

BRIEF TO THE STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE, TRADE  
AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS ON BILL C-2  
BY ACTION BELL CANADA  
BOX 4286 Station E Ottawa  
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Action Bell Canada is concerned about the exclusion of utility services from Bill C2 on the grounds that they are regulated in the consumer interest elsewhere.

As a citizen clearinghouse committee for efficient and inexpensive telephone service, we feel inclusion of utility services is essential for the following reasons:

- a) The federal regulatory authority is currently conspiring with private telephone companies to enter into price rate fixing arrangements through a proposed rate adjustment formula.
- b) The federal government is itself attempting to put forward an equalization of telephone rates programme as a means of pressuring the publicly owned telephone systems in the Prairie Provinces to raise their rates.
- c) Utility services at times conduct misleading advertising about their services, their availability, quality and bargains.
- d) Utility services sometimes adopt questionable price and trade practices such as rate group price categories, pay phone price categories, discount price rates for larger industrial customers, service charges (e.g., directory assistance charges) and the like.

- e) Utility services are not regulated so that individual or groups of subscribers' consumer concerns can be heard and acted on (e.g., delay in orders, suspension of services, security deposit credit practices).
  
- f) Utility services are allowed to diversify, enter into more profitable areas of business, undertake cross-subsidization, thus potentially having a detrimental effect on the provision of the basic utility service (e.g., the improvement of telecommunications services and manufacturing to the detriment of the provisions of basic telephone services on low cost quality basis).

Action Bell Canada hopes that other consumer groups will speak up on the need to strengthen other provisions of Bill C2. We view the inclusion of utility services in this consumer protection bill as one measure towards creating socially responsive and effectively managed utilities in Canada.