

Adjournment Debate

The studies on breast implants are of vital importance and I deplore the short-sighted attitude of the Department of National Health and Welfare toward this type of investigation.

The best proof that studies to develop better regulations and control have been so far neglected by the Department is that the most recent research project entitled "Breast implants: their characteristics and behaviour *in situ*" presented last May by Dr. Guidoin to Departmental officials was categorically turned down.

As Dr. Guidoin told Dr. Sheena Lee, Head of the Research Administration Division, it is a great disappointment to realize that this research project was not recommended for financial assistance under the National Health Research and Development Program.

This project seems to have been taken lightly and indicate a complete lack of communications between the various divisions of the department. I find most regrettable this situation which might have serious consequences for Canadian women who will have to submit to this kind of surgical operation during the forthcoming months and years. These negative effects might be even worse than those we have been able to assess so far.

I therefore ask the Minister to take action to remedy this situation as soon as possible. He should take steps to make available additional research funds immediately and implement regulations very shortly. I call for much stricter control to rectify the intolerable situation which exists now.

Because we need to protect the health of a great many Canadian women, including a large number of Quebec women, I urge the Minister to take the necessary steps without delay. This situation which endangers the health of women should not be tolerated any longer.

Mrs. Monique Landry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to answer a question by my hon. friend from Louis-Hébert (Mrs. Duplessis), on a subject of great topical interest.

Mr. Speaker, reconstructive surgery has become common place. Every year, thousands of Canadian women undergo such surgery in an attempt to recover their normal appearance. Some of these treatments are simple and effective, while others are complex and sometimes unpredictable. And some only provide temporary improvement and require frequent surgical touch-ups.

When the purpose of the operation is to correct a deformity or disability resulting from an illness, accident or the removal of a malignant tumour, medical expenses are refundable on the same terms as all other essential health care. However, if a person decides to undergo plastic surgery although his or her appearance is quite normal to society, it is up to that person to pay the cost. However, any complications due to plastic surgery

that was not successful may be refundable if harmful to the health and well-being of the person in question.

Breast reconstruction is practised throughout the western world. The destroyed tissues must often be replaced by a permanent implant designed to give the breast a normal appearance. These implants come in the form of bags filled with a liquid and are permanently attached within the breast. Various methods are used to manufacture these medical aids, and since the end of the sixties, a variety of models have been available.

Mr. Speaker, at the present time, products of this kind must be imported. All must comply with the Food and Drug Act and the regulations on medical instruments.

However, until now, only the new implant devices available on the market since 1983 have been subject to a pre-marketing examination. Very few have been introduced up to now. In fact, most of these products were introduced before the regulations were amended in 1983.

On the basis of reports from abroad on breast implants and unfavourable reactions to these devices, the Department of National Health and Welfare decided to look into the matter in 1982. A study conducted in Canada at the time revealed a certain degree of dissatisfaction within the medical community. Generally, it has been found that the results obtained by breast implants were not spectacular, but that there was no need to take corrective action. The Health Protection Branch was recently advised of unfavourable reactions to these products. The reports submitted raised once more the doubts already expressed about the quality, durability and long term safety of certain breast implants.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of National Health and Welfare is now reevaluating the need for research in this area with a view to improve the quality and safety of breast implants used in Canada. It should be possible to achieve a decrease in the morbidity and costs associated with the treatments, the new surgical interventions and the readaptation of patients who are unfavourably affected by reconstructive surgery. We have to find mechanisms to make good use of the experience of research centres and doctors specialized in this field. As in any highly sophisticated branch of medicine, their participation is essential.

● (1900)

[English]

AIRPORTS—AUTOMOBILE RENTAL POLICY. (B) REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE HEARING

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, almost a year ago I raised with the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) a matter concerning the policy regarding car rental agencies at airports. At that time I requested the Minister to postpone the bidding which was imminent and to refer the matter to the Transport Committee. I made the allegation that as a result of the way the regulations had been written the only