

As I have explained, these concerns are simply unfounded. The government is confident that, under the new legislation, condominium owners will continue to exercise the range of choices available to them with the approval of government laws and regulations.

It is signed by the Minister of Communications, the Hon. Marcel Masse.

There are some caveats in this letter which make condominium owners very nervous.

• (1150)

As we heard earlier today when petitions were being presented to the House in support of the private member's bill of my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam, cable companies are very powerful organizations.

If at some future date they can summon up an argument that shows the condominium homeowners are using a system that treats cable companies or co-operative housing units unfairly, I am quite sure that the CRTC may be sympathetic to that kind of an argument. That is what is of great concern to condominium owners and co-op housing groups.

Two years ago when this amendment was before the House when the same bill under a different name was being debated, the government members ganged up to defeat the amendment. I would hope, with the passage of time, they would have had an opportunity to reflect on these concerns and will support the amendment at this time.

If the amendment is adopted by the House, all the House will be doing is clearly recognizing that condominium homeowners are exactly the same type of people who choose to live in single family dwellings. They are no different. They are not commercial enterprises in the sense, Mr. Speaker, that you would apply to the cable industry.

They are individual homeowners who pay individual property taxes unlike apartment dwellers. They should be treated as individual homeowners, and treated fairly by the government.

A question came up in committee, for example, that if Conrad Black had a mansion with 100 rooms in it, had a satellite dish on the roof and fed a signal into every one of these rooms, how would he be treated? The answer

Government Orders

came back, as a single home owner. However, if we took a cable and ran it to a garage where someone else was using it, it would be considered as a commercial enterprise. I think that is the dumbest, most illogical approach to the concerns that these people have.

All I would ask is that the House give serious consideration to these concerns.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Beaches—Woodbine for placing before this House an issue that really needed to be addressed in a very serious manner.

One of the reasons I have often had complaints—I would agree with the people who have complained—is the fact that bills are unclear. The intent of the legislators is left open to question.

This is a perfect example of where lack of clarity and foresight in a bill by the minister and by the government leaves up to question the place of condominiums. As a matter of fact, it also leaves in the air the question of apartment buildings which, for those who are listening and for those who want to know, are exempted as long as they abide by the rules and the regulations which the CRTC has in place for cable companies.

Mr. Speaker, if one lives in an apartment building, one should have the same access as any other person in a private home to all the channels which are allowable by law through a cable company.

By the way, the interesting part about that is I am aware of a number of apartment buildings right in my own city where that is not the case. I do wish that the apartment dwellers in those buildings would write the CRTC, call their local people and be in touch with the local cable companies if the apartment building is charging them a fee and they are getting services like HBO and ESPN. They are outside of the law, and are not acting as good citizens. In actual fact, they are taking money out of the Canadian broadcasting system and the development of the talent and skills that my colleague from Toronto alluded to earlier.

I appreciate this particular amendment because it concerns condominiums. Condominiums are basically homes that are built either one on top of each other, or collectively, but they are privately owned.