

Patent Act

Mrs. Collins: Mr. Speaker, I hoped to have the opportunity to pose a question to the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) following his speech, but that was not allowed. I thought that perhaps during debate we were all equal in the House.

However, I am pleased to have an opportunity to address a question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre). I will be a member of the Legislative Committee dealing with this Bill and I am looking forward to studying it in more depth.

I was particularly pleased that the Minister raised the issue of the Terry Fox Foundation and the Welcome Foundation which are based in the riding of the Leader of the Opposition. Ironically, the first opportunity I had to talk to those people was on Cancer Day last spring. I was selling daffodils on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society and the leader of the Terry Fox Foundation recognized me. The issue he wanted to address to me was the importance of this legislation which was pending at that time, and the kinds of activities that would be generated as a result of the legislation. This includes not only the kinds of scientific research jobs that will be created in British Columbia, which I thought the Leader of the Opposition would be concerned about, but more importantly for Canadians, the possibility of finding cures for cancer and other diseases that will help senior citizens and all people.

I am continually amazed by the comments we hear from the Opposition. I believe the opposition Parties have frequently made what I believe are terribly misleading comments that try to imply that drug prices in Canada today are low because of generic competition. It is my understanding that only 7 per cent of drugs now on the market in Canada have generic competition and that in fact since 1979 only one of the 145 new drugs that have entered the market has a generic competitor. I believe that the reason we enjoy the relatively reasonable drug prices is more likely because of the health care system which enables the provinces to bulk buy and negotiate prices for these drugs with the drug companies. Perhaps the Minister could enlighten me on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Before the Hon. Minister answers the question, I want to advise the Hon. Member for Capilano (Mrs. Collins) that we are all equal in the House. According to the provisional rules, Standing Order 55(2), the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) have unlimited time for debate. However, they do not have a period for questions or comments. I do not want the Hon. Member to feel that she is not equal in the House.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member or Capilano (Mrs. Collins) was absolutely right. The fact is that 7 per cent of the drugs in Canada have generic competition. Of course, these are the major drugs, so that on a dollar value it represents approximately 20 per cent. However, the prices of the 80 per cent of drugs in Canada that have no generic competition are still about 80 per cent of the price they are in the United

States. The main reason for this is that provincial Governments purchase 60 per cent of the drugs and, from a sales point of view, it is cheaper for the drug companies to sell to ten buyers than to 10,000 physicians. Of course, the buyer can make bulk purchases, receive volume discounts and so on. The market in Canada is different from that in the United States, and that is why the prices of drugs where there is no generic competition is 80 per cent of the price in the United States.

I should also point out that the drug prices review board will also review that 80 per cent of drugs and keep their prices to the cost of living. That will provide additional consumer savings, such that the head of the pharmacare program in Saskatchewan said that he believes Bill C-22 will make it cheaper for Saskatchewan in the future than under the current regime. I would ask the Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) to talk to the head of the pharmacare program before he gets caught up in some of these wild numbers his colleagues are talking about.

Mr. MacDougall: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister bring me up to date on how many announcements have been made in regard to the proposed legislation?

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I forget the exact number of announcements, but so far it comes to \$550 million of new incremental additional research and development in Canada.

● (1450)

If the Opposition, using dilatory tactics, are somehow able to prevent this, then of course the \$550 million will probably not be there. That is the real price tag members of the New Democratic Party should bear in mind if they carry on the way they are.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, I have known the Minister for many years. I know he considers himself to be a very open and generous man. In the tradition of the Conservative Party when it was in opposition with respect to more freedom of information and being open and so on, I wonder if he now would agree to make public the cost impact studies of this legislation? I understand there have been some studies done. Will he make these studies public so that the Canadian people, not just Members of Parliament, will have a chance to see what the assessment has been of some of these officials?

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated many, many, many times in the House, if we get this thing to committee, which I suppose we are now going to do, we will indeed look at the cost studies and examine all the alternatives. I am looking forward to that with great anticipation. That is what I have been trying to encourage the NDP to do for some days now.

Mr. Redway: Mr. Speaker, the Minister indicated in his remarks that one of the purposes of this legislation is to enhance the health of Canadians. I must say I was surprised to learn that Dr. Gagné, the Dean of Pharmacy at the University of Montreal, had indicated that Canadians, as a result of the present legislation, were being denied the use of certain drugs