

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 16, 1992

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House of the unavoidable absence of the Speaker.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean) moved that Bill C-279, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (breast prostheses) be read the second time and referred to Legislative Committee B.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted and honoured to introduce for debate today private member's Bill C-279, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (breast prostheses).

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that people are protected from dangerous and potentially dangerous breast prostheses. Bill C-279 would have a number of direct affects on the regulation of the breast prostheses industry.

First, it would create within the current Food and Drugs Act a specific category for breast prostheses apart from other medical devices. At the moment, the only devices that receive specific mention in the regulations are contact lenses and menstrual tampons.

These two items should, of course, be carefully regulated. But it seems very strange to me that they should be uniquely singled out while breast prostheses should be lost in the catch-all grouping of "any device designed to be implanted into the tissue or body cavity of a person for 30 days or more".

If breast implants are given individual mention, hopefully Health and Welfare Canada might re-examine its policy about other implants as well, ensuring the safety of still more Canadians, and specifically Canadian women.

Second, Bill C-279 would affect all breast implants regardless of when they became available on the market. When the current regulations to the Food and Drugs Act were introduced in 1982, products that were already on the market had no obligation to meet the new safety requirements.

The government has yet to produce the necessary evidence that would demonstrate that the Meme implant was one of these. In fact, to this day, the only proof supplied by the government to back up its claim that the Meme implant was on sale in Canada before October 8, 1982 is a series of advertisements in various journals dating back to that period.

Based on this meagre evidence, there was no obligation to question the safety of the Meme and, therefore, to conduct a full safety review. I might add that because of this, the Meme implant was really on the market in Canada illegally.

The Meme implant is widely used throughout Canada and is by far the most popular implant in the province of Quebec. Plastic surgeons like the Meme because it is much easier to implant than some of the others that are on the market.

Thousands of women across Canada have received these implants and many are very happy with the results that this medical device has achieved. Eighty per cent of those are within the province of Quebec. However, there are also many women who have suffered tremendously because of this product.

I wonder, would these women be in the situation that they are in today had the Meme manufacturers been obligated to prove the safety of this implant. Or would the manufacturers have been forced to modify the implant so that no woman would have to go through the hell that some of the implant recipients have endured.