

# **Results of the Survey of Existing Citizen Groups on "Citizen Utility Board (CUB)" Model for Canada**

(January 1997)

Please find attached the results of the Survey prepared and circulated by the Working Committee on "CUBs" in Canada, and compiled and analyzed by Democracy Watch.

The Working Committee is made up of the following 10 organizations: Association des consommateurs du Québec; Association coopérative d'économie familiale du Centre du Montréal (ACEF-Centre); Association pour la protection des automobilistes (APA); Consumers' Association of Canada; Democracy Watch; Environmentally Sound Packaging (ESP) Coalition of Canada; Fédération des associations de coopérative d'économie familiale (FACEF); Fédération nationale des associations de consommateurs du Québec (FNACQ); One Voice - Seniors Network (Canada); and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre.

The first page of the attached material contains background information that was sent to all of the groups along with the Survey. The following pages contain the Survey questions along with the results received. For each question the answer which received the highest response is underlined (unless it is not appropriate to do so).

The Survey was circulated to 90 groups in English and 38 groups in French in late October 1996 (total 128), of which 23 groups responded in English and 9 responded in French (32 in total = 25% response rate). See the lists of surveyed groups and respondents attached at the end of the survey results.

# **Survey of Existing Citizen Groups on "Citizen Utility Board (CUB)" Model for Canada**

(Circulated by the Working Committee on "CUBs" in Canada)  
October 1996

**Please help us by faxing this survey with your answers by  
Tuesday, November 12, 1996 to Fax: (613) 241-4758.  
Thank you in advance for participating in this survey.**

Please note: You will receive a copy of the Working Committee's report on "CUBs" in Canada in return for participating in the survey

## **BACKGROUND**

In many industry sectors, the businesses involved contribute money to an industry association, such as the Canadian Bankers Association, the Canadian Cable Television Association, and the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association. These industry associations lobby on behalf of the member businesses, and provide services and information to the member businesses.

The Working Committee of existing consumer groups is proposing that similar organizations be formed for consumers. They propose that these groups be formed by having businesses which send bills and other mailings to consumers include a one-page information pamphlet in the same envelope. The information pamphlet would invite consumers to join the consumer organization and would describe the organization, what services it would provide, and its membership structure.

For example, when a customer receives his/her telephone bill in the mail, a one-page information pamphlet would be in the same envelope, and it would describe and invite the customer to join a consumer organization which would work on telephone issues from the consumer perspective. The customer would be able to join the group by filling out a form in the pamphlet and sending it back to the consumer organization along with a membership fee.

This method has worked in four states in the U.S. to form consumer organizations which work on utility issues. The groups are called "Citizen Utility Boards" or "CUBs." For example, in 1984 an information pamphlet was sent out in utility billing envelopes (telephone, gas, water and electricity) to the 5 million households in Illinois. Within two years the consumer organization had 150,000 members and since then the organizations has saved consumers over \$4 billion by successfully challenging proposals by the utilities to increase their rates.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THIS SURVEY**

One step in the Working Committee project is a national survey of existing citizen groups who work directly or indirectly on consumer issues, including your organization. The objectives of the survey are to determine answers to the outstanding issues/questions about the "CUB" model for Canada.

Your response and the responses of other citizen groups will be considered by the Working Committee as part of the process of determining the best model for "CUB-like" consumer organizations in Canada.

The Working Committee is also conducting a survey of consumers about issues concerning the Canadian model for these "CUB-like" consumer organizations.

Below are a series of questions about the structure and purpose of these "CUB-like" consumer organizations to help the Working Committee determine the model that should be used in Canada:

# SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

(To be answered by someone who represents your organization)

**Name of Organization** 128 groups were surveyed (90 English; 38 French)  
32 (25%) responded in part or in full (23 English; 9 French)  
See attached lists for names of groups

## I. Background

Your answers to questions #1-7 will give us background information about your group which will help us analyse the responses to the survey.

1. How many full members does your organization have?

Please circle one of the following choices:

- |                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| (a) less than 1,000           | <u>19</u> |
| (b) between 1,000 and 5,000   | 6         |
| (c) between 5,000 and 10,000  | 2         |
| (d) between 10,000 and 15,000 | 2         |
| (e) between 15,000 and 20,000 | 0         |
| (f) more than 20,000          | 3         |

2. In addition to full members, how many supporters/donors does your organization have?

Please circle one of the following choices:

- |                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| (a) less than 1,000           | <u>19</u> |
| (b) between 1,000 and 5,000   | 3         |
| (c) between 5,000 and 10,000  | 2         |
| (d) between 10,000 and 15,000 | 2         |
| (e) between 15,000 and 20,000 | 2         |
| (f) more than 20,000          | 2         |

3. What percentage of your usual annual budget is made up of government grants from municipal, provincial or federal governments? Please circle one of the following choices:

- |                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| (a) less than 10 percent      | <u>12</u> |
| (b) 10 percent to 25 percent  | 4         |
| (c) 25 percent to 50 percent  | 7         |
| (d) 50 percent to 75 percent  | 5         |
| (e) 75 percent to 100 percent | 3         |

4. How is your board of directors formed? Please circle one of the following choices:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (a) elected from amongst, and by the members by direct vote?                               | 8   |
| (b) elected from amongst, and by the members and/or delegates at an annual general meeting | <u>16</u>   |
| (c) appointed by the existing board  | 5 (2 for now only)  |
| (d) appointed by the staff   | 0   |
| (e) other  | 2 (representatives from different groups in the area; one appointed from each province and 2 others appointed at large) |

5. What consumer issues does your organization address?

Please circle "Yes" for each issue your organization addresses:

- |                                |     |           |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----------|
| (a) banking?                   | Yes | <u>16</u> |
| (b) life and health insurance? | Yes | <u>10</u> |
| (c) telephone?                 | Yes | <u>15</u> |
| (d) cable-TV?                  | Yes | <u>14</u> |
| (e) auto insurance?            | Yes | 9         |
| (f) post office?               | Yes | 6         |
| (g) hydro-electric utility?    | Yes | <u>16</u> |
| (h) natural gas utility?       | Yes | <u>8</u>  |

- (i) water and sewage utility? Yes 4  
 (j) other (Please list) 10 (municipal and provincial fees; seniors income and benefits, health care (4), access to information, privacy, food safety (4); environment (3); gasoline (2); highways, auto travel (2); toy safety (2); advertising; pension reform; literacy; foreign aid)

6. What services does your organization provide?

**Please circle "Yes" for each service your organization provides**

- (a) help people if they have a complaint about the services or products of a business?  
 Yes 19  
 (b) provide information such as comparing the prices of services and products of different businesses? Yes 13  
 (c) provide legal advice if members are suing a business? Yes 8  
 (d) lobby government on behalf of consumers on issues such as consumer protection?  
 Yes 25  
 (e) intervene in regulatory hearings on issues such as increases in prices for services such as telephone and cable-TV? Yes 14  
 (f) other 7 (test case litigation; public information on policy issues and regulations; evaluation/analysis on over 1,700 toys; work with business on improving consumer policies; budget consultation; discounts through coop buying service; research)

7. Do you provide different services to members than to the general public?

**Please circle Yes 10 or No 19**

If "Yes", please describe the difference in the services provided:

(many services are for members only or members receive a discount; newsletters (4); reports (2); media lists; advice)

## II. General Support for "CUB-like" consumer organizations

Questions #8-10 concern your general support for using of the method described in the Introduction above of funding "CUB-like" consumer groups:

8. Were you previously aware of this method of forming and funding consumer groups and its development in the U.S.? **Please circle Yes 25 or No 7**

9. Generally, do you support using the method of sending out an information pamphlet in mailings from a business as a way of funding consumer groups in Canada?

**Please circle Yes 27 (5 maybe) or No 4**

10. If you answered "Yes" to question #9, go directly to question #11.

If you answered "No" to question #9, please indicate your reason(s) below by circling "Yes" for each applicable reason and then go to question #11:

- (a) too many consumer organizations exist already Yes 2  
 (b) consumer organizations should send out their own mailings Yes 0  
 (c) governments and businesses address consumer issues adequately on their own Yes 0  
 (d) our group adequately addresses the issues we work on for all Canadians Yes 0  
 (e) other 3 (consumer response may be low (for a variety of reasons); there are enough consumer groups in Quebec; businesses should be required to pay a levy to fund a "CUB" for their particular industry)

## II. Purpose and Structure of "CUB-like" consumer organizations

Questions #11-14 address issues concerning the purpose of using this method of funding consumer groups, and the structure of groups which could be created using this method:

11. Imagine that an information pamphlet is sent out in the same envelope as a business' bill or other mailing to its customers, and the information pamphlet invites the customers to join a "CUB-like" consumer organization which would work on issues concerning that business (for example, a banking consumer organization would work on issues concerning banks). What do you think the organization should do with the money gathered from fees paid by members?

**Please circle one of the following choices:**

- (a) use the money to cover the costs of the work of the new "CUB-like" consumer organization? **5**
  - (b) give the money to existing consumer groups to cover the costs of their work on consumer issues? **10**
  - (c) use the money to cover the costs of the work of the new "CUB-like" consumer organization, utilizing the expertise of existing groups where those groups are providing adequate services to consumers? **13**
  - (d) other **3** (no one size fits all; I don't know; use the funds to continue work on problems of each sector)
12. If consumers could join the "CUB-like" consumer organization for a nominal membership fee, but they could also donate money in addition to the membership fee, what do you think the "CUB-like" consumer organization should do with the money donated in addition to the membership fee? **Please circle one of the following choices:**
- (a) also use it to cover the costs of the work of the new "CUB-like" consumer organization? **5**
  - (b) set up a fund to which existing consumer groups who work on the same issues as the new CUB-like" consumer organization could apply for grants? **13**
  - (c) set up a fund to which existing consumer groups which work on issues that cannot be funded using the method described above could apply for grants? **10**
  - (d) other **2** (unsure; model should vary)
13. If a "CUB-like" consumer organization was created using the method described in the Introduction, what structure do you think the organization should have?
- Please circle one of the following choices:**
- (a) democratically-structured with the board of directors elected from amongst, and by the consumers who are members of the organization? **11**
  - (b) with a board of directors appointed by the government from amongst representatives of existing consumer groups? **0**
  - (c) with a board of directors appointed by existing consumer groups from amongst representatives of existing consumer groups? **3**
  - (d) with a board of directors the majority of whom are elected from amongst, and by, the consumers who are members, and the rest of whom are appointed by the elected board? **2**
  - (e) with a board of directors the majority of whom are elected from amongst, and by, the consumers who are members, and the rest of whom are appointed by the government from amongst representatives of existing consumer groups? **1**
  - (f) with a board of directors the majority of whom are elected from amongst, and by, the consumers who are members, and the rest of whom are appointed by existing consumer groups from amongst representatives of existing consumer groups? **10**
  - (g) with a board of directors the majority of whom are elected from amongst, and by, the consumers who are members, and the rest of whom are appointed by both government and existing consumer groups from amongst representatives of existing consumer groups? **2**

(h) other 0

14. Which "CUB-like" consumer organizations do you think should be created using the method described above? A consumer organization that watches over . . .

Please circle "Yes" or "No" for each of the following sectors:

(a) banking and trust companies sector?	Yes	19	<u>or</u>	No	0
(b) life, health, property, auto insurance sector?	Yes	16	<u>or</u>	No	1
(c) telecommunications sector?	Yes	19	<u>or</u>	No	0
(d) energy utilities sector?	Yes	20	<u>or</u>	No	0
(e) transportation sector?	Yes	12	<u>or</u>	No	4
(f) postal services sector?	Yes	11	<u>or</u>	No	2
(g) other (Please list by sector)		4			

(no sectors currently covered by existing groups; medical; housing; food; wherever possible)

### III. Role of Industry and Government

Questions #15 and 16 address the issues of industry and government participation in the development of consumer groups using the method described in the Survey Introduction.

15. If businesses in a particular industry (for example: banking, telephone, or cable-TV) refuse to include the information pamphlets in their mailings to customers when they are asked to do so by the Working Committee on "CUBs" in Canada, do you think the government should require the businesses to enclose the information pamphlets in their mailings?

Please circle Yes 21 or No 8

16. If a consumer organization is created for a particular industry sector using the method described in the Survey Introduction, do you think that the funding the organization receives from consumers should replace funding granted by governments or by regulatory agencies to consumer groups who do research, education or advocacy on issues concerning that industry sector?

Please circle Yes 5 or No 24

### IV. Your Participation in the campaign for "CUBs" in Canada

Question #16 concerns your participation in helping develop this method of funding consumer groups in Canada.

17. The Working Committee of consumer groups will determine the best model for using this method of funding consumer groups in Canada based on your input from this survey and the survey of consumers. When the model is determined, groups involved in the Working Committee will be approaching industry and government representatives with the model to request their participation in developing consumer organizations using this method.

Please indicate below whether your organization is interested in joining with Working Committee members in approaching industry and government, and which industry sectors you are interested in approaching:

My organization IS 16 / IS NOT 8 (Please circle one choice) interested in joining with members of the Working Committee on "CUBs" in Canada in approaching industry and government concerning developing "CUB-like" consumer organizations for the following industry sectors (Please circle "Yes" for each sector you are interested in):

(a) banking and trust companies sector?	Yes	9	
(b) life, health, property, auto insurance sector?	Yes	5 (1 auto only)	
(c) telecommunications sector?	Yes	6	
(d) energy utilities sector?	Yes	6	
(e) transportation sector?	Yes	4 (1 depending on mandate)	
(f) postal services sector?	Yes	2	
(g) other (Please list by sector)		3 (it depends (2); represented by a federation who would decide whether or not to help; large oil companies)	

## The following 90 groups were sent the CUB Survey in English:

Action Centre for Social Justice  
Advoc. Resource Centre for the Handicapped  
Alberta Council on Aging  
Allergy Asthma Information Association  
Animal Alliance of Canada  
Automobile Protection Association  
B.C. Federation of Labour  
BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre  
Borrowers' Action Society  
CableWatch  
Consumer Assoc. of Canada (CAC National)  
CAC (B.C.)  
CAC (Manitoba)  
CAC (Northwest Territories)  
CAC (Saskatchewan)  
CAC - Alberta  
CAC New Brunswick  
CAC Newfoundland  
Canadian Assoc. of Retired Persons (CARP)  
Canadian Automobile Association  
Canadian Bankwatch  
Canadian Environmental Defence Fund  
Canadian Environmental Law Association  
Canadian Labour Congress  
Canadian Shareowners Association  
Canadian Taxpayers Federation  
Canadian Toy Testing Council  
Citizens For Auto Insurance Reform  
Canadian Federation of Students  
Citizens Concerned About Free Trade  
Citizens for Public Justice  
Confed. of Resident & Ratepayer Assoc.-TO  
Consumer Council of Canada  
Consumer Policy Institute  
Council of Canadians  
Council of Canadians with Disabilities  
Democracy Watch  
Downtown East-Side Residents Assoc. (DERA)  
End Legislated Poverty  
Energy Probe  
Environmental Law Centre of Alberta  
FOCUS  
Friends of Canadian Broadcasting  
Friends of the Earth  
Greenpeace  
Health Action Network Society  
Jesuit Centre for Faith and Social Justice  
Low Income Families Together  
Manitoba Federation of Labour  
Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities  
MediaWatch  
Nat. Action Comm. on the Status of Women  
Nat. Anti-Poverty Organization  
National Citizen's Coalition  
Non-Smoker's Rights Association  
Northwatch  
Nova Scotia PIRG  
Nuclear Awareness Project  
One Voice  
Ontario Association for Community Living  
Ontario Federation of Agriculture  
Ontario Federation of Labour  
Ontario Native Alliance  
Ont. Public Interest Research Group-Brock  
OPIRG Toronto  
OPIRG-Carleton  
OPIRG-Guelph  
OPIRG-Kingston  
OPIRG-Ottawa  
OPIRG-York  
Pollution Probe  
Public Interest Advocacy Centre (Ottawa)  
Public Interest Law Centre  
Quebec PIRG - Concordia  
Quebec PIRG -McGill  
Results Canada  
Sierra Club of Canada  
Sierra Legal Defense Fund  
Simon Fraser PIRG  
Social Investment Organization  
Social Planning Council of Metro TO  
SPARC-B.C.  
Taskforce on the Churches and Corp. Soc. Resp.  
Telecommunities Canada  
Transport 2000  
United Tenants of Ontario  
Vancouver Island PIRG  
Voice of Women  
Waterloo PIRG  
West End Community Ventures

### The following 23 organizations responded:

Alberta Council on Aging  
Automobile Protection Association  
BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre  
Borrowers' Action Society  
CableWatch  
Consumer Association of Canada (National)  
CAC - Alberta  
CAC Newfoundland  
Canadian Automobile Association  
Canadian Toy Testing Council  
Consumer Council of Canada  
Democracy Watch  
Downtown East-Side Residents Assoc. (DERA)  
MediaWatch  
Nat. Anti-Poverty Organization  
One Voice  
OPIRG-Guelph  
OPIRG-Kingston  
Public Interest Advocacy Centre (Ottawa)  
Quebec PIRG -McGill  
Results Canada  
Sierra Club of Canada  
Waterloo PIRG

## **The following 38 groups were sent the CUB Survey in French:**

Acef Abitibi-Temiscagame  
Acef Basses Laurentide  
Acef Bois Francs  
Acef-Centre de Montréal  
Acef de l'Est  
Acef du Grand-Portage  
Acef du Nord  
Acef Estrie  
Acef Granby  
Acef Haut St. Laurent  
Acef Lanaudiere  
Acef Nord Montreal  
Acef Outaouais  
Acef Portage  
Acef Quebec  
Acef Rimouski  
Acef Rive Sud (Montréal)  
Acef Rive Sud de Québec  
Acef Sud-Ouest de Montréal  
Acef Thetford Mines  
Association alimentaire Carrefour d'éducation populaire de Pointe St. Charles  
Association des consommateurs du Québec (ACQ)  
Association des consommateurs pour la qualité dans la construction (ACQC)  
Association pour la protection des intérêts des consommateurs (APIC Cote Nord)  
Carrefour d'entraide Drummond Inc.  
Centre d'information et de recherche en consommation de Charlevoix-Ouest (CIRCCO)  
Centre de recherche et d'information en consommation (CRIC de Port-Cartier)  
Centre populaire de Roberval  
Fédération des Acefs  
FNACQ  
Groupe de recherche en animation et planification économique (GRAPE)  
SAC-Shawinigan  
SBP de Chicoutimi  
SBP de Jonquiere  
SBP de la MRC d'Asbestos  
SBP Estrie  
SBP St. Felicien  
Service budgétaire populaire (SBP) d'Alma

## **The following 9 groups responded:**

Acef Estrie  
Acef Granby  
Acef Rimouski  
Association des consommateurs du Québec (ACQ)  
Fédération des Acefs  
FNACQ  
Groupe de recherche en animation et planification économique (GRAPE)  
SBP de Jonquiere  
SBP de la MRC d'Asbestos