

will support these important changes to Canadian competition law.

Mr. McGrath: May I ask a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the predictions of the vice chairman of the Food Prices Review Board in January that food prices would continue to rise, especially after supermarkets lifted their voluntary freeze of food prices, which we are experiencing now, may I ask the minister what steps the Anti-Inflation Board has taken to establish clearly to the people of this country that it is doing something to restrain prices, especially food prices? I ask this as it is apparent that this is not being done and as such lack of action is affecting seriously the government's attempt to attack inflation.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I point out that the freeze itself, which has been operative for several months, is the first evidence of the impact of the board on pricing in the food distribution sector. There will be variations in prices as the winter goes on because of the importation of fresh fruits and vegetables to Canada. Really, there is little opportunity to avoid variation especially in such commodities, and such variations may occur from time to time.

In general terms, to respond to a point raised in the previous question, the gross profit margins of these firms will be under close scrutiny by the board, particularly after the filings which are expected at the end of this month.

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ENERGY

GASOLINE—POSSIBILITY OF LEGISLATION SETTING MILEAGE STANDARDS FOR AUTOMOBILES

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Bearing in mind that the United States has already enacted legislation in the field of energy, the announcement that gasoline prices are to rise next summer and the need for us all to be energy conscious, does the minister intend to introduce legislation during this session, to provide for greater efficiency in automobiles and light trucks?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, we intend to introduce some mandatory measures.

Mr. Korchinski: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the legislation contain penalties, to induce automobile manufacturers to produce more efficient vehicles, or is it intended to implement the legislation by way of taxes on the public, which must buy these cars, even though they may be less efficient?

● (1430)

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, the measures will deal with new gas mileage standards. They will be aimed at increasing, on a fleet average, the gas mileage standards by 1980. The second period will be 1985. Those measures will be

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comparable to those introduced by the United States. Therefore, it should not in any way penalize Canadian manufacturers and their workers.

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AGRICULTURE

COW-CALF STABILIZATION PROGRAM—GOVERNMENT POSITION ON ALBERTA PROPOSAL—POSSIBLE DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, might I direct a question to the Minister of Agriculture. In as much as the minister has indicated on a number of occasions that he will be initiating a specific stabilization program for beef in the calendar year 1976, what action is his department and the government taking with regard to the proposal advanced by the minister of agriculture of the government of Alberta specifically outlining a cow-calf stabilization program of which the costs would be shared 75 per cent by the federal government and 25 per cent by the provinces?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, that proposal was submitted several weeks ago, actually before Christmas. As I said before in this House, there is an ongoing committee of provincial deputy ministers and officials in Ottawa. They have not as yet come to a conclusion.

Mr. Mazankowski: Instead of the minister's continual evasiveness and procrastination, will he tell the House whether in fact he will initiate any kind of program specifically for the cow-calf producers of this country—yes, or no?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, I said we would have a program for the calendar year 1976, from January to the end of December, for beef.

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HEALTH

REQUEST FOR ALTERNATIVE FACILITIES IN VIEW OF HOSPITAL CLOSINGS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. P. B. Rynard (Simcoe North): Mr. Speaker, I wish to address a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the anguish, fear and dismay caused by the proposed closing of several hospitals, particularly in rural areas, I would like to ask the minister if health care centres or other facilities are being planned to look after those needing care and, also, if any provisions are being made to look after the approximately 5,000 people who will be unemployed.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I can certainly understand the concern expressed by the hon. member. However, as he well knows, the administration of health services is the exclusive responsibility of the provincial governments. I might advise the hon. member that discussions are underway with the provinces in order to try to develop lower