

*Adjournment Debate*

the problem, but the illegal abortions being performed contrary to the duly enacted Criminal Code of this country. The federal Government must make it known to the provinces, Quebec and Ontario in particular, that Section 251 of the Criminal Code must be enforced.

Each year nearly 65,000 unborn Canadians are killed in Canadian hospitals. Sheer numbers alone indicate the magnitude of the problem. But we need more than total numbers. We need all the information we can get on abortion, statistical and otherwise, if we are ever to solve this problem. The gathering of therapeutic abortion data by Statistics Canada must be re-established immediately to help all Canadians resolve the issue of abortion in Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of Supply and Services):** Mr. Speaker, I share the opinion of the Toronto Member for Willowdale (Mr. Ostrom) that we must have objective and reliable data on abortions in Canada. The issues related to the debate on abortion are complex and if the statistical data can help us to gain a better understanding of them, I think that it is important for us to have these data.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, since I have been the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada, I have been able to see for myself to what extent this agency plays an essential role by providing data on all major issues facing Canadian society. Few subjects are debated in this House without our relying on data from Statistics Canada.

Having said this, Mr. Speaker, like all federal agencies, Statistics Canada always tries to improve its programs and is completely supportive of the efforts made by our Government to control its expenditures.

In this context, last spring, my predecessor undertook, in close cooperation with the chief statistician, a review of all departmental programs to establish our priorities.

Good statistics on abortion would certainly have been viewed as a priority, but the program then in existence was judged less important because the data compiled dealt only

with therapeutic abortions authorized under Section 18 of the Criminal Code 1969 Amendment Act. Since the data was incomplete, our investigation had only limited usefulness and could even be misleading in certain cases.

Mr. Speaker, as a woman and a minister in a government concerned with social issues, I recognize the needs expressed by many people who wish to obtain statistical data on abortion. Consequently, my colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), and myself have asked the officials of our Departments to examine all possible solutions which would enable Statistics Canada to continue to provide relevant information on this issue.

I am happy to announce today that the publication of data on abortion will be maintained. A new method for compiling the data will however be used. Our yearly estimates will from now on be based on data from the provincial records of doctors' fees. These estimates will be more complete than the present data since they will include abortions practiced in Quebec clinics.

On the other hand, they will be less detailed because these records contain little information on socio-demographic and medical factors. However, Statistics Canada officials have identified a means to counter this problem. Their review of the information on socio-demographic characteristics previously compiled has shown that changes are relatively slow to occur. It was therefore decided that this information would be published every three years rather than annually.

To implement this program, we shall need the cooperation of hospitals and other provincials organizations. I expect that the provinces will accept to cooperate with us in this most important matter.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 3(1).

The House adjourned at 6.27 p.m.