

Oral Questions

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for his question. The Minister has made very clear that she expects the savings to be passed on, not only in gasoline prices at the pumps but in home heating oil and diesel fuel, as the expensive fuel is used up by retailers. We expect the same excellent action which we have seen in the reduction at the pumps, which is now some 48 cents per gallon.

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PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

MANUFACTURE OF GENERIC DRUGS—GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs said in the House on March 17 that he was “concluding our consultation process” regarding the possibility of restricting the manufacturing of generic drugs. Did this consultation process, which he said was concluding three weeks ago, involve consultation with the most important people affected by this decision—average Canadian consumers?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): Mr. Speaker, we have indeed carried out a vague series of consultations over the past few months and, in the course of these consultations, we have indeed met with representatives of pharmaceutical and generic drug companies on the one hand, and with consumers on the other.

[English]

EMPLOYMENT IMPACT

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, the Minister also stated that the policy “will ensure that it creates jobs and brings investment to Canada”. If the Government is to legislate generic drug companies out of business, how is it possible to create employment and to compensate for the massive increase in costs to average Canadian consumers?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): As I said already on a number of occasions, Mr. Speaker, after the policy has been made public and adopted by the Cabinet, we will have a policy which will meet the need of consumers as well as favour job creation and investments in Canada.

[English]

WESTERN GRAIN STABILIZATION ACT

TIMING OF PAYMENTS ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board. The Minister will be aware that the western grain stabilization plan will generate an approximate \$500 million payment during the next few weeks, I hope, which will cover last year's shortfall in grain receipts. Is it the Minister's strategy to announce the stabilization payments at the same time as he announces the initial prices for grains, in order to soften the blow of those prices being so low? When will he be making that announcement?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is correct. The Government amended the Act a little over a year ago to allow for an interim payment. We are now in the process of determining whether in fact there will be an interim payment. We hope to have the figures generated and the money in the hands of producers by the first of May, if we can. When the Hon. Member talks about initial prices, I guess I would ask for his advice as a farmer. He knows full well that grain prices are not very favourable. I would ask him whether he thinks we should make the two announcements at the same time.

DEFICIENCY PAYMENTS INQUIRY

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister makes the announcement on initial prices, will he also announce that there will be deficiency payments to compensate for the low Canadian grain prices and the losses which are being generated by the U.S. Farm Bill? Will he take the advice of the advisory board and announce deficiency payments as well?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, we face a very difficult situation in world grain prices. It is not entirely the fault of the U.S. Farm Bill. The European Community has been producing excessive amounts of grain, which I believe is the main reason for the fall in world grain prices. The American action is a reaction to what the Europeans are doing. We are looking at all kinds of avenues to support western and Canadian grain producers in this very difficult time. One of the means we have at our disposal is the Western Grain Stabilization Act which the Hon. Member mentioned in his previous question.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

FORGET COMMISSION—REQUEST FOR INTERIM REPORT ON PENSION INCOME

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.