

Government Orders

Then there has been the effect of the GST on drugs and hospital services. More and more people have been pushed on to welfare by federal fiscal and unemployment insurance policies, culminating in greater numbers of people on provincial drug plans. As I indicated earlier an aging population means more seniors on drug plans.

The net result is a lack of fiscal elasticity for the provinces. Their budgets are stretched to the limit for health care. Any increase in the price of drugs is too much and this government has not denied that. In fact, it appears it has accepted it with pride, that \$550 million is an acceptable price to pay in this day and age of recession. I cannot see the priorities of this government and this government cannot deny impending increases and is trying to pull out the safety net of generic drugs.

In fact I submit it is imperative that generic drugs get to the market quickly and 20 years, in my opinion, is not quick enough. This bill calls for another three years of patent protection, three more years for which the provinces must buy higher priced brand name drugs.

The government House leader was recently interviewed on CBC Radio and stated that the price of drugs would rise. Well, neither the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs nor the Minister for International Trade has denied that prices would climb as I indicated and they seem to relish that.

The fact is compulsory licensing keeps the cost of drugs down. Generic drug companies have evolved from the need of Canadians to protect the medical system. If I could so kindly remind this government, yesterday the government admitted that this bill will cost Canada \$550 million by the year 2000, a headline in *The Ottawa Citizen*.

The health minister of Ontario has indicated that over 20 per cent of citizens are covered under the Ontario Drug Benefit Program and that Bill C-91 will have a price tag of \$1 billion in the next 10 years. No matter which way you slice this bill it will cost millions.

Undoubtedly, the federal government did not drive a hard bargain and it was hoodwinked or brow-beaten by lobbyists. We could easily allocate \$550 million for research and development directly under the leadership of the federal government. That is the way to go.

Bill C-91 promises to strengthen the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board and says that it can roll back prices, it can impose jail sentences, and so on. In the same breath, the minister said that the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board has served to protect consumers allowing the cost of medicines to increase by only 2.9 per cent between 1987 and 1991. If he was so convinced that the board had done its duty, why then would he consider putting these so-called severe penalties?

I do recall once more that during the debate on Bill C-22 this government at that time indicated that it was the answer, that it was a balanced bill. Five years later, it is no longer a balanced bill, no longer a balanced law. In fact, the intent of Parliament at that time was to review this by the year 1996 and then report to this Chamber, making recommendations after consulting the Canadian public and all stakeholders in the pharmaceutical industry, health care system, provincial ministers, and so on. But it is only 1992 and already the rules of the game are changing. Is that fairness?

What the minister failed to concede was that the Green Shield plan has found the cost of drugs to be increasing at 11 per cent per year. In my province of Manitoba drug costs have jumped by 12 per cent. I will tell you how angry Manitobans will be if we proceed with Bill C-91, how upset my constituents of Winnipeg North will be.

Last summer *Maclean's* magazine had a cover story and I remember the title as being something like: "Canadians are mad as heck", because we do not listen to the concerns of our constituents. Constituents are telling us that Bill C-91 will deal a devastating blow to their pockets.

When we pay for a drug we pay not only for the research and development costs and a mark up for profit. We are also paying for a business to function, to expand, to pay shareholders, to recoup losses from failed drugs that did not reach market, for overhead and aggressive marketing. We are paying for offices with marbled floors, skylights and fountains, corporate jets and advertising. But when we buy a drug or a pill we are buying health and health must always be affordable to Canadians.