

Senator Frith: Let's be sure that it is on the record that when we were being asked to pass Bill C-22, we were asked to believe that what we now see has happened, and is happening, would not happen — just as many of our witnesses and parliamentarians predicted it would happen. Since we are talking about the report, is the government leader in a position to let us see a copy of that report, or to table it here in the Senate?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I undertook yesterday to look into that matter with Mr. Benoît Bouchard, and I shall do so. I would also like to obtain, as soon as possible, an analysis by Mr. Bouchard and his department of the report that was commissioned by the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, so we can see what they have to say about that report.

Following upon the admonition of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition yesterday, I took the occasion to read one or two of the media articles that appeared yesterday and I find that the board — or perhaps the body that conducted the study — neglected to divulge its methodology, thereby making it difficult to conduct a proper analysis of the findings.

However, these are matters that I will refer to Mr. Bouchard, in the hope and expectation that I will have something comprehensive by way of analysis to bring here in a very short time, because I do acknowledge the considerable interest of honourable senators in this matter.

Senator Frith: Honourable senators, this document does not meet what lawyers call the best evidence rule. This is a copy of part of the report. I would be glad to table it or simply to make it available while we await the full report, which will include anything they do have to say about methodology and, of course, the analysis. I would hope that we would send the documentation, as it evolves, to a committee for study, ideally the committee that studied Bill C-22 and Bill C-91.

I have not, in my quick reading of this report, seen anything about the methodology, and so I cannot help on that aspect, nor contradict what the Leader of the Government has said.

However, let me give a few of highlights. The report says in the introduction:

This study compares the introductory prices of new patented medicines in Canada with the prices of those medicines in other countries.

Then at page 1 of the March report, under the heading "Introduction", the report reads:

International price comparisons for 177 of the top 200 selling patented drug products sold in Canada as of June 1992 were also performed.

The conclusion was:

The main finding is that Canadian prices of top selling drug products were generally greater than prices in the other countries listed in the Patented Medicines Regulations, with the exception of the U.S. and Germany.

That confirms what was said yesterday. The report does, in fact, have something to say about methodology, so I guess we cannot claim that the authors of the report refused to disclose it. I will not read the whole thing, but at that same page, the report says:

Methodology.

To perform the analysis, the top 200 selling patented drug products were identified from the international price data filed by patentees under the Regulations (Form 2 Block 5).

Under "Analysis" it says:

Overall, 105 out of 177 drug products sold in Canada were priced above the median international price. The number of cases where Canada was the highest in the world was 42, or 24 per cent.

I have one last highlight. On page 3 the report deals with the international price comparison of the top 200 patented drug products sold in Canada, dated March 1993. This, of course, is after Bill C-22 was passed, and we had been told that this would not happen. I read one paragraph:

Table 4 compares prices of drug products introduced after 1987. Of the 68 top selling drug products introduced after 1987, 19 were category i...

Et cetera, and it sets out the categories.

For category i drug products, 12 out of 19 had Canadian prices exceeding median international prices. For category ii drug products, only four out of 12 had Canadian prices exceeding median international prices. Finally, for category iii drug products, 26 out of 37 had Canadian prices exceeding median international prices.

Honourable senators, I am obliged, and we should all be obliged, to the Leader of the Government for volunteering to bring all the material he can by way of the report, which itself is an analysis, and an analysis of the report, if I understand his undertaking. However, since the Senate did focus a lot of public attention on drug prices during debate on Bill C-22 and Bill C-91, I think it would be a worthwhile exercise for us to look into the matter and perhaps refer all the material to a committee in due course.