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The alternate path is to proceed as planned with the first leg, and implement a new "basket" of countries on January 1, but to defer creating guidelines on the economic pricing factors pending further policy development and consultation. This approach offers several benefits to all parties. It ensures the immediate implementation of new provisions that will lower drug prices in Canada, fulfilling a key federal government policy objective. It allows the PMPRB to monitor the impact of this change to help inform future policy development. The PMPRB will not be giving up the economic pricing factors: On the contrary, those factors will remain to be used in the context of Board hearings where all sides can present relevant evidence and make submissions to the hearing panel.

There are many competing interests and perspectives at play and the PMPRB cannot be expected to satisfy all of them. The pharmaceutical industry, for example, is strongly opposed to the new basket of countries. But the second road gives Ottawa a clear "win" by rapidly reducing allowable prices for new patented drugs, and thereby generating substantial savings for public and private drug plans. It also provides time for further consideration on the more contentious elements, including further dialogue to help address the concerns of many patient groups who fear that the changes will deprive Canadians of timely access to important new medicines.

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