

May 3, 2023

Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P.
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
Department of Finance Canada
James Michael Flaherty Building
90 Elgin Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0G5

Dear Minister Freeland,

Re: Legislative Measures to Strengthen Canada's Complaint-Handling System for Bank Customers

On behalf of a coalition of consumer advocates, we are writing to express our support for the amendments in the *Budget Implementation Act, 2023, No. 1*, which will establish a single external complaints body (ECB) for banking complaints.

We commend the government for taking concrete action on this critical consumer protection issue. A system that allows banks to choose their ECB falls short of international standards and is unfair to consumers. The amendments will improve consumer outcomes, particularly for those who lack the capacity, time or resources to navigate the complex complaint resolution landscape.

Once the legislative measures come into force, we urge you to designate the Ombudsman for Banking Services and Investments (OBSI) as the single ECB. OBSI is a well-established, non-profit, independent organization that has been providing dispute-resolution services to Canadian financial consumers for over 25 years. Selecting OBSI over a different entity would serve the public interest by minimizing uncertainty and disruption for complainants. Finally, OBSI's complaint handling services already reflect many international best practices. OBSI is the clear choice to fill this crucial role.

Thank you for considering our views on this matter. We look forward to continuing progress on this important issue. We would be pleased to assist your office, the Department of Finance, and the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada in moving this issue forward in any way we can.

Sincerely and on behalf of the coalition of concerned consumer advocates,

Jean-Paul Bureaud
President, CEO and Executive Director
FAIR Canada

CC: Michael Sabia, Deputy Minister of Finance
Judith Robertson, Commissioner, Financial Consumer Agency of Canada

The coalition of concerned consumer advocates is:

FAIR Canada

Jean-Paul Bureaud
President, CEO and Executive Director

Prosper Canada

Elizabeth Mulholland
CEO

Public Interest Advocacy Centre

John Lawford
Executive Director and General Counsel

Canadian Association of Retired Persons

Bill VanGorder
Chief Operating Officer & Chief Policy Officer

CFA Societies Canada

Michael Thom
Managing Director

CanAge

Laura Tamblyn Watts
President and CEO

Option consommateurs

Christian Corbeil
Chief Executive

Kenmar Associates

Ken Kivenko
President

Consumers Council of Canada

Don Mercer
President