

Consumers play vital role in marketplace

By PIERRE BLAIS
Minister of Consumer and
Corporate Affairs

The second National Consumer Week, held this year from April 22 to 28, focuses on consumers as a major force in the economy. Consumers play a vital role in the marketplace, as they are the driving force behind the production line. We must provide them with the necessary tools to fulfill this role.

Ever since Confederation, the federal government has contributed to the protection of consumers and the promotion of a fair and efficient marketplace.

Today, Consumers and Corporate Affairs Canada carries on this tradition and continues to be committed to these principles through such diverse activities as ensuring the safety of products and the accuracy of measurement in trade, protecting consumers against misleading advertising and dishonest commercial practices and making sure that factual product information is provided to consumers.

The promotion of consumers' interests, including those of the most vulnerable groups - children, the elderly, and the functionally illiterate - is one of the fundamental objectives of my department. Our commitment is simply to provide Canadian consumers with a fair and equitable marketplace.

All our programs and activities are designed and implemented with this in mind. I am thinking for example, of KidsCare, our ongoing child safety awareness program established this year.

My department is also very concerned about the well-being of the elderly, and tries to identify the specific causes of accidents so that it can reduce the number that occur and improve the safety of products used by these consumers.

Consumers in the 90s will have to deal with a world in which changing demographics, globalization of trade, new products resulting from

technological change, as well as concern for the environment, will influence their behaviour and their habits.

To prepare for the future, CCAC has undertaken an extensive review of federal consumer policies by consulting with

representatives of business and consumers, as well as the provinces and territories. This review will help the federal government define its role in the changing marketplace of the 1990s.

The marketplace is where economic concepts and theories become reality, where policy becomes practice, and where the buyer and seller meet. It is,

ultimately, the place where the savings and salaries of Canadians are converted by consumers into goods, services and a standard of living.

Well-informed, demanding and confident consumers are the key to an efficient marketplace. I encourage all Canadians to participate in the activities organized for National Consumer Week, April 22 to 28.



Cancer fundraiser

Looking through seed packages at Dominion Seed House on Maple Avenue are (left to right), Charlie MacLean, president of Dominion Seeds; Pat Harris, chairperson of special events for the Halton Hills Cancer Society and Paul Armstrong, fundraising chairman for the society. Dominion Seeds will donate 10 per cent of all seed sales on April 27 to the Cancer Society. (Herald photo)

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Q. Last year, I paid a lot of medical expenses for my wife. Since she and I both have employment income, should we consider splitting the medical expenses claim?

A. Probably not. Because only those medical expenses that exceed 3% of net income (maximum \$1,542) may be claimed, it is more beneficial for the lower-income spouse to claim all the expenses incurred for both spouses, providing he or she has sufficient tax payable to absorb the expenses.



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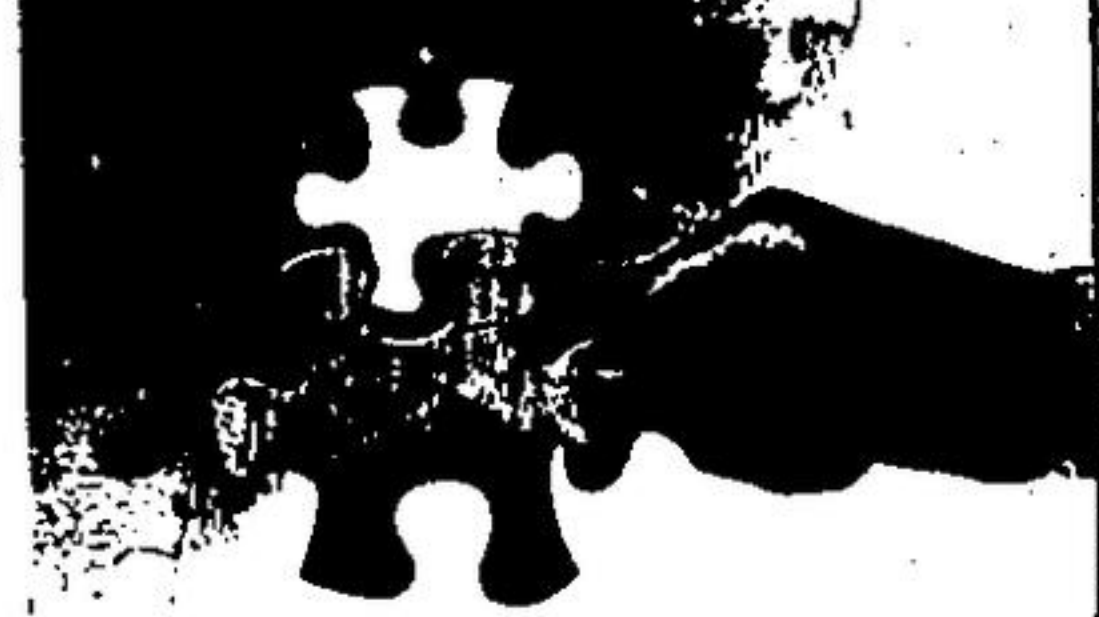
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