

Oral Questions

senator is continuing his hunger strike on behalf of young Canadians.

Considering that there appears to be no link whatsoever between the announcement of new programs and the hunger strike, could the Deputy Prime Minister indicate whether the Government has at least a contingency plan to prevent the worst from happening on the Senate side?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I suggest it is extremely sad that a man like Senator Hébert should take such an extreme measure to try to influence the Government into changing its direction as to essentially political choices in the area of job creation for young Canadians. From the political and humane point of view, it is absolutely unacceptable that a person should use such a method on which I will not comment as harshly as most Canadians. I cannot object too strongly to this attempt at making political gains at the expense of young Canadians.

INQUIRY IF PROGRAM REPLACEMENT PLAN EXISTS

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, I fully understand that the Government is entirely "divorcing" the announcement of programs from the hunger strike. Therefore, I ask the following question: Has the Government a plan, irrespective of the programs, to put an end to what is going on at the Senate before it is too late?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Secretary of State of Canada): On many occasions this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, I indicated that the policies of this Government are not decided according to the decision of this or that Canadian to go on strike. Such a method has never been a basis for governing a country, and we are going to start using it today.

Senator Hébert has made his own decision. He has never asked anybody for the permission to go on a hunger strike. He does not have to ask anybody for the permission to stop. And it is certainly not by changing the Government policy that we could cause Senator Hébert to change his mind.

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[English]

CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY—JOB-CREATION OFFER

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. As the Minister is aware, the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association circulated a letter to MPs claiming that it will quadruple R and D jobs if the Minister curtails generic drug manufacturing. Does the Minister agree with that claim by the manufacturers and, if so, will he explain to the House how that can possibly happen simply by doubling R and D expenditures?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): Mr. Speaker, we have said many times that we intend to revise the legislation on the pharmaceutical industry. We have launched a major consultation process across the country, and we intend to announce a policy whose aims will be along the same lines as previous policies announced by the Government, namely to create jobs and promote investment in this country.

[English]

COST OF LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister not agree that those false claims will cost Canadian consumers and elderly persons some \$211 million a year if he goes ahead with those legislative changes? Will he ask the drug companies to table in the House letters substantiating those claims?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): Mr. Speaker, we have repeated many times that when the decision is announced, it will not be at the expense of the consumer, and furthermore, and I repeat, it will have the advantage of creating jobs in Canada and generally promoting investment in the industry.

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[English]

PUBLIC WORKS

PROPOSED SALE OF OTTAWA PARKLAND AS SITE FOR UNITED STATES EMBASSY

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Public Works, which we can understand, and in the absence of the Parliamentary Secretary who, in this case, is AWOL in South Korea—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gauthier: My question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is in order, but I am sure the Hon. Member knows that commenting on the presence or absence of others is not.

Mr. Gauthier: I said my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Will he tell the House if it is federal policy to sell federally owned parklands? NCC Chairman, Jean Pigott, recently said that she wants to sell part of an Ottawa river-front park known as Mile Circle, to the United States of America for an embassy compound. Is the Government in favour of selling our natural parklands?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I believe this question has