

Broadcasting Act

on the roof and are sending a signal to the people who share that condominium and do not make a profit from the operation.

The Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Redway) asked in the committee how Conrad Black would be treated under this legislation if he had a 50-room mansion with a satellite dish on top which sent a signal to each one of those 50 bedrooms. Apparently that situation would not be considered any differently from how a condominium was considered previously. However, the second question asked what would happen if one of these signals ran into a chauffeur's room in the same mansion. The answer was that it could very well be considered a commercial operation. That did not make sense to me and it is a concern to condominium owners.

The Minister has given them the assurance that they will not be treated any differently today than they were last year. They are asking why this cannot simply be put in the legislation. Why not just put what the Minister means in the legislation?

We all know that governments come and go, and that Ministers come and go. In the future, somebody that may not have been a part of this process, or may come under a different administration, will look at this situation in isolation. One can only assume it will only look at what the Government meant by a certain policy because it will not have any clear legislation to guide it.

I ask the Minister, when she says that things will not be any different, whether that cannot be written into the legislation to address the concerns of those individuals? As I pointed out, the concern I do not have now is the word of the Minister. I accept her word, as I said at committee. I told Mr. Loader and other representatives that if the Minister says they will not be affected in the future any differently from how they were in the past, they can accept that. However, that concern still exists on the part of condominium owners, which is understandable when one reads the transcript of the committee hearings on August 30, specifically if one reads pages 10:49; 10:50, and 10:15 of the transcripts of that committee hearing.

I will not spend too much time on this because I know other Members want to say a few words about it as well, particularly the Member for York East who also had discussions with the condominium owners in this particular location.

I only want to stress to the Minister that if she says they have nothing to fear and wants to give them real assurances that they have nothing to fear in the future, let her write that in the legislation. Her officials do not seem to agree with the assurances that the Minister has given to these condominium owners. The Minister is saying one thing and her officials seem to be saying that as another body may interpret this Act, it could have an effect on these condominium owners. At the very least, they are entitled to have the Government say what it means in the legislation rather than simply give words of comfort to these people, which is of no comfort to them at all.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the amendment that I introduced dealing with the rights of condominium owners. The Minister and most Members will recognize that being in a condominium is a preferred choice for perhaps hundreds of thousands of Canadians. It is a relatively new form of accommodation in terms of the kind of property holding or tenure that exists.

Unfortunately, in the last few years various initiatives by different levels of Government have tended to put condominium owners in the status of second-class citizens. In my City of Winnipeg, an assessment decision was made that gave a higher mill rate to condominium owners than to those who were single family property owners. Yet there is no difference. The form of tenure is the same. There is a clear form of ownership. It just happens that the units are either stacked or attached in some way. They do not even have to be that. What they do is to share certain services in common. In terms of rights of accommodation and tenure there is no difference. However, there is clearly a real apprehension that this Bill, by its redefinition of undertaking and distribution, will create that kind of position or potential by which future discrimination may take place.

• (1610)

If I might, Mr. Speaker, I would just give an example of some correspondence I have received. I wish to mention to the House that as late as last week I attended a meeting of several hundred people in my constituency who are condominium owners. They were not there for any other purpose than, they felt, to defend their basic rights as citizens to be treated equally and fairly. The following letter is a reflection of one of the owners from 55 Nassau, which is a condominium in the downtown part of Winnipeg. It states:

This Bill, if passed will be a flagrant act of discrimination against everyone who chooses to live in a condominium. In its present form the authors of this act do not consider that condominiums are homes. In fact, Bill C-136 would only licence, regulate or penalize those Canadians who do not live in single residences.

I will not read the whole letter. I think that the tone is there. I do not believe that any Government would want to create the feeling or sense of discrimination in the minds of so many Canadians that they are being singled out for special treatment.

I have read from the proceedings of the committee meeting at which the Minister gave assurances. I think that that is a legitimate exercise. We appreciate that. But an assurance is very different from any law. Something being written into legislation is very different from a guarantee. Conditions can change. Ministers can change. Governments can change. Regulatory agencies can change. Courts can interpret matters differently. While I accept the good intentions of the Minister, I think that the means of securing that intention should be to agree to the amendment that would clarify very clearly in the legislation what the Minister herself has said, recognizing as