

Oral Questions

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I am proposing now, as I always would propose, that the federal government use only the authority that it has. Both the federal government and the provincial governments have jurisdictional authority in this domain. It is in the federal act that the words "comprehensiveness" and "accessibility" are used. Specific words could have been included to make particular operations included if the federal government had wanted to do so. I am not even asking the minister to do that.

The minister has alluded to the fact that operations for cancer, for example, are not put in the act. Certain hospitals across Canada have not said on principle that they will exclude cancer operations, but have specifically said that they will exclude abortions. They have made the decision to deny comprehensiveness and accessibility, going against what I would argue is the federal authority in terms of legislation.

Will the government show true leadership in this debate instead of hiding behind a past act, interpreted the way the minister wants? Either give it a broader interpretation or amend that act to provide the accessibility that all Canadian women ought to have.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is asking that we violate the Constitution of Canada to do what he would like us to do. Our obligation is to respect the Constitution of Canada—

Mr. Broadbent: No, I'm not. Didn't you hear the question?

Mr. Beatty: The hon. gentleman asked his question. Surely I am entitled to answer it Mr. Speaker. We have an obligation to respect the Constitution of Canada which gives the primary responsibility for the delivery of health services to the provinces. The hon. gentleman concedes the fact that nowhere in the Canada Health Act is any procedure, including life-saving procedures, required to be provided in a specific way by any province. What the hon. gentleman proposes is that we throw constitutionality to the wind—

Mr. Broadbent: Nonsense!

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, again the hon. gentleman should listen to the response. He asked that we ignore the constitutional responsibility of the provinces and of Ottawa, that we engage in an invasion of provincial jurisdiction. Doing so could threaten the very constitutionality of the Canada Health Act.

Mr. Broadbent: I will leave that minister's rhetoric aside. He knows I did not propose violating the Constitution. I say to the minister, refer my proposal to the Supreme Court. I will accept its decision if the minister will accept its decision.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, my last question is directed to the Minister of Justice. According to the Supreme Court, Canadian women are entitled to unqualified access to abortion in all regions of this country. However, there are regions in this country that do not give Canadian women that right.

My question is, simply, why the government did not table amendments to the Canada Health Act, consistent with the Supreme Court's decision to give all Canadian women the same rights in all regions.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member asked the same question in English and in French. The answer is the same. We must all respect the Canadian Constitution.

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[*English*]

MEMBER OF THE SENATE

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Federal Business Development Bank and is about the issue that will not go away. On Friday, the minister for small business, on his kamikaze mission, said in the House of Commons that the Cogger-FBDB bills were quite small and would not necessarily be brought to the president's attention.

Apart from the fact that those bills totalled some \$104,000, a relatively nice small amount, how can the minister then explain the internal memo of the Federal Business Development Bank which I have in hand, part of which says about Lapointe Rosenstein bills that this bill was signed by the president, the president approved payment of same, invoices were signed by the president and so on? How about that for information that was kept away from the president? How can the minister explain the actions of his colleague last Friday? Could he give us the latest version of the truth in this affair?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, the president of the Federal