

Routine Proceedings

An hon. member: We'll miss your speech.

Mr. Nunziata: You can listen to my speech on the TV behind the curtains.

But let us get serious for a moment. The whole purpose behind report No. 23 is to open up parliamentary committees in order to give the public greater access to committees. The way to do it, in my respectful submission, is to go all the way, open up committee proceedings both to radio and to television.

Right now any member of the public can come to Parliament Hill and take part in any of the committee meetings that take place. They can attend committee hearings, the committee hearings are open.

Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of Canadians do not have access to Parliament Hill because they do not happen to live in the Ottawa area and they have to rely on television and the news media in order to obtain information about what goes on in Parliament.

If the goal is to open up Parliament, to show Canadians exactly what happens on Parliament Hill, we ought to give access to all committees. But the House management committee is saying that it is going to give access to those who can hear, we are going to give radio or audio access to all the committees, which is a good move, an excellent move and everyone can hear what is going on. But, for some reason, the House management committee does not want to allow Canadians to see what is going on at committees.

As I stand here, there is a rule of the House of Commons that says that the person who is operating that camera can only shoot me from the waist up. It is a very tight shot. You cannot see very much this way or very much that way. The public does not know what is going on in this House of Commons. The public does not know how many people are sitting here in the House of Commons. These are very restrictive rules in terms of what can happen and what type of image can be seen on television.

The person operating the camera cannot take a wide-angled shot of the House to see what is going on in the House because the House management committee has decided that is not appropriate. It only wants the public to see a certain amount of what goes on in the House of Commons. You have to ask yourself why. I suppose there are arguments on both sides. One thing I do not agree with is restricting people from seeing what goes on at

committees. I do not understand why the House management committee is refusing to allow the media access to committees, allowing cameras. For example, they may make the argument that it might be chaotic, that if each of the television stations wants access to the committee rooms, you might have 10 to 15 cameras. That is nonsense because at the end of Question Period every day, out in the lobby of the House of Commons, there are two stationary cameras.

All the news media pool their resources. There is a stationary microphone, one camera, one on the opposition side, another on the government side. Individuals can be interviewed in front of those cameras and in front of those microphones. The video is available to all the television stations because there is a single feed. The member for Broadview—Greenwood referred to the Olympics where you do not have 50 million television cameras taking a video of each of the events. There is a pooling of resources and any television station that wants to use the images can use them.

The point I am making is let us leave it up to the members of the parliamentary press gallery so they can pool their resources. They are profit-making organizations. They would love nothing better than to be able to televise committees. Leave it up to them. In each of the committee rooms they would establish stationary cameras, two or three in each committee room, with a microphone. They could feed off the audio. In that way, any television station would have the opportunity to use the video from each of the committee hearings in order to facilitate the dissemination of what goes on here on Parliament Hill.

As the member for Broadview—Greenwood indicated in his submissions a few moments ago, members of the public have a distorted sense of what goes on here on Parliament Hill. The only thing they see when they are flipping through their channels is a single member of Parliament standing up. Sometimes if it is an important speech, the seats behind the member of Parliament will be occupied to give the impression that the House is full, when in effect the House is not full.

They see Question Period on the nightly news. They see people in a very partisan way. They see members of the opposition asking questions of the government, both sides being very partisan. What is absent from the information that goes out to the public is what goes on at committees, all the fine work that is being done on a daily basis at committee.