Nothing could be more untrue than to suggest anything of the sort. The Senate committee recommended removing these references largely on the basis of two concerns that were raised by witnesses that there were in their view—

Mr. MacWilliam: Quebec.

Mr. Beatty: The hon. member says Quebec. He feels it is illegitimate because people in Quebec should raise this concern. I disagree. I think we have an obligation in this House to listen to people in all parts of Canada and to give them equal respect no matter which part of Canada they come from.

These witnesses expressed the concern that these provisions were in their view inconsistent with the over-all intent of the bill to regulate the carriage rather than the content of telecommunications and that some provinces may have viewed the reference to culture as potentially eroding their responsibilities.

The government has no intention of using its authority to regulate telecommunications carriers to erode the provincial role in culture. It is absurd to suggest anything of the sort.

Whatever the merits of the concerns raised about these references, in this regard the government has serious doubts about both concerns. We have agreed to remove them because they are not essential to the bill whatsoever.

The specific reference to culture is not essential because the bill clearly recognizes in other ways the increasingly important role of telecommunications as a carrier of cultural products and services. The policy objectives state that telecommunications "perform an essential role in the maintenance of Canada's identity and sovereignty" and that the telecommunications system should serve to "enrich and strengthen the social and economic fabric of Canada".

Surely our culture is fundamental to our identity and just as surely cultural products and services are an important part of the social and economic fabric of Canada. Telecommunications serve to link this country together through a whole range of activities from personal conversations to data and information transfers, to business transactions and increasingly to the enjoyment of cultural products and services. On this the policy statement is quite clear.

In addition some have expressed concern that there may be a legislative gap between Bill C-62 which governs telecommunications and the 1991 Broadcasting Act which governs broadcasting. The concerns are simply ill-informed.

The two pieces of legislation were largely developed in tandem. It is clear from the legal definitions in them that broadcasting is an integral part of telecommunications which has been removed from the scope of Bill C-62 because it is the subject of separate legislation. Moreover recognizing the trend for convergence in broadcasting telecommunications technologies and services, both pieces of legislation were designed to be technologically neutral, precisely to avoid any concern about a legislative gap. It simply does not exist.

Under the twin umbrella of these two pieces of legislation the CRTC is given broad authority within the limits imposed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to regulate telecommunications and broadcasting in the public interest, and the flexibility and scope required to take into account the increasingly interrelated nature of these activities and indeed of content and carriage in an era of convergence. It is clear that such a concern as has been expressed by my hon. friend simply is not legitimate. There was no intention to undermine the ability of the federal government to legislate in the field of culture or to operate in any way in the field of culture. Indeed none of the evidence that was introduced before the committee, none of it, indicated in any way that such an amendment would impede the ability of the federal government to do its job or would transfer to the provinces powers which they do not have today. Far from it.

• (1650)

What it does do though is ensure that members of Parliament are sensitive to the concerns that have been expressed in various regions of Canada. It ensures most of all that nobody can raise a bogus point that somehow the telecommunications system and telecommunications legislation is being used to take away from the provinces areas which legitimately belong to them. It is not simply something which is legitimate.

Pursuant to Standing Order 26(1) I move: