

Oral Questions

Hon. Francis Fox (Secretary of State and Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, I think the important role of the federal cultural policy review committee is to address the problems of the future, and I think it is a good idea and advisable to have some of the officials of the Department of Communications as members of this committee. I think that if the committee felt cut off from the people who have been administering the federal cultural policy over the years, this would not allow it to have all the information it requires to come to concrete proposals. I think it is a sound idea that the committee be able to benefit from the experience of the department and have access to the feelings of departmental officials on ongoing programs, and be able to develop, with the concurrence of departmental officials and with their advice, a sound cultural policy for the future.

Miss Carney: Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same minister. If we extended his logic, we should have every single civil servant in the Department of Communications on the Applebaum committee. May I point out that the Canadian conference of the arts has publicly stated that "Many members of the arts community and the media are skeptical about the credibility and independence of the committee process." In view of the fact that the review committee will be holding only five regional public meetings, how can the minister assure the House that members of the arts community who wish to participate in the inquiry process will have the opportunity to do so?

Mr. Fox: Madam Speaker, I think it is giving very little credit to my immediate predecessor, who is from the party opposite and who named many members of the federal cultural policy review committee, to intimate that they would have so few qualifications as to be completely dominated by two of my civil servants. It is quite the contrary. I agree with my predecessor that the people who were appointed were eminent people, people of high quality who had a great contribution to make.

As to the number of hearings, I believe that the committee members are intent on seeing to it that they are able to communicate with as many Canadians as possible. I am sure that every member of the cultural community and every member of any professional association knows very well how to communicate and to make his point of view known to that committee. Indeed, I think it is an excellent committee. Of course it has been strengthened since we took office, and I am looking forward to the report of that committee.

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**CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

**DECISION TO STOP SERVICE PROVIDED FOR DEAF TELEVISION
VIEWERS**

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Communications who will be aware that 1.5 million Canadians who suffer from

a hearing disability were shocked a few days ago to learn that the CRTC had ordered Rogers Cable in Toronto to stop the practice of decoding the closed captioned programs for the deaf and showing them on a special channel to provide a service for hearing-handicapped Canadians. What action does the minister propose to take to ensure that that service is restored immediately?

Hon. Francis Fox (Secretary of State and Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, I sympathize completely with the sentiments expressed by the hon. member. As he knows, the service was closed down by CRTC because the licence issued to Rogers Cable TV apparently did not include the authorization to carry such a service. The chairman of the CRTC has decided to hold a public hearing on the matter as soon as possible, and the date of March 10 has been set for hearings in Toronto on this subject. I trust that the matter at that time will be settled by CRTC to everybody's satisfaction.

Mr. Beatty: Madam Speaker, the minister will know that his answer is certainly not satisfactory for the people who have been deprived of that service and who will continue to be deprived until the CRTC reverses the decision it took. In view of the fact that the minister, on several occasions over the course of the last several months, has indicated that a Telidon mini-decoder will be available for deaf Canadians within the next few months, can the minister tell the House exactly when that mini-decoder will be available on the market?

Mr. Fox: Madam Speaker, of course the short answer to that question is, as soon as possible. My officials inform me that they have received some proposals from industry which they are at present evaluating. I should also point out to the hon. member that part of the \$27.1 million which I announced last Friday to support the Telidon program is for research and development, and a portion of that is earmarked for developing an improved Telidon captioning decoder.

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CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

**INQUIRY WHETHER MRS. LISE PAYETTE WILL RESUME
EMPLOYMENT**

Mr. Alexandre Cyr (Gaspé): Madam Speaker, my question also is directed to the Secretary of State and Minister of Communications. Can the minister tell the House whether it is true that Mrs. Lise Payette is no longer actively involved in politics with the Parti Québécois and has resumed her political activities at the CBC French network to promote Quebec's independence? If so, will she rate the red carpet treatment from the minister or the president?

Hon. Francis Fox (Secretary of State and Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, I must say to the hon. member that I have no indication about this. Mrs. Payette did not tell me what she intends to do in the future. I have no idea