

*Oral Questions*

limited period. The cost includes pharmacists' fees, prescription fees and the fact that new medicines on the market are being used. Many new drugs on the market are much more expensive than those that were there before, so it is like comparing oranges and apples, or tomatoes and corn. Yes, we are very concerned about this situation, and that is why my colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, and I and our provincial colleagues will look at this together—

**An hon. member:** It is a disgrace.

**Mr. Blais:** Yes, the former minister of consumer affairs just spoke about a disgrace, although they opposed—

[*English*]

**Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth):** Madam Speaker, my supplementary is for the same minister.

In 1987, when the government decided to increase monopolistic patent protection in Canada, in response to concerns from seniors, provincial governments and consumers that this would lead to higher drug prices, the hon. House leader said, and I quote: "The Drug Prices Review Board will ensure that prices are reasonable and do not get out of line".

Do the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and his government really believe that an 11 per cent annual rise in the cost of prescription drugs is reasonable? Further does he believe that the Patent Medicine Prices Review Board warrants any credibility in the eyes of Canadian consumers?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)):** Madam Speaker, I said yesterday and I repeat today that I am not satisfied with a general increase of that size in the price of drugs. I already said that and I hope that my colleague is not suggesting that we should invade provincial jurisdiction, since the provinces are responsible for generic drugs.

What I am saying is that we, in our field of jurisdiction, have to look after patent drugs. The figures that we have on the price increases of patent drugs throughout Canada show us that they are less than the rate of inflation. Those figures are real, and the hon. member knows it because he did not challenge successive reports of the Drug Prices Review Board even once since 1987. Never-

theless, since the prices have increased in general and it is in provincial jurisdiction, we must sit down with the provinces and look at this increase together and find a solution together.

[*English*]

**Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the same minister.

Yet another promise was made by the current House leader when he was the minister responsible in this House on November 18, 1986, when he said: "The price of drugs will not increase by one cent, not those now on the market, not those coming on the market. Drug prices will not go up but by a single penny".

Given that the price has not gone up by one penny but has gone up by 11 per cent every year since 1987, why did the government mislead Canadians on such a fundamentally important health issue to all Canadian families?

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)):** Madam Speaker, I will use the words spoken by the member for Papineau—Saint-Michel. It is a disgrace for a member who knows the facts to lead Canadians to believe things that are not true. That is a disgrace.

The truth is that the price of patent medicine throughout Canada has increased at a lower rate than inflation. The over-all price of all medication, including generic drugs, with the cost of medication, pharmacists' fees and the more expensive medicine which doctors now prescribe more often, has increased for consumers and health costs across Canada have gone up as a result. We are prepared to discuss this reality with the provinces not to invade their field of jurisdiction, but to discuss with them how to control these prices, as we have done at the federal level. We have managed to control them.

[*English*]

**Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West):** Madam Speaker, on this issue, we on this side of the House agree with another quote, one from the member of Parliament for Halifax West when he said in reference to this government: "The public no longer considers us honest". That is what his colleague on the government side said.