

Oral Questions

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Hamilton East has understood nothing, as usual. No action has yet been taken and she has already decided that the government and the health system would pay for it all. The provinces are responsible for applying the system. If they decide to negotiate reimbursement with Dow Corning, it will certainly be in the company's interest to reach agreement with the provinces concerned. But again, all the measures taken in the United States have been taken in Canada, except that the Americans do not have the system of universal health care that we have here in Canada. I am quite prepared, and we have already started to contact the provinces to ensure that this issue is treated equally.

The information about suing is false. I never made a commitment to Ms. Marsolais-Tardif—although you did not give her name, I am giving it—to prosecute any company whatever.

I said that I would help the "I Know" organization, if it needed help. That is all. That is the information.

[English]

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, if the minister of health and welfare is not prepared to table the documents as the hon. member for Nepean suggested, maybe she would table them for Canadian women on his behalf.

In view of yet another company pulling out of the implant market, I reiterate my call for a judicial inquiry into health and welfare department of medical devices for its handling of the breast implant issue. In the face of the complete failure of leaving the testing of breast implants in the hands of manufacturers, will the minister assure Canadian women that no new implants will come on the Canadian market without government testing for their safety.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I said already that those implants were not available on the Canadian market. I said too that before they could be back on the market, I would need to have the assurance that there is not even a little problem for Canadian women. I believe that is what Canadian women want to know.

Once again I refer to my colleague and my predecessor. At least I believe she knows what she is talking about. She knows very well. We have had conversations and I have said to her many times that I will not put in danger the health of women in terms of breast implants. That is what we are doing. That is what we will do.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, first of all the hon. minister was not listening. I said new implants. Second, he has talked several times this afternoon about his concern for the health of Canadian women and he in fact consistently endangers the health of Canadian women by his lack of action.

What is the minister going to do for the 150,000 Canadian women who are left with unanswered questions about the safety of their implants, about the safety of their health. Will the minister meet and work with provincial ministers of health to ensure that women breast implantees have the kind of information and the kind of support they need to know they are safe or that they need medical help?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the member asked me what I will do for the 150,000 women who have breast implants. I already said that we are trying to get the best information available through Dr. Cornelia Bayne's committee from the United States and Canada. They will report to me some time in April, and will provide all information they have in terms of the choice that women should make regarding the breast implants they already have, or for those who would like to have those implants.

In terms of the provinces, I have already had three meetings with the ministers from the provinces. On any request, I will do that again. I believe Canadian women know increasingly that I am doing what should be done to protect the health of Canadian women.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I really do not want to stand here and insult the minister by suggesting that I do not believe that he has done exactly what needs to be done for the health of these women.

Dow Corning not only admitted when the new president took over that there are some problems with these implants, but now Dow Corning has withdrawn the implants from the market and said it will consider recompense in the United States where women do not have access to a medical plan, and in Canada for any