



**PUBLIC INTEREST ADVOCACY CENTRE**

**LE CENTRE POUR LA DEFENSE DE L'INTERET PUBLIC**

ONE Nicholas Street, Suite 1204, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 7B7

Tel: (613) 562-4002. Fax: (613) 562-0007. e-mail: [piac@piac.ca](mailto:piac@piac.ca). <http://www.piac.ca>

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Canadians Want Increased Consumer Protection For Internet Services**

A new study released today by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) highlights problems with consumer protection for customers of internet services. According to Michael Janigan, PIAC Executive Director and General Counsel, "Canadian internet customers are not being well served by the current hands-off approach to regulation of the Internet". Janigan also noted "Our survey found that almost two thirds of consumers think that the government should develop and enforce consumer protection rules. In particular, sixty-two percent of customers thought it was very important for the government to develop rules with respect to quality of service."

PIAC's study, conducted with the financial assistance of Industry Canada, reviewed the current mechanisms for self regulation and the handling of customer complaints and found them wanting. Currently consumer problems such as spam, service outages and delays, and billing complaints are handled by individual internet service providers (ISPs) in ways which are frequently not transparent or standardized. ISP practices may create an imbalance in service arrangements to the customer's disadvantage. The PIAC report also warns that the high level of concentration in the high speed Internet market, dominated by two suppliers cable and local telephone companies, bodes ill for future internet consumer welfare.

The report recommends action first by the ISPs themselves to more effectively deal with consumer problems by implementing more effective self regulation through a number of models currently available. Failing such initiative, the report finds public support for appropriate regulatory intervention.

#### **For more information please contact:**

Michael Janigan  
Executive Director/General Counsel  
Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC)  
(613) 562-4002 ext. 26  
[mjanigan@piac.ca](mailto:mjanigan@piac.ca)

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