeking information to demonstrate the interest and the use that is being made of our parliamentary service for international educational purposes. In other words, we are at this moment a reasonably hot item and one clearly in demand by people across Canada and beyond our borders.

I must say that while I have the utmost admiration for and confidence in the CBC parliamentary television network, I am expressing a certain personal desire to see the House of Commons service extended, but I must caution you, Sir, and those who are looking in that I have no authority as an individual Member of Parliament or a Parliamentary Secretary to initiate any moves or recommendations on my own. What I think is the useful aspect of the debate raised by the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell is that we are putting this issue into the open before the Corporation for its consideration and before other members of the Government apparatus to achieve the full potential of this unique broadcast vehicle. That tremendous potential, that increasing public awareness of parliament among viewers across the country makes imperative, in my view, the need to consider ways of making use of the down time of the parliamentary service.

I am a little hesitant about providing full support for the motion we are debating today. The principle of bringing Parliament to the people via television, as I have said and as other Members have said, is sound. We have debated many ways of putting that principle into practice on a number of occasions, both in committees and here in the House. However, the question at the time when the TV and radio broadcasting committee was deliberating the implementation of broadcasting in the House was how do we indeed commit that principle to practice. The motion before us raises a similar question.

Now that we have a service and now that there seems to be widespread agreement in this House that efforts ought to be

made to enhance the service, what is the best way to increase an understanding of parliamentary procedures and traditions through the parliamentary broadcasting service?

As you are no doubt aware, Mr. Speaker, many suggestions have been put forward over the last few years for enhancing the television coverage of Parliament. Many of these suggestions involve expanding the House of Commons service, that is, the feed provided by the House to the CBC and other broadcasters to provide regular coverage of standing committee meetings. The Government is in favour of a couple of key recommendations made by the special committee on the reform of the House of Commons with respect to televising committee proceedings and will undertake consultations with Opposition Parties to seek an agreement on implementation.

The special committee specifically recommends that:

Fuller use be made of the parliamentary service.

The Government supports this recommendation in principle and the Government House Leader, the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) has stated here in the House that he will consult with all Parties on its implementation. For its part, the CBC has confirmed its interest in enhancing the coverage provided by its parliamentary television network.

My sources in the Corporation tell me that the CBC is getting so much mail requesting brochures on the parliamentary system that it has run out of them. The word is that the CBC is gently requesting viewers to ease up on letters asking for brochures.

Nothing is final yet on the matter. There are no doubt many more suggestions to be made during the upcoming discussions. This debate is part of those suggestions. That is why I commend the Hon. Member's initiative in bringing this matter before the House of Commons for discussion. However, I think it is reasonable to assume that an expansion in the television coverage of Parliament by the House of Commons service, by the CBC or by both is not very far off.

The motion does not recognize your office, Mr. Speaker, as the proper authority for the House of Commons television service. As we are well aware, any modification is the Speaker's responsibility, and the motion does not explicitly refer to your role.

While I realize that the way the CBC uses the feed provided by the House of Commons service is its own decision, I would think it would be your office or the television and radio broadcast committee which ought to offer any suggestions to the CBC about modifying the way the Corporation's parliamentary television network packages or distributes that feed. Perhaps the motion presumes this, but it does not say so explicitly. For that reason, I am reluctant to support it.

I think if we believe in an arms length relationship with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, it would not be in this way that we should be laying hands on the CBC and telling the CBC how to use its service. It is within your jurisdiction, Sir, through appropriate consultations that this might be done.