

major reforms in its health care system. Its aim is to improve access and quality of care for all Quebecers. Does the minister intend to let the Government of Quebec run its health care system as it sees fit?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Health Act gives Canadian provinces all the powers they need to revamp their health care systems. Canadians expect the federal government to continue to play an active role in the area of health care and ensure that national standards are met throughout Canada. The basic concept is simple: universal access for everyone across Canada. Mr. Speaker, this is a concept that is important to all Canadians and it is supported across Canada.

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, in Quebec, respect for rights and freedoms is part of a long democratic tradition of which we are proud. We have reason to believe that the Canadian government has been guilty of violating those rights. Quebec is perfectly well able to protect the rights and freedoms of its citizens, including those they have in the health care area. Quebec Minister Rémillard is asking you to withdraw completely from health care in Quebec, which in fact falls under provincial jurisdiction. What are you going to do?

[English]

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is well aware of the fact that within the confines of the Canada Health Act the basic principles of universal access and equity of treatment in Canada are set out. The provinces have full discretion in terms of the organization of their health care systems.

My colleague in Quebec has indicated that he believes that his reforms can be done within the context of the Canada Health Act. I have had my officials write to his, seeking more information with regard to proposals made by the Government of Quebec. If it can be done within the law, he has the right to do that.

The principle of universality and the principles of universal access and of equity of treatment that are contained in the Canada Health Act are principles that

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are supported by all Canadians and are to the benefit of all Canadians.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Communications, my question is directed to the parliamentary secretary.

Gérard Veilleux said yesterday at the Communications and Culture Standing Committee meeting: "There was so little political will on the part of the government to support the CBC that I—" that is, Mr. Veilleux, the president "—was never able to get through the Minister of Communications' door to ask for help." He was told the minister was too busy.

Why was the minister too busy to deal with this question that strikes at the very roots and the very heart and soul of national unity, one that has negative impacts on the economic, social, cultural and linguistic fibre of every community affected by this decision?

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Communications indicated to the House on Monday, there have been constant discussions with the CBC since the budget of April, 1989.

[Translation]

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, since the minister has refused to meet Mr. Veilleux, will he meet representatives from Sydney, Rimouski, Windsor, Sudbury, Winnipeg, St. Boniface, Calgary, Saskatoon, Vancouver and other cities affected by the 1,100 job cuts, and let these representatives tell him about the negative impact on regional English and French programming? Will he take the time to meet employees who were laid off, which was a nasty Christmas present?

• (1500)

[English]

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, the minister is always available to consult with Canadians.