

QUEEN  
JL  
103  
.C6  
W3  
1984

MULTI-YEAR OPERATIONAL PLAN

Consumer Services Sub-Activity

1984-1988

DEPT-MON-1981-6795-



DOSSIERS DE CCC  
CCA FILES

MULTI-YEAR OPERATIONAL PLAN  
Consumer Services Sub-Activity  
1984-1988

Submitted by: Maureen Walsworth  
Director

Approved by: H. Levesque Hendricks  
ADM, Consumer Affairs

Date: 1984-02-16

Ce plan est disponible dans les deux langues officielles.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page - (ii)

### **PART A: ORGANIZATION AND PROGRAMS**

1.0	ORGANIZATION AND PROGRAMS.....	1
1.1	Description of Standard Role and the Organization.....	1
1.2	Mandate.....	2
1.3	Legislation.....	3
1.4	Resource Summary.....	3

### **PART B: ENVIRONMENT**

2.0	ENVIRONMENT.....	4
2.1	Issues, Threats and Opportunities.....	4
2.1.1	Government Programs and Liaison.....	4
2.1.2	Business Relations.....	4
2.1.3	Vulnerable Consumers.....	5
2.1.4	Consumer Movement.....	6
2.2	Major assumptions.....	6
2.2.1	Government Programs and Liaison.....	6
2.2.2	Business Relations.....	6
2.2.3	Vulnerable Consumers.....	6
2.2.4	Consumer Movement.....	6
2.3	Workload forecast and impact on operations...	7
2.3.1	Government Programs and Liaison.....	7
2.3.1	Business Relations.....	7
2.3.2	Vulnerable Consumers.....	7
2.3.4	Consumer Movement.....	8
2.4	Regional perspective.....	8
2.4.1	Government Programs and Liaison.....	8
2.4.2	Business Relations .....	9
2.4.3	Vulnerable Consumers.....	9
2.4.4	Consumer Movement.....	10

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont'd)

Page - (iii)

### **PART C: PROGRAM PLANS**

3.0	PROGRAM PLANS.....	11
3.1	Major changes.....	11
3.2	Program objectives, priorities and long term operational objectives.....	11
3.2.1	Program objectives.....	11
3.2.2	Priorities.....	12
3.2.3	Long term operational objectives.....	14
3.2.3.1	Government Programs and Liaison...	14
3.2.3.2	Business Relations.....	14
3.2.3.3	Vulnerable Consumers.....	15
3.2.3.4	Consumer Movement.....	15
3.3	Charts (Long term operational objectives)	
3.3.1	Government Programs and Liaison.....	17
3.3.2	Business Relations.....	18
3.3.3	Vulnerable Consumers.....	19
3.3.4	Consumer Movement.....	20
3.4	Resource justification and deployment.....	21
3.4.1	Government Programs and Liaison.....	21
3.4.2	Business Relations.....	21
3.4.3	Vulnerable Consumers.....	21
3.4.4	Consumer Movement.....	22
3.5	Long range implications on central services..	24
3.5.1	Communications Service.....	24
3.5.2	Management Services.....	24
3.5.3	Policy Coordination Bureau.....	24
3.6	Human resources issues.....	24
3.6.1	Legislative changes.....	24
3.6.2	Program changes.....	25
3.6.3	Organizational changes.....	25
3.6.4	New skill requirements.....	25
3.6.5	Workforce.....	25

## MULTI-YEAR OPERATIONAL PLAN 1984-1985

### PART A: ORGANIZATION AND PROGRAMS

#### **1.0     ORGANIZATION AND PROGRAMS**

##### **1.1     Description of Standard Role and the Organization**

Within the sub-activity there are two distinct roles: the role of the Headquarters Branch and that of the Field.

The role of the Headquarters Branch has the following four components:

- providing advice to senior management on all matters relating to consumer affairs within the mandate described below;
- acting as program managers for the sub-activity with the following responsibilities:
  - coordinating the Headquarters and regional workplans
  - monitoring the achievement of the sub-activity workplan and reporting on a quarterly basis
  - evaluating the performance of the sub-activity with reference to its mandate
- providing functional guidance to the Field through:
  - the preparation of strategies and planning frameworks
  - the preparation of technical guidelines within the specialist areas of the mandate
  - the provision of ad hoc technical advice on a day-to-day basis
  - the provision of skills transfer workshops to meet identified technical needs
- delivering certain national aspects of the sub-activity workplan.

The role of the Field has the following three components:

- participating in the planning process for the sub-activity as a whole;
- preparing annual workplans within the context of strategies and planning frameworks provided by the Headquarters Branch through:
  - the identification of local opportunities
  - the prioritization of these local opportunities on the basis of the most efficient use of available resources
- implementing the annual workplan, and reporting progress on a quarterly basis.

The Consumer Services Branch in Headquarters is organized along program lines into the four following Divisions, each headed by a Chief:

- Government Programs and Liaison
- Business Relations
- Vulnerable Consumers
- Consumer Movement

The Consumer Services Field element is organized along geographic lines into the following five regions, each headed by a Regional Manager:

- Atlantic Region with district offices located in Dartmouth, Sydney, Fredericton, Moncton, Corner Brook, St. John's, Charlottetown.
- Quebec Region with district offices located in Montreal, Québec, Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivières, Chicoutimi, Rimouski.
- Ontario Region with district offices located in Toronto, Ottawa, Sudbury, London, Hamilton.
- Prairie Region with district offices located in Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary.
- Pacific Region with district offices located in Vancouver and Victoria. Two program officers located in Vancouver and Victoria are responsible for the geographic areas of Kelowna and Prince George.

## **1.2 Mandate**

There are four aspects to the mandate of the Consumer Services sub-activity which may be expressed as follows:

### **Government Programs and Liaison**

- supporting the consumer interests in the administration and implementation of government programs and regulations. Areas where the consumer interest could be better served will be determined by appropriate intelligence gathering. The sub-activity will seek to increase consideration of the consumer interest by the preparation of memoranda, analyses and position papers by direct intervention or for consideration by the ADM, Consumer Affairs.

### **Consumer Movement**

- strengthening the consumer's role in the marketplace by assisting consumers in organizing for appropriate collective action. This is a special consumer relations activity concerned with such aspects as monitoring the effectiveness of existing consumer groups, and offering technical support, core funding for certain groups, supporting projects and catalyzing and stimulating consumerism through community based projects aimed at collective action in the marketplace.

### Business Relations

- accelerating the trend within business to become more socially responsible and sensitive to the consumer's interest. The purpose of these relationships will be to guide and catalyze the production of objective consumer product information, the establishment of appropriate mechanisms for resolving consumer complaints, the handling of exigent problems and the maintenance of the quality of goods and services at an appropriately high standard.

### Vulnerable Consumers

- continuing to attempt to influence efforts in government, voluntary sectors and business for the purpose of ensuring that the market adequately serves vulnerable consumers.

### 1.3 Legislation

This sub-activity functions under the general enabling legislation of the department. It administers the Tax Rebate Discounting Act (TRDA).

### 1.4 Resource Summary \*

The sub-activity's person-year allocation has been cut 1 PY commencing in the year 1984/85 of the planning period, and its operating budget has been reduced by \$8,000.

<u>HQ</u>	<u>ATL</u>	<u>QUE</u>	<u>ONT</u>	<u>PRA</u>	<u>PAC</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
21	15	13	17	12	9	87

Financial resourcing over the planning period is displayed below.

	<u>83/84</u>	<u>84/85</u>	<u>85/86</u>	<u>86/87</u>	<u>87/88</u>
\$000	3601	3805	3805	3805	3805

\*This resource summary does not reflect the Change Proposal being put forth to Treasury Board for TRDA.

## **PART B: ENVIRONMENT**

### **2.0 ENVIRONMENT**

#### **2.1 Issues, Problems, Threats and Opportunities**

##### **2.1.1 Government Programs and Liaison**

Canada will continue to experience diversity and rapid change in economic, social, and political conditions. This diversity and change will cause government activities to evolve, and will cause new government activities to be developed. The necessity to ensure that, as government activities are implemented and administered, any potential adverse effect on the consumer is minimized, will continue.

There appears to be a growing awareness by the general public of the need for greater public participation in the regulatory process. There also appears to be a growing acceptance by government of the challenge to meet that need. These conditions create the opportunity for greater acceptance of the mandate of Government Programs and Liaison.

##### **2.1.2 Business Relations**

Consumers will continue to require support and assistance in the marketplace. However, there are diminished resources available to governments to respond, directly, to these needs. The particular support and assistance required, directly associated with business, by the consumer falls within the following areas: improved recourse and input mechanisms, and improved quality of products and product-related service.

There is an established trend within business to treat consumer affairs as good business. This means that business could be supplying or could be encouraged to supply this type of support and assistance to the consumer as an extension to, or as part of, its current involvement in consumer affairs.

There is a continuing need on the part of business to enhance recourse mechanisms available to consumers, to enhance the opportunities for consumers to provide feedback to business on a variety of concerns, particularly about the quality of products and product-related service. There is also a continuing need for the provision, by business, of objective consumer information which will enhance consumers' interest in and ability to make effective purchasing decisions.

While major consumer concerns remain extant, there is an increasing trend towards a greater sense of corporate social responsibility on the part of business. This will provide the sub-activity with the opportunity during this planning period to accelerate the growing recognition on the part of business that customer satisfaction is a key factor in the profitability of business. Recognition on the part of the business community that the trend to specialization in an increasingly diverse market makes the cost of attracting new customers extremely expensive - in comparison to retaining current customers - will provide the sub-activity with an additional opportunity to convince business to enhance its consumer affairs and customer relations programs in the interest of market retention. The resources of business would be used to carry out activity on behalf of the consumer interest - resources far in excess of those available to the sub-activity during the planning period.

However, there is continuing uncertainty within the business community about current and future economic conditions that could affect growth and profitability. This could lead to reluctance or even failure on the part of business to maintain or enhance its current consumer affairs and customer relations programs. Such a trend would further jeopardize the consumer interest, put increased pressure on governments to respond directly to marketplace problems and tarnish the image of the business community in the eyes of consumers.

### 2.1.3 Vulnerable Consumers

Certain classes of consumers, such as the elderly, the disabled, migrating natives, youth, and new Canadians (immigrants and refugees) are vulnerable to receiving less value for their consumer dollar spent than the majority of the consumer population. The major problem is that to correct or to offset their particular consumer vulnerability would require resources far beyond those currently available within the sub-activity.

The opportunities foreseen within the planning period stem from certain activities and initiatives undertaken in the private and public sectors. In particular, the U.N. designates special years to focus upon the needs of certain population classes such as International Year of Women, International Year of the Disabled, and International Year for Youth. This brings added attention to those groups of people in the marketplace and a concurrent opportunity to focus on their consumer problems.

It will be possible for the sub-activity to piggyback upon this special national interest and to steer resources available within related voluntary organizations, business interests and governments to assist with the special consumer related needs within the target population. In this manner, resources considerably greater than those directly available within the sub-activity can be brought to bear to respond to the consumer needs of vulnerable consumers. In the final analysis, the success of the program relies on the commitment and participation of the established marketplace forces in working together to address special consumer problems.

#### 2.1.4 Consumer Movement

Individual consumers remain the silent majority in the marketplace, traditionally dominated by business. Consumers collectively, have shown little capacity for effective lobbying, compared to business, industry and labour. The marketplace is therefore unbalanced against the consumer. This is compounded by an adverse economic situation, since government can never deploy sufficient resources to resolve the current imbalance, nor can it directly organize consumer groups for effective lobby. There is a need for the sub-activity to act as a catalyst and to stimulate consumers to organize themselves more effectively.

### 2.2 Major assumptions

The major assumption for the planning period is that the national strategies and program frameworks will form the basis of all Headquarters and Regional initiatives of the sub-activity in work planning and implementation.

#### 2.2.1 Government Programs and Liaison

It is assumed that the Government Programs and Liaison strategy will have been fully developed and workplans prepared and implemented during 1984-85.

#### 2.2.2 Business Relations

It is assumed that the strategy will be fully operational within the first year of the planning cycle. It is also assumed that the program will continue to attract, increasingly, the interest of the business community.

#### 2.2.3 Vulnerable Consumers

It is assumed that the strategy will be fully operational within the first year of the planning cycle. Furthermore, it is assumed that the program will achieve higher profile with resultant demands and expectations for more community initiatives and on a national scale.

#### 2.2.4 Consumer Movement

It is assumed that the Consumer Movement strategy will be partly operational during 1984-85. It is expected that the first year of implementation will be primarily developmental, devoted to laying the necessary groundwork for future significant initiatives. It is further assumed that the strategy and mission of the program will excite the voluntary sector to be pro-active in its relations with other sectors of the marketplace.

## **2.3     Workload forecast and impact on operations**

### **2.3.1   Government Programs and Liaison**

Future intelligence gathering will increase the number of areas identified where consideration of the consumer interest can be improved in the implementation and administration of government activities. Due to this increase in workload, there will be a need to refine the process for selection of the areas where the sub-activity can most effectively concentrate its limited resources.

The annual number of tax rebate discounting transactions has continued to increase by at least 100% each year. The obvious increase in workload will necessitate new efficiency measures.

Impressed demands comprise a significant portion of the workload in this work element. Should impressed demands require more than 20% of the time allocated to program areas other than TRDA, project work and other program work may be delayed.

### **2.3.2   Business Relations**

Due to the acceptance of the Business Relations strategy, which is based upon a marketing approach, available resources will be strained to produce the necessary product line (publications designed to assist sub-activity staff in securing commitment from business to improve customer service, while at the same time satisfying the needs of their own organizations).

As a consequence, there will be a need to exercise restraint in the development of product line, linking it only to the delivery of national projects. In turn, this will require that Consumer Services staff make full use of the marketing concept in applying the available product line to program delivery.

Impressed demands will continue to be a factor affecting the time available for project and other program work. Project and other program work may be delayed if impressed demands exceed the 30 person days set aside for response by the Headquarters component.

### **2.3.3   Vulnerable Consumers**

The process and strategy described in the program plan will tax available resources totally. It may be anticipated that as the program becomes known to the voluntary and private sector, the demand on officers for more leadership will increase. There is a backlog of explanatory information outstanding for vulnerable consumers who are disabled, as well as a need to develop promotional material for the program. This will place unusual strain on existing resources.

It may be anticipated that as the program succeeds and becomes known to the voluntary and private sectors there will be increased demands on officers to provide leadership and support in the problem-solving process. Currently, officers use their resources to deal with selected problems determined by a variety of criteria (opportunity for success, skill and leadership requirements, timing, consumer priority, commitment from organizations). For the most part, the officer determines how to use which procedure. However, as organizations become involved in the concerns of a particular population (e.g. disabled, elderly, or youth) they will expect the officers to continue their involvement in the concerns of these populations. The officer's control on any issue will be conditioned critically by these raised expectations for continuity beyond any particular year and for any particular population. It will be necessary then to emphasize the self-help model amongst marketplace organizations in an effort to compensate for the increased workload.

#### 2.3.4 Consumer Movement

With a recent change in delivery strategy for the funding of consumer organizations, resources will be taxed to the limit. In addition, with recent Cabinet approval of government policy regarding assistance to the voluntary sector, demands for technical support from consumer related groups and organizations are expected to increase.

There will be natural resistance to change from many organizations currently dependent on support from the Consumer Movement Program. In order to avoid confrontation, officers will have to spend a great deal of time persuading and educating voluntary organizations in an effort to achieve consensus support for the program initiatives. Much of this activity may be deemed technical support (e.g. how to build membership, how to organize effectively, or how to raise money) but it will require extraordinary attention from officers as the program develops through the transition phases of the program plan.

#### 2.4 Regional perspective

A major factor in the environment within which the MYOP will be implemented is the set of particular conditions within each region. Much of the mandate of the Consumer Services sub-activity will ultimately be implemented at the local level and consequently it is necessary to take into account local issues, local capacities demonstrated through initiatives, significant regional deviations from what may be considered national norms, and any highlights of recent activities. It is convenient to discuss these regional considerations under each component of the mandate.

##### 2.4.1 Government Programs and Liaison

The regional and district offices, being in close contact with consumers and consumer groups, are in an excellent position to identify existing consumer issues. Furthermore, they are fostering an ongoing working relationship with provincial and regional federal officials. This means that they can play a particularly valuable role in the process of providing input into certain decisions made in the administration of government activities, particularly where the decisions have a uniquely regional impact. The sub-activity's strategy is directed toward taking full advantage of the unique position enjoyed by regional and district offices.

It should be noted that the precise nature of the role to be played by the Regions will vary, depending on the relationship existing between the individual Regional Office and its federal and provincial counterparts. In the Atlantic Region, the conference call among senior provincial officials, chaired by the Regional Director, continues, while a new Federal Information Sharing Committee, on which the sub-activity is represented, has begun holding monthly meetings. While direct federal/provincial relationships are somewhat tenuous in Québec, effective contact is maintained at the working level in Ontario and the Prairies, and at a senior level in the Pacific Region.

#### 2.4.2 Business Relations

Due to the concentration of business in Ontario and Québec, these two Regions continue to have the greatest opportunity and scope to tap the higher levels of management in the manufacturing and national retailing sectors, servicing industries and trade associations for the benefit of consumers across Canada.

#### 2.4.3 Vulnerable Consumers

Responding effectively to the identified needs of vulnerable consumers across Canada will demand considerable ingenuity and credibility at the regional level. The fundamental geographic and socio-economic characteristics vary widely from region to region and are changing rapidly as people adapt to the requirements of the marketplace. Furthermore, socio-demographic features of Canada require a flexible and responsive strategy for intervention at the community level.

Although vulnerable consumers as a class may be represented in various generic groups throughout Canada, individually their prime point of contact is their local community. It remains, however, the task of the officer to generate interest and commitment from various community organizations in order to respond effectively to their consumer problems. These organizations come from the private, voluntary and public sectors of the marketplace. However, they are not developed equally from region to region in Canada. In Quebec, for example, there is a strong possibility for change using the consensus strategy because the voluntary movement is strong and there is a large number of businesses with local affiliations. The opportunities for mounting community action plans will be greater than is the case in Northern Canada or smaller Prairie communities. While the voluntary movement is not as strong in the Atlantic or in the Ontario regions, there are organizations from the public and private sector which can be motivated to respond to consumer problems of the target population. The task is one of identifying priorities which would attract participation from all organizations.

#### 2.4.4 Consumer Movement

The state of the consumer movement in Canada varies widely from region to region, perhaps being most visible in Quebec.

Given the "grass-roots" orientation of the Consumer Movement program, the regions will have a significant contribution to make in terms of identifying consumer problems. Geography interest variables and fragmentation are factors which will mitigate against the development of a cohesive network of consumer groups. This is especially relevant for the Prairies where great distances must be overcome in the interest of communication and cooperation.

## PART C: PROGRAM PLANS

### **3.0 PROGRAM PLANS**

#### **3.1 Major changes**

The current plan, as laid out in this document, represents no significant change from the previous MYOP. It is a continuing articulation of established directions.

#### **3.2 Program objectives, priorities and long term objectives**

##### **3.2.1 Program objectives**

The hierarchy of program objectives and sub-objectives for the sub-activity relates to the Bureau's strategic objective: ...to promote policies to...assist and represent consumers...

However, these rights, as stated, seem to imply a unilateral approach by the Bureau to consumer affairs programs. Therefore, in order to reflect the multi-faceted nature of the involvement of the sub-activity in consumer affairs the program objective for the sub-activity, with four sub-objectives, is stated as:

TO FACILITATE CONSUMERS ACHIEVING THEIR POTENTIAL AS APPROPRIATE ACTORS IN THE MARKETPLACE - AT MINIMUM COST TO THE MARKET SYSTEM AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
--

- TO SUPPORT THE CONSUMER INTEREST AS LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS AND POLICIES AFFECTING THE MARKETPLACE ARE IMPLEMENTED AND ADMINISTERED.
- TO HELP ENSURE THAT CONSUMER NEEDS ARE MET, BY WORKING WITH AND THROUGH BUSINESS.
- TO HELP RESOLVE SPECIAL CONSUMER PROBLEMS BY INFLUENCING ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CANADIAN MARKETPLACE.
- TO HELP CONSUMERS COLLECTIVELY STRENGTHEN THEIR POSITION IN THE MARKETPLACE BY WORKING WITH CANADIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR.

### 3.2.2 Priorities

The detailed priorities of the sub-activity over the planning period are in descending order of priority as follows:

- bringing into operation the recently staffed headquarters organization through concentrated orientation, training and development
- developing strategies and planning frameworks to be used nationally in the implementation of the sub-activity's work
- securing early program implementation results so that feedback can be generated useful for refining strategies and program plans
- developing appropriate functional guidance material that will contribute to support the momentum of program implementation
- monitoring the need for new skills training in order to develop a body of professional competence
- scanning the marketplace for opportunities to enhance the catalytic role of the sub-activity

These sub-activity priorities are supportive of the following Bureau priorities (as listed in a memorandum from the ADM to Directors "Multi-Year Operational Plan", 9 September 1983).

- Bureau priorities
  - improving our management of human resources
  - increasing our awareness of and responsiveness to the needs and concerns of the publics we serve
  - increasing our productivity
  - seeking better congruence of legislation and programs and the present social, economic and political environment with due regard to needs, costs and benefits.
  - program implementation and the establishment of criteria for evaluating results.
- Bureau objective

To establish and enforce rules and promote policies to protect, inform, assist and represent consumers and to maintain equity in market transactions based on measurement.

The following matrix has been constructed to underline the relationship among the sub-activity priorities and those of the Consumer Bureau.

	Organization	Strategies/ Program plans	Results	Functional Guidance	Training	Scanning
Improve management of human resources	X			X	X	
Increase awareness/responsiveness to needs and concerns of publics served		X	X			X
Increase productivity	X	X	X	X	X	X
Better congruence of legislation, etc.						
Program implementation	X	X	X	X		

### 3.2.3 Long term operational objectives

The setting of long term objectives in each of the four areas covered by the strategic sub-objectives is a difficult task. This difficulty stems from the fact that initial accomplishments in the total area of the mandate depend upon recognizing and seizing opportunities. Judgment or a long range estimate as to the achievements that will be made by the sub-activity is presented below.

#### 3.2.3.1 Government Programs and Liaison

In five years' time, the sub-activity should have an explicit and recognized involvement in improving the consumer interest in government programs as demonstrated by:

- the existence of an information gathering system having the capability of providing continuous information on new and evolving government programs, policies and regulations to permit the timely identification of unfavourable impacts of such programs, etc., upon the consumer and to assure the appropriate, timely representation of the consumer interest.
- the implementation of a process for bringing the substantive details of the unfavourable impact to the attention of the appropriate actors in government.
- a successful record of dealing with several issues.
- the existence of a process for ongoing interdepartmental and intergovernmental dialogue on consumer issues and concerns of mutual interest.
- several examples of positive achievements resulting from interdepartmental or intergovernmental cooperation and/or collaboration on innovative ventures.
- the existence of a backlog of issues needing the attention of the sub-activity.

#### 3.2.3.2 Business Relations

In five years' time, through the implementation of the Business Relations strategy, the sub-activity should have established ongoing working relationships with business. This will allow the sub-activity to capitalize on the trend by the business community towards increasing social responsibility, as demonstrated by:

- the existence of processes for influencing, stimulating, and catalyzing the resources of business to:

- \* improve or establish consumer recourse mechanisms
  - \* establish or promote mechanisms within specific sectors, such as the motor vehicle industry, for resolution of consumer complaints, e.g. mediation, arbitration panels, consumer advisory committees and the like
  - \* provide forums for influencing the quality of products and product-related services.
- the experience of influencing a large and substantive fraction of Canadian business.
  - examples where the direct involvement by business will reduce the demands for complaint resolution and consumer product information on the sub-activity.

### 3.2.3.3 Vulnerable Consumers

In five years' time, it should be evident that several groups of vulnerable consumers have learned how to take responsibility and initiative to participate on an equal footing with other marketplace participants in Canada. The resultant effects of the sub-activity's endeavours in this regard will be a stronger self-help movement and greater attention paid to those who have consumer needs which have not been addressed.

The goals to be achieved in this program are directly linked to the development of marketplace resources. Although there will be different populations targeted each year (such as youth, natives, lone-parent families, new Canadians), the problem-solving strategy established to address the consumer problems of the vulnerable will draw on existing community resources and use these in such a way as to develop and expand the resources of each organization within the self-help movement. As this occurs there are direct benefits to the consumer, while at the same time, the sub-activity uses its resources to facilitate a process which continually creates new resources for handling unidentified consumer problems of the future.

### 3.1.3.4 Consumer Movement

It is to be expected that, in five years' time, the proposed new funding strategy will have been fully implemented and will have been in operation for at least two years. As a result, the consumer movement should exhibit the following characteristics:

- there should exist a strong national consumer organization that is linked in a broad network with other national voluntary organizations as well as with its own regional and local counterparts. The other voluntary organizations would comprise a wide variety of groups such as labour organizations, women's institutions, church groups and community groups.

- there should exist a reliable, practical process for identifying, monitoring and documenting consumer problems and information dissemination to consumer organizations.
- there should be a body of appropriate professional competence within, or easily accessed by, the consumer movement.
- there should be a process for continuously using and expanding these new linkages via conferences, meetings, seminars and published material.

Long-term operational objectives

3.3.1 Government Programs and Liaison

1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
<p>Experience with publicity of consumer affairs within government</p> <p>Begin to design and initiate information gathering system for identifying the impact of government programs on the consumer</p> <p>Begin to design the process for making cogent cases relating to government programs where the consumer interest could be better served</p>	<p>Completion of information gathering system</p> <p>Early experience with an information gathering system which will allow the identification of issues to be pursued in the current and/or following years of the plan</p> <p>Redesign, on the basis of early experience, information gathering system</p> <p>Experience with making cases</p> <p>Redesign the process for making cogent cases, with emphasis on promoting ongoing interdepartmental and intergovernmental dialogue on pertinent issues of mutual interest</p>	<p>New publicity oriented projects to increase the visibility of consumer affairs in government</p> <p>Refine process for ensuring a continuing appreciation of consumer affairs in government</p> <p>Refine, on the basis of the experience of dealing with early cases, the information gathering system</p> <p>Refine the process for making cogent cases</p> <p>Several cogent cases presented</p> <p>Early constructive experience including increased awareness resulting from inter-departmental and intergovernmental dialogue</p>	<p>Positive evidence of an increased appreciation of the function of consumer affairs in government</p> <p>Functioning process for timely identification of impact upon the consumer</p> <p>Mechanism in place for bringing these impacts to the attention of appropriate government officials</p> <p>Successful record of dealing with several issues</p> <p>Backlog of issues to deal with</p> <p>Increased inter-departmental/inter-governmental dialogue</p> <p>Early examples of interdepartmental/intergovernmental cooperation</p>	<p>Positive evidence of an increased appreciation of the function of consumer affairs in government</p> <p>Functioning process for timely identification of impact upon the consumer</p> <p>Mechanism in place for bringing these impacts to the attention of appropriate government officials</p> <p>Successful record of dealing with several issues</p> <p>Backlog of issues to deal with</p> <p>Increased inter-departmental/inter-governmental dialogue</p> <p>Early examples of interdepartmental/intergovernmental cooperation</p>

Long-term operational objectives

3.3.2 Business Relations

1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
<p>To identify and analyse the policies of major retailers concerning consumer recourse mechanisms</p> <p>To undertake activity leading to the establishment by business of motor vehicle resolution mechanisms</p> <p>To identify and act upon opportunities for the establishment of advisory panels to influence the quality of goods and services</p>	<p>To review and determine the degree to which these policies meet the needs of consumers and business, and to undertake activity leading to their revision, enhancement or promotion</p> <p>To undertake activity which secures increased direct involvement of the motor vehicle industry in consumer problem resolution mechanisms</p> <p>To undertake activity which encourages the manufacturing sector to set up consumer feedback mechanisms (such as consumer advisory and focus panels) concerning the quality of goods and product-related services</p> <p>To undertake a review of internal procedures for the referral of complaints and enquiries to government or the private sector, as appropriate</p>	<p>Early examples of new or enhanced refund/return policies by major retailers.</p> <p>Involvement of new industry sectors in improved mechanisms for consumer recourse</p> <p>Commitment to, and planning underway, on the part of at least one business in the manufacturing sector to establish a focus group or advisory panel</p> <p>To implement improved internal procedures for complaint and enquiry referral</p>	<p>Demonstrated practice by a large percentage of retailers of posting return policies</p> <p>Continued increased participation by industry in new or improved resolution mechanisms for consumer recourse and consumer feedback mechanisms</p>	<p>The existence of processes for influencing, stimulating and catalyzing the resources of business to</p> <p>*improve/establish consumer recourse mechanisms</p> <p>*establish or promote mechanisms for resolution of consumer complaints</p> <p>*provide forums for influencing the quality of products and product-related services</p> <p>Examples where the direct involvement by business have reduced demands for complaint resolution and consumer product and product-related service information on the sub-activity</p>

Long-term operational objectives

3.3.3 Vulnerable Consumers

1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
<p>To produce a discussion paper on the Vulnerable Consumer and appropriate methodologies for resolving their problems in the marketplace</p> <p>To establish an advisory and consultative mechanism at the national level of/for the vulnerable consumer (focus on elderly and youth)</p> <p>To prepare a compendium of special projects for youth to commemorate the International Youth Year</p> <p>To determine the feasibility of developing a computerized inventory system of identified organizations</p>	<p>To establish a marketplace forum as a mechanism for consulting with national organizations on matters related to vulnerable consumers</p> <p>To provide technical assistance to regions that request help in developing relationships with community organizations</p> <p>To produce a special monograph on consumer concerns of youth in Canada</p> <p>To provide an in-service training program on community action strategies</p> <p>To assist organizations to develop, implement and evaluate a community project.</p>	<p>To evaluate marketplace forum as a means of establishing national priorities</p> <p>To evaluate and adjust the program strategy and planning framework</p> <p>To establish a working relationship with international organizations and associations of/for vulnerable consumer groups.</p> <p>To evaluate Summer Canada programs as a support to the Consumer Problems Survey</p>	<p>To expand advisory and consultative parameters to include Forum of all target populations affiliated with the International Year for "Shelter for the Homeless"</p> <p>To ensure that adjustments to the program strategy and planning framework are understood and incorporated into routine practice at field level</p> <p>To evaluate effectiveness of network building mechanisms.</p>	<p>To utilize the services of consumer panels or focus groups to draft recommendations for a consistent national approach to solving the specific consumer problems of vulnerable people</p> <p>To evaluate the program strategy and the use of the community intervention model for problem-solving by district and regional staff.</p>

Long-term operational objectives

3.3.4 Consumer Movement

1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
<p>To assess the present funding program and seek approval of new funding strategy</p> <p>To develop Program Plan and national strategy</p> <p>To design and develop a national consumer movement newsletter</p> <p>To develop a reporting form for use with consumer movement organizations</p> <p>To develop a problem identification process and quarterly summary report format</p>	<p>To market the funding program</p> <p>To implement the Program Plan at all levels, with emphasis on problem identification and organization needs</p> <p>To produce pilot tests of a national newsletter</p> <p>To document organization needs, current activities and perception of consumer problems</p> <p>To identify staff skill needs</p> <p>To provide technical assistance to regional offices</p> <p>To prepare an inventory which identifies technical support resources to the consumer movement</p>	<p>To implement the new funding strategy through transition stages</p> <p>To evaluate newsletter and other methods of increasing involvement of consumer organizations in the identification of consumer problems.</p> <p>To upgrade staff skills</p> <p>To increase technical support to consumer organizations</p>	<p>To continue to implement the new funding strategy through transition stages</p> <p>To promote tactics and strategies for consumer organizations to respond to identified issues and problems</p> <p>To transfer to Consumer Movement organizations more responsibility for newsletter content, promotion and distribution</p> <p>To increase the involvement of the Consumer Movement relating to newsletter content, promotion and distribution</p>	<p>To adjust the Program Plan to contribute to the existence of a strong consumer movement, with a national infrastructure and locally-supported groups, as well as existence of a body of professional support to the consumer movement</p> <p>To evaluate mechanisms for the identification of consumer problems</p> <p>To increase organization effectiveness of the consumer movement</p>

### 3.4 Resource justification and deployment

#### 3.4.1 Government Programs and Liaison

The goals of Government Programs and Liaison work element are to effectively administer the Tax Rebate Discounting Act and to support the consumer interest in the administration and implementation of government activities generally. Administration of the statute will require the monitoring and processing of activities and documents related to as many as 300,000 tax rebate discounting transactions in 1984-85. The remaining staffs in Headquarters and the regions are dedicated to the goal of supporting the consumer interest in government, through the operation of a process designed to provide government decision-makers with the information they require on consumer issues to make balanced decisions.

Administration of the Tax Rebate Discounting Act is a duty imposed on the Department by the statute itself. Supporting the consumer interest in government activities is essential to realizing the Bureau's strategic objective of assuring consumers of their rights in the marketplace, since the role that government occasionally plays in the marketplace cannot realistically be ignored.

#### 3.4.2 Business Relations

The Business Relations program is committed to working with business to improve or establish recourse mechanisms, to establish better mechanisms for feedback from consumers to business and to encourage business to improve product and product-related service quality. To achieve these objectives, it is necessary to have trained personnel in place with well-developed skills who are fully capable of encouraging business to recognize the economic opportunities inherent in effective consumer affairs and customer relations programs and also to encourage business to develop or enhance effective programs and activity in these areas. In this way, the Business Relations program will ensure that consumer needs are met in the marketplace in a manner which also benefits business.

A major commitment of resources continues to be required for the ongoing task of complaint and enquiry handling. This includes receiving or resolving complaints and/or enquiries through referral or direct action, as appropriate. It also includes in the headquarters component, the handling of ministerial correspondence.

#### 3.4.3 Vulnerable Consumers

The Vulnerable Consumer program is committed to work with organizations in the marketplace in order to help resolve consumer problems of vulnerable groups of people. The sub-activity's role is facilitatory with some elements of low-profile leadership. The essential resources for any of these activities will be contributed from established forces in the marketplace. However, there will be a need for trained personnel equipped with current market intelligence to bring about commitments and decisions for action from other marketplace participants.

The end result of the process benefits the consumer in two ways: 1) an outstanding problem is addressed and some useful change should occur; 2) the consumer, through the organizations, achieves a new degree of credibility, confidence and partnership within the marketplace. This has a ripple effect directly on consumer organizations but as well on related organizations which participate in the process capitalizing on a minimum resource investment.

#### 3.4.4 Consumer Movement

The Consumer Movement program attempts to strengthen the consumers' role in the marketplace, by supporting consumer efforts to organize for responsible collective action. There are two complementary components to the program. These financial and non-financial elements represent a strategy for change which responds to emerging consumer problems as well as the operational needs identified by consumer related organizations.

Program delivery modifications are planned for the funding activity in light of limited financial resources, the diverse nature of consumer and consumer-related organizations and the proliferation of local initiatives aimed at the provision of a specific service. An overriding consideration in the administration of the funding activity is to use resources in such a way as to reduce dependency on the government and to promote self-sufficiency and confidence amongst organizations in the voluntary sector.

The non-financial activity of the program relates to the technical support, market intelligence and skill development which will enhance the image and effectiveness of consumer organizations. There remains a need to augment the sub-activity's ability to respond to the needs of voluntary organizations in a systematic and consistent fashion across the country. This is a primary goal of the Consumer Movement program.

**RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT**

DESCRIPTION	83/84	84/85	85/86	86/87	87/88
AUTHORIZED	88	87	87	87	87
DIRECT WORK ELEMENTS					
1. Govt. Programs & Liaison 1)	8.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5
2. Business Relations 2)	26	24.5	24.5	24.5	24.5
3. Vulnerable Consumers	4.5	5	5	5	5
4. Consumer Movement	13	11	11	11	11
TOTAL DIRECT	52	48	48	48	48
TOTAL INDIRECT	24	26	26	26	26
OVERHEAD	12	13	13	13	13
RESOURCES REQUIRED	88	87	87	87	87
OPERATING COSTS (\$000)	3601	3805	3805	3805	3805
GRANTS & CONTRIBUTIONS (\$000)	1689	1689	1689	1689	1689

1) Includes administration of the Tax Rebate Discounting Act.

2) Includes Complaints and Enquiries (14 P/Y)

-----

Consumer Services - Headquarters  
Resource Deployment by Major Work Elements in Person-Years

	<u>1984/85</u>	<u>1983/84</u>
Total Authorized	19.9	20.0
Total Available	17.6	17.1
Government Programs & Liaison	3.3	2.9
Business Relations	3.5	3.1
Vulnerable Consumer	1.3	1.6
Consumer Movement	2.2	2.9
Other Direct	1.4	0.8
Total Direct	11.7	11.3
Total Indirect	5.9	5.8
Total All Work Elements	17.6	17.1

### 3.5 Long range implications on central services

#### 3.5.1 Communications Services

Generally, communications addressed to the public at large will not be undertaken. However, the Canadian Consumer Week project will require significant support from Communications Service. Levels of support will be detailed in the workplan.

#### 3.5.2 Management Services

Ongoing support of the existing system, improvements to project management system, and possibly some support resulting from the program evaluation framework to be developed will be required.

#### 3.5.3 Policy Coordination Bureau

- Assistance will be required for basic research to support the Vulnerable Consumer program. Specifically, the research will focus on the salient characteristics of vulnerable consumers, concentrating on natives, youth, the elderly, the urban poor and certain classes of women. The results of this research will enable program staff to target audiences and modes of intervention to assist vulnerable consumers.
- Assistance in the analysis of the consumer impact of selected government activities will be required.
- Assistance will be required into the cost effectiveness of traditional complaint handling in comparison to third party mediation or arbitration. This research will flow from a working paper on consumer redress developed in the 1983-84 program year.
- Assistance of staff from the Bureau of Policy Coordination may be required on an ad hoc basis to prepare responses for the Minister's signature or for responses to consumer issues by Consumer Services field staff.
- Assistance will be required in the development of an evaluation framework for the assessment of the various aspects of the sub-activity's mandate.

### 3.6 Human Resource Issues

#### 3.6.1 Legislative changes

It is planned to introduce amendments to the Tax Rebate Discounting Act. There is no impact on human resources.

3.6.2 Program changes

Planned changes to the delivery of the funding program to voluntary organizations will require specialized technical training to field staff. This will be developed by the sub-activity as part of the implementation of the new program.

3.6.3 Organizational changes

No significant organization restructuring is envisaged over the planning period.

3.6.4 New skill requirements

Considerable new specialist technical knowledge is required to implement the mandate. This will require extensive upgrading of skills; specialists will be sought to provide appropriate training.

3.6.5 Workforce

The person-year allocation is assumed to remain constant over the planning period. Possible increases of one or two person-years to respond to increased workload in the administration of the Tax Rebate Discounting Act may be needed.

QUEEN JL 103 .C6 W3 1984  
Wadsworth, Maureen  
Multi-year operational plan

[illegible]

INDUSTRY CANADA/INDUSTRIE CANADA



177723

