

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 12, 1970

The House met at 2 p.m.

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

BROADCASTING, FILMS AND ASSISTANCE TO THE ARTS

Second report of Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts, in both official languages—Mr. Leblanc (for Mr. Reid).

[English]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

First report of Standing Committee on Public Accounts—Mr. Hales.

[Editor's Note: For text of above reports, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

COMMUNICATIONS

STATEMENT ON RADIO RELAY LICENCES

Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform hon. members of the following decision regarding radio relay licences.

The government of Canada, using the power vested in the Minister of Communications to grant licences to operators of radio-relay systems, is implementing an interim policy regarding the establishment of new communications services using microwave relays. This policy will apply pending possible changes to be recommended by the Telecommunication Commission.

In recent years licences for such systems have been granted mainly on technical grounds. However, the growing social and economic importance of this form of telecommunications requires that more attention be placed on other criteria if we are to assure an orderly growth of the Canadian communications system which will assure maximum social benefits and minimum of wasteful duplication of investment.

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The use of a systems approach in the granting of licences for microwave relays implies that applicants will have to demonstrate:

That there is some public interest and need to be served by the creation of the new facility;

That existing communications facilities cannot properly satisfy this interest and need;

That the applicant will conform to the standards of service and the technical requirements of the existing network so that the most effective and economical use of the radio spectrum is assured.

● (2:10 p.m.)

This means that licences will not be granted until applicants have submitted a detailed economic-commercial brief that will permit the department to assess the system and make a decision based on these criteria. The applicant will also be required to submit an equally detailed engineering brief so that the department may determine if the proposed facility meets technical performance standards set out by the Department of Communications. Furthermore, the department will not consider itself bound by financial or commercial commitments made by the applicant before a licence has been granted.

The primary objective of these new procedures is to provide for the planning of the efficient and orderly growth of the Canadian telecommunications network in the social and economic interests of Canadians in all parts of Canada. It will allow the Minister of Communications, in the granting of new licences for microwave relays, to determine that the new facilities will provide significant advantages over existing facilities in terms of cost, convenience and quality of service.

The new microwave licensing approach should make it easier for the federal government to perform more effectively its function of co-ordinating national telecommunications policy with provincial requirements and programs of provincial development.

The principles outlined in this statement in no way prejudice the recommendations which may be made to the government as a result of the Telecommission. Consequently this policy