

Oral Questions

He asks a question that indicates he is supportive of the North American free trade agreement being completed and being extended to countries like Brazil and Chile. As we have indicated before in this House, there is a good possibility that we might in future negotiations increase the free trade zone to other countries. At this stage it is important for us to simply contemplate the terms of the one negotiation before going further.

Clearly a free trade zone that encompassed these other countries that are going through a reform similar to what Mexico has done do deserve the support of countries like Canada.

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• (1440)

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Earlier today the government tabled legislation which effectively puts an end to compulsory drug licensing in Canada, a system which has saved Canadian consumers up to \$1 billion annually on the cost of prescription medications.

At the very time that this government has been lecturing provincial governments about spiralling health care costs, how could it possibly justify introducing legislation which certainly will lead to higher health care costs in the provinces?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, the report of the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, PMPRB, was tabled in Parliament earlier today. It reports that last year, as in the previous five years, the price increase for patented medicines was under 3 per cent, 1.5 per cent less than the Consumer Price Index. This shows that the system in place has kept patented medicine prices for which we are responsible from increasing.

Furthermore, the new government policy announced today is that beyond the \$1.1 billion in investment obtained since 1987, the increase last year alone of nearly 24 per cent more investment in Canada means \$2 billion in investment for Canadian drug companies over the next five years. That means jobs and better medication for people in hospitals. It is a plus for Canada and Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

It is very clear that this government has the support of the multinational drug industry in eliminating compulsory licences in Canada. What is less sure, however, is whether or not this government has the support of the provincial health care ministers in doing the same thing.

I want to ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare if he has the support of the provinces of Ontario, Manitoba and Nova Scotia in eliminating compulsory licences, thereby increasing provincial health care costs.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I informed the ministers of health in Canada about the policy and of course the ministers had questions. I said that during the summer, particularly on the 25th and 26th at the deputy ministers' level, we will have meetings to determine exactly the conditions that the provinces would like to see put in the legislation to be sure that we will have control of the legislation.

The provinces will support it when they are sure that the recommendations they made will be considered. But by and large, we do not make recommendations before the legislation is tabled in this country.

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BREAST IMPLANTS

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, we had questions last week about information the Ministry of National Health and Welfare had in 1989 calling for action on breast implants and this government's failure to act.