



we need your help!

The Consumers' Association of Canada (CAC) is here to protect you – your health, your assets, and your rights. In fact, we have been protecting Canadian consumers for over 50 years. Right now, we are fighting against big auto insurance rate increases, for mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods, for affordable, reliable electricity, and much more. Our work depends on the contributions of members like yourself.

please mail your contribution to:

Consumers' Association of Canada
267 O'Connor Street, Suite 404
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1V3
tel: 613.238.2533 fax: 613.563.2254
email: info@consumer.ca
website: www.consumer.ca

Please consider making an additional financial contribution to help us continue this important work.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____
street city province postal code

Email _____

Yes! I'll help protect my rights by supporting the Consumers' Association of Canada.

Enclosed is my contribution of:

- \$25 \$50
 \$100 \$250
 \$500 Other \$

I'd like to pay by:

- Cheque (payable to: Consumers' Association of Canada.)
 VISA MasterCard American Express

Card No. _____ Expiry ___/___ Signature _____

I prefer to become a monthly donor by joining the Consumers' Advocates Club.

CONSUMER ADVOCATES

I'd like to help the Consumers' Association of Canada protect consumer rights every day of the year!

- I authorize the Consumers' Association of Canada to receive the following amount from my bank account or credit card each month.
 \$10 \$15 \$25 \$42 (Charter Member) Other \$_____ (minimum \$10)

Signature _____

I wish to donate through my:

- Bank Account (enclosed is a VOID cheque)
 Visa MasterCard American Express

Card No. _____ Expiry ___/___ Signature _____

My guarantee: I understand I can change or cancel my pledge at any time.

In order to gain a broader base of support and make the CAC a more effective voice for consumer rights, we occasionally exchange the names of our donors with other like-minded organizations. If you do not wish your name to be exchanged, simply check this box



CONSUMER CONNECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 2003

CAC fights high auto insurance prices



AUTO insurance has become a very hot consumer issue across Canada. How hot? Just ask the consumers of New Brunswick! Consumers in that province, having experienced auto insurance rate increases of up to 300%, voiced their displeasure at the polls almost un-electing the Lord Government. In response to this situation, the New Brunswick Government decided that the way to try and keep rates down was to reduce benefits paid to innocent victims of crashes.

The Association stepped into this issue by publicly disagreeing with this action and recommending that New Brunswick look at implementing a public auto insurance system modeled after the one in British Columbia. A few days later the Government of Nova Scotia decided to also not take any action to have private insurers reduce rates and instead opted for reducing benefits to car crash victims. Again, the Association made its views known that consumers should be fully protected and these Maritime Governments were simply "tinkering" with the system with no guarantee that rates for consumers would go down. It was time for these Governments to take steps to really protect consumers.

Bruce Cran, National Secretary of the CAC, was designated as the spokesperson on the auto insurance issue. Cran says, "given consumer concern over rising insurance prices and discriminatory practices, the Association is planning other initiatives to raise consumer awareness and ensure the consumer voice is heard by government and industry across the country." One of those other initiatives is a detailed study, to be released in September, comparing insurance rates across the country. Bruce adds, "currently, the CAC is the only group standing up to the insurance companies in order to protect consumers."

Bruce has conducted more than 70 media interviews across Canada, including radio talk shows, and national TV news shows. The CAC's comments appeared on the front pages of the Halifax Chronicle-Herald as well as in papers such as the Toronto Star. "The CAC press statements and positioning resulted in the Association receiving the most significant national media profile in the last ten years. At the moment, this is clearly the top issue for consumers across the country," says Bruce.

To find out more about recent CAC insurance activities visit our website at www.consumer.ca.

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hot consumer issue in the news

GETTING in the news means the CAC is informing Canadian consumers about issues and topics that impact their day to day lives the most. In June 2003, the CAC news release titled, 'Millions of Canadian Consumers are Concerned About Mad Cow Disease and Will be Eating Less Beef in the Future,' ranked in the top ten news releases at newswire. A total of 448 internet browsers accessed the CAC news release in a single day. To view the news release visit our website www.consumer.ca.



Bruce Cran, President CAC BC Chapter, addresses the media in Halifax on the issue of increasing auto insurance rates.



message from the president

READERS of this newsletter no doubt know that the mission of the Consumers' Association of Canada is to represent and articulate the best interests of Canadian consumers to all levels of government and to all sectors of society by continually earning recognition as the trusted voice of the consumer on a national basis.



CAC National President and fellow board member Peggy Kirkeby discuss policy at the recent national board meeting

One way in which we fulfill our mandate is through meeting with appropriate officials and participating in various discussions/committees. As an example, recently I have met with the Airline Travel Complaints Commissioner, Senior officials in government departments such as: Industry Canada—Department of Consumer Affairs; Agriculture Canada; Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, and participated on the Government on-line Advisory Committee.

Along with direct contact, we make our voice heard extremely effectively through media exposure. This gives CAC visibility and places our issues before the public in a manner that cannot be ignored. In the past month CAC has been seen, heard and read about by millions of Canadians through our exposure in hundreds of newspapers and many radio and TV appearances.

Secretary Bruce Cran and I have spent a good part of the past month doing interviews on topics such as insurance rates, mad cow disease, privatization of liquor stores, airlines, fines for misleading advertising, and consumers affected by retail bankruptcies.

Insurance rates are likely to continue to be a high profile issue during the coming months as Canadian consumers face increases of over 20%, on average, and the topic is a hot political issue in provinces soon to have elections. CAC is currently conducting a study, based on one done two years ago by the BC branch, to compare rates under different types of government and private schemes.

We are continuing to fulfill our mandate in the most effective manner.

Sincerely,

Mel Fruitman

liquor to cost more in BC under private system

IN JUNE the BC branch released a study that shows consumers will pay more for liquor privatization in British Columbia. The study entitled "Privatization of BC's Retail Liquor Store System: Implications for Consumers" compares prices at private liquor stores in Alberta with those at BC government liquor stores.

The study finds that consumers will pay an estimated 10–20% more under a private system in BC. "This was a surprising result, considering British Columbians pay an extra 10% social services tax not applied in Alberta," added Bruce Cran, President CAC BC Branch. "Even without the tax, the additional profit margins required by private industry will mean consumers pay more." The study is available at www.cacbc.com.

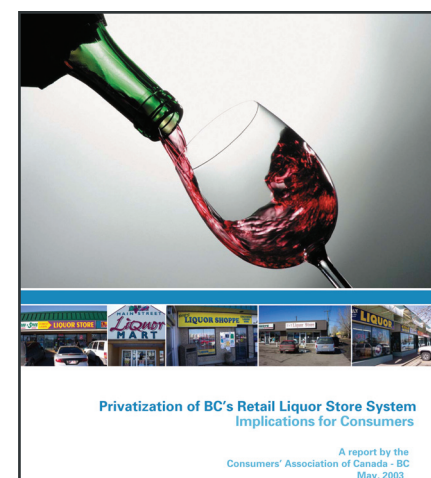
canadians invited to tell auto insurance horror stories

THE Consumers' Association of Canada has invited Canadian drivers to submit information about their auto insurance experiences to the Association. "After our latest press conference we were overwhelmed by hundreds of calls from consumers in Nova Scotia who wanted to tell us about their experiences with auto insurance", said Mel Fruitman, President of the Association. "After hearing some of these stories it is no wonder that thousands of consumers in that province are upset about auto insurance."

"We believe that many consumers all across Canada, not just in Nova Scotia, want to tell their story to someone who will listen", said Fruitman." The Association has made it easy for consumers to tell them about their auto insurance experiences via the internet. A person can click on www.cacbc.com to fill out a form "and tell it as it is".

The Consumers' Association will review all the information collected and determine how this information can be used to achieve lower prices and fairer treatment for drivers.

For related releases and studies go to www.cacbc.com.



nova scotia car insurance rates up to 500% higher than provinces with public auto

ON JULY 17 the CAC released the first results of its soon to be completed national study of auto insurance rates in ten provinces. These early findings confirmed that auto insurance rates in Nova Scotia are significantly higher than what consumers pay in the three western provinces with public auto insurance. The study shows that even drivers with clean driving records can pay up to \$6,000 for car insurance in Halifax compared with \$800 per year in Victoria.

For more information about the insurance rate results for Nova Scotia visit www.cacbc.com.

auto rate hikes

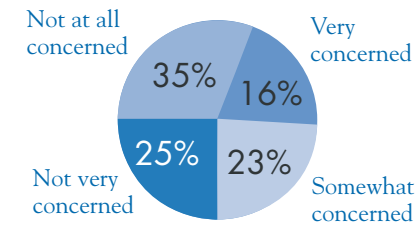
One year from February 2002 to February 2003

Manitoba	7.2 %
British Columbia	7.3 %
Saskatchewan	9.5 %
Ontario	29.7 %
Quebec	37.2 %
Prince Edward Island	58.4 %
Alberta	59.4 %
Newfoundland and Labrador	63.8 %
Nova Scotia	65.9 %
New Brunswick	70.6 %

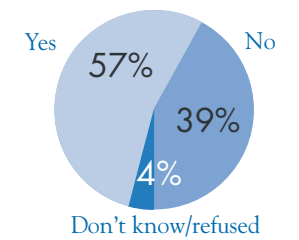
Source: Statistics Canada

level of concern over canadian beef

Responding to consumer concerns about Canadian beef after the recent occurrence of Mad Cow disease in Canada, the CAC issued a national poll. Here are the results:



How concerned are you about the safety of Canadian beef in view of the recent occurrence of Mad Cow disease in Canada?



Do you believe the Canadian government has given you adequate information for you to decide whether it is safe to eat beef?

Source: Pollara, June 2003

making it happen

The CAC is a volunteer driven organization that relies on the strength and contribution of people across the country to represent the interests of consumers. Here's one outstanding volunteer.



evelyn fox

REFERRED to as Canada's "Ralph Nader" by then BC Consumer Services Minister Joan Smallwood, Evelyn Fox has protected and advocated consumer rights as a volunteer for almost 20 years.

After taking early retirement from the BC Consumer Affairs Office she never missed a beat joining the CAC in 1985 and serving as President for 11 years. For Fox, the decision was an easy one to make. "For as long as I can remember I have spoken out for consumers and for protection of their rights in the marketplace. Becoming a member of the CAC and their strong consumer voice seemed to be a natural fit," says Fox.

Some outstanding achievements resulting from her advocacy work with CAC include the development of consumer protection legislation in the areas of traffic safety, funeral services and negative option marketing practices. Fox remains an active member in BC and stresses the importance of an organization such as CAC, especially in these times when government seems to be pulling back on programs that protect consumers. "It is so difficult for one person to make an impression on government and industry. However, by belonging to an organized and recognized group such as the CAC one can truly impact the decisions of society's decision makers and ensure consumer rights are protected," says Fox.

In recognition of her tireless work the BC Chapter has just awarded Fox a lifetime membership for her dedication and years of service to consumer advocacy and protection. As Bruce Cran, President of the BC Branch and National Board member says, "there is nobody more deserving!"