



Canadian Partnership for Public Policy-Oriented Consumer Interest Research (PPOCIR)

REPORT of the 2015 WORKSHOP

Held at McGill University
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With the collaboration of Anne Iavarone-Turcotte and Behnoush Amery

The PPOCIR Partnership was created to provide evidence-based insight soundly based on (i) practical experience and on (ii) research from many disciplines - to improve public policy and consumer well-being. In the process it is expected that input from policy-makers, consumer advocates, the private sector, and researchers, will lead to new opportunities for Partnership development and novel strategies for enhanced decision-making.

Expected Workshop outcomes include the following:

- ❖ Participants will provide and obtain information in readily-understandable formats, and provide feedback on current PPOCIR research projects;
- ❖ Represent and network among Canada's PPOCIR community;
- ❖ Members will gain a better understanding of the PPOCIR Partnership's objectives and how to devise - and participate in - the most promising steps Partnership can take;
- ❖ Participants will share the latest discoveries with other researchers and with practitioners interested in PPOCIR, to identify potential partners for their research needs;
- ❖ Researchers who are expert in the rigorous methods of one specific discipline will meet and exchange ideas with advocates and research users, and they will develop inter-disciplinary research connections;
- ❖ PPOCIR policy-makers will identify research areas that deserve attention.



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“Night-Before” Networking Dinner	
<p><i>Workshop participants who arrived the day before the workshop were able to engage in networking activities with other registrants at a designated restaurant.</i></p>	
Welcome over Coffee and Muffins	9:30-9:50
1. Co-Convenors’ Introduction	9:50-10:00
<p>Robert Kerton University of Waterloo Professor Kerton welcomed everyone to the thanked the many organizers who discussed and decided upon the program for the second workshop in a three year program. He expressed special gratitude to researchers and Partners who carried out joint projects and to all who came to make presentations and / or offer expertise at the 2015 Workshop.</p> <p>Geneviève Saumier McGill University Professor Saumier offered participants a warm welcome to the Workshop and to McGill, one of the co-applicant universities in the SSHRC project. She provided additional information on local arrangements, including measures to create summaries of each session in both French and English. Summaries will be available on the PPOCIR web site. Geneviève officially opened the Workshop and introduced the Graduate Student Session.</p>	
2. Capacity-Building: Graduate Student Research Projects	10:00-11:00
<p><i>Objective: Provide graduate students undertaking PPOCIR research an opportunity to present their methodology and / or findings and to obtain feedback from members of the PPOCIR community.</i></p> <p>Session Moderator: Marie Lachance, Université Laval</p> <p><i>Presenters:</i> “Every Day Legal Problems of Canadian Consumers: findings of a 2014 General Population Survey” (10:00 – 10:15)</p>	



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Matthew McManus and David Kryszajtys

York University, PhD Candidate and Masters Student

Mr. McManus presented an overview of research on the consumers' legal problems in Canada based on a more general survey conducted since 2008 by Canadian Forum on Civil Justice (CFCJ). The survey is designed to measure the multi-dimensional costs of unresolved everyday legal problems. The McManus-Kryszajtys (M-K) report looks specifically at the "who" and "what" of consumer legal problems to explore how these are related to one's attitudes about the justice system.

Mr. Kryszajtys described the methodology of their research. The data comes from a national telephone survey of 3264 Canadians 18 years or older. The original survey covered 48 problem scenarios and, from the 48, M-K identified 6 to be consumer problems. In the M-K research, respondents were asked if they had experienced consumer problems. Respondents were asked to report serious problems, actions taken in response to the problem, consequence of experiencing problems, types and adequacy of assistance received, and connections between problems and the costs related to the problem.

Based on the data, the most common type of legal problem Canadians experience is a consumer problem (24.2% of respondents). Among consumer problems, the two major ones are i) spending a large amount of money without getting what was paid for (27%) and ii) spending money for repairs or renovations that were poorly done (27.6%). Other issues reported include problems with bill or invoice (20.8%), spending money for a service and not getting what was paid for (13.4%), an insurance claim being rejected (7.3%), and safety issues with a purchase (3.8%).

Mr. McManus reported that 96.5% of Canadians who experience a consumer problem take one or more steps to try to achieve resolution: 83% contact the other party, 41.6% contact their friends. Only 7.9% contact a lawyer, compared to 15% who contact an outside organization. The data revealed that 59% of Canadians sampled resolved their consumer problems. The cost to solve the problem for 37.8% of these consumers was less than \$500, while it was between \$1000 and \$4999 for 31.9% of them.

When it comes to the relationship between legal consciousness and consumer problems, those without a consumer problem are more likely to agree that the justice system in Canada is fair. Among those with a consumer problem, consumers with higher level of education and higher income are more likely to agree that the justice system in Canada is fair. First Nation respondents are 30% less likely to agree about the fairness of the justice system in Canada.

Are there policy implications? Some services are available that do not involve accessing the



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formal legal system. For instance, Ontario residents have rights under the Consumer Protection act (CPA) and can make use of the CPA filling out a complaint with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. Residents could also contact the Better Business Bureau, or, on certain issues, the Human Rights Commissions. In many cases the financial costs to access these services are minimal.

“Evaluation of a Household Waste Management Awareness Program” (10:15-10:30) Pascale Marceau, Université Laval

Pascale Marceau presented her research project on the evaluation of an IAE campaign (Information, Awareness and Education) that is being carried out in the regional county municipality (RMC) of Arthabaska. This campaign, titled « Défi Minceur - 2lb / semaine », is a household waste management awareness program that aims to reduce the weight of residual materials (garbage) produced by households by 2 pounds a week.

The research’s goal is to measure the campaign’s impact on the audience it targets: does the campaign affect people’s level of awareness, attitudes and behaviors regarding the management of residual materials or not? The research’s chosen methodology is quantitative. Thus, citizens of Arthabaska will be surveyed by telephone and their answers compared to those of citizens of another RMC not subjected to the campaign. The idea is to measure the efficiency of IAE campaigns in order to improve them and maximise their chances of acting on economic, environmental and social problems associated with the management of residual materials.

Questions and suggestions addressed how the citizens’ awareness level, their attitudes and consumer behaviors can be measured.

“Cross-Jurisdictional Comparisons of Misleading Advertising, Privacy, Telecommunication and Copyright Consumer Protection Regimes: Preliminary Observations” (10:30-10:45) Lukas Parker, Ryerson University Masters Student

Mr. Parker first presented research of Paul Goodrick (Ryerson University) comparing public policy frameworks for mobile communication devices in Canada, Australia, UK and US. He stated that the scope of this comparison - at this stage - is very wide. Key questions in his study addressed (1) policy and sectoral regulatory bodies (2) competition policy and regulation (3) consumer protection policy and regulation, and (4) spectrum allocation policy. Lukas summarized one initial finding as a general convergence in policies toward a faster national broadband. Comparative analysis is more difficult because of differences in the definition of ‘speed’ and in the implementation of policies among the four countries.

Mr. Parker’s study adds privacy and misleading advertising regimes in the same four countries



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and examines Canada-US passing off comparisons. With a focus on national level government, his study presented four diagrams comparing misleading advertising consumer protection regime in Canada, US, UK, and Australia. There seem to be many important interactions between the state and non-state actors in UK, Australia, and the US. For example, in some cases a non-state actor, such as the Better Business Bureau, receives a consumer complaint and has an agreement with the state that allows the non-state actor to pass the case file to the state for further investigation. There are many similarities in UK and Australia.

Mr. Parker compared the consumer privacy across four jurisdictions. The US does not have privacy legislation in the way that Canada or Australia does. Then, he compares passing off claims using market research surveys. Passing off is when a producer makes a false representation that is likely to mislead consumers in to believing that the good or service is from another provider. Both Canada and U.S. have a similar legal regime with both state law and common law covering “passing off”. However, initial findings suggest that there are some differences in the approach taken in the use of survey evidence. The use of survey evidence within passing off cases is intended to investigate the impact that the misleading statement has on consumer’s beliefs and if the statement does mislead actual consumers.

Finally Mr. Parker explained a component of redress for consumer difficulties with mobile communication devices across four countries. An interesting initial finding is in regards to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) in Australia and The Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications (CCTS) in Canada. Both of these organizations are funded by the industry and all market participants must adhere to the decisions made by the organizations. Consumers are able to bring complaints to the agency to seek complaint resolution in the tele-communication sectors. Further analysis of these institutions and others will allow for a better understanding of public policy redress. This information can then be used to compare approaches and determine if there are any opportunities to improve the current regime.

“Bibliographical investigation of sociological contributions to PPOCIR in Canada” (10:45-11:00)

Mathieu Lizotte, Université Laval

The presentation focused on the new consumer practices brought about by the sharing economy (collaborative society), characterised by 4 features: 1) exchange between peers; 2) mediation on a web platform to establish consumers’ trust; 3) a critical mass of users making up a market; 4) the sharing of goods, instead of the ownership of individual property. Examples of this growing phenomenon include: Uber, EBay, Amigo Express, Kickstarter and Etsy.

The collaborative economy raises a number of questions for PPOCIR, including how to protect the consumer and the provider of goods and services; how to certify the quality of products and services (benefits vs. costs and risks); how to manage competition with existing players in the market (taxi, hotel); how to prevent or counter tax evasion, including how to distinguish between commercial exchange (taxed) and barter (not taxed).



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The presentation addressed in particular the issue of the rationality of the actors involved in the sharing economy, especially their reasons and motivations for doing so. Those include political beliefs and concerns for the environment, ethics (fair trade), health (bio labels) and security (automobile, clothing). Moreover, the collaborative economy is viewed by some as a means to support local economy and / or as a tool for social change, and / or method for stimulating innovation.

In the discussion that followed the presentation, a participant suggested that the notions of « political consumerization » and morality be explored in relation to the political and ethical factors identified. The concept of « consumer-peer to consumer-peer » (CP2CP) was also put forward to help qualify the transactions done in the sharing economy. One question raised the issue of whether the choice criteria or standards change when consumers engage in these new practices.

3. Innovative Consumer Use of ICTs and New Forms of Business-Consumer Interactions – PPOCIR Perspectives on Disruptive Changes

Objective: Provide research perspectives to contribute to the understanding of consumer issues (opportunities and threats) in the sharing economy and social media.

3A) New incentives, Roles and Modalities in the Sharing / Collaborative Economy

11:00-Noon

Session Moderator: Kernaghan Webb, Ryerson University

Presenters:

“Policy-Making in the Sharing Economy”

Sunil Johal, Mowat Centre, School of Public Policy and Governance, University of Toronto

Dr. Johal noted that Mowat Centre research includes: Policymaking for the Sharing Economy, the City of Ottawa taxi review, Tourism and the Sharing Economy for the OECD, and consulting and research reports with government agencies and the private sector. He defines the sharing economy as a marketplace or platform that allows people to buy goods and services directly from one another, instead of buying from traditional businesses. Alternatively, people share the same assets on a rental or time-share basis rather than buying.

There are many companies based on the Sharing Economy. Examples from the transportation economy include Uber and Lyft in ridesharing, and Zipcar and Autosshare in car-sharing. Etsy, eBay, and Craigslist provide examples in the retail industry. Airbnb and VRBO are sharing-service firms in accommodation; Home Repair and TaskRabbit operate in home services, while Indiegogo, Kickstarter, Prosper, and Borrowell operate in Finance.



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“A peer-to-peer transaction is not a new concept (selling things to neighbours has a long history), but the scale is.” Technology allows sharing to have scale, to be relatively frictionless and safe, thereby making sharing much more appealing. The key points about the Sharing Economy are i), it is easy to expand rapidly, and ii), there is no need for physical infrastructure to enter a new city or region. However, regulatory barriers are often central to their trajectory.

The presentation included statistics on the growth of the sharing economy. Airbnb was established in 2008 and is now valued at approximately \$25B. In the summer of 2010, fewer than 50,000 rooms were rented, while there were 17 million rooms rented in the summer of 2015. Uber was established in 2009 and is now valued at over \$50B which is more than General Motors. Uber adds 40,000 new drivers every month in the U.S. These companies grow very quickly because people like them and find them easy to use. Compelling evidence is in satisfaction rates: 65% of customers have a positive impression of Uber, while this percentage is only 29% with the taxi companies.

Sunil Johal then explained there are several players in the Sharing Economy: established operators, platforms /marketplaces, entrepreneurs /service providers /workers, consumers /users, and broader public. He mentioned that trust and reputation act as a type of invisible hand for the market. He then talked about the sectors ripe for disruption. What industry sectors will people move to in the Sharing Economy? Sectors with the shareable or rentable assets are attractive (hard assets like a car or soft like research skills). Other fertile sectors are consumer/service industries with non-specialized labour, little brand loyalty, and/or limited competition. Also attractive are industries with highly fragmented markets and those where the economics provides a “win-win” outcome, especially wherever there are a large number of people in the market.

From a public policy point of view, Sunil Johal pointed out that we need government intervention to establish a principles-based strategic operating framework - one that provides evidence on when and where the service provider does – and does not - operate properly. For example, Uber has agreed with Boston to give the city access to data in exchange for the right to operate in the city. At the end of the presentation, Sunil made the important points that consumers use performance data to choose among services in the sharing economy, and secondly, informed consumer decisions determine the value of assets in sharing-economy marketplaces, and are highly efficient in doing so.

“The Uber of Everything - How the Freed Market Economy is Disrupting and Delighting”

Ted Graham, PwC Canada

Ted Graham signed up as an Uber-X driver in September of 2002 and completed about 150 trips. He shared his lessons from the supply side stating that Uber is a \$60-billion company with about 4,000 employees. Mr. Graham explained the process of joining Uber: after scanning all his driving licence and insurance cards he was picked up by a limo and taken to a hotel for the ID verification. There were couples, retired and young people among the potential drivers. He



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viewed a half-an-hour video as training to learn how a 5-star customer service system operates. The presentation noted a measured rate of customer satisfaction with the Uber of 65% in Toronto. From this beginning, Mr. Graham also signed up for a taxi driver training program (with a four-month waiting list) and a monthly webinar.

He explained the feedback system in Uber - a two-way rating process. Drivers are rated by passengers and passengers are rated by drivers. Any drivers who receive below 4.3 out of 5 stars from the passengers must take additional training. The rule is that if improvement is not achieved within a few weeks, the driver will not be allowed to use the Uber platform. Typically, if a passenger rates a driver low, Uber compensates the passenger without question, and takes the matter up with the driver. On the other side, drivers rate passengers, giving a low score when passengers make them wait for a long time or make their car messy. The drivers are the car owners so they care about how passengers use or abuse the car. The passengers who receive low rates for a while will be given a warning by Uber. Passengers can always ask Uber how they have been rated.

Drivers face risks and rewards. One risk is hostility of taxi drivers. In one example, when a taxi driver saw someone sitting in the back seat of a car instead of front seat, the presumption was that an Uber relationship existed. The taxi driver took a picture, ostensibly to be sent to the driver's insurance company to let them know that this driver is using his car as a taxi. The result can be an increase in their insurance fee. To date, (December, 2015) there are no insurance companies that legitimately insure Uber drivers. There can be a secondary policy on the drivers but there is an unresolved gap until a driver turns on the app, probably only when the passengers is in the back seat. This raises a question about whether there is any coverage prior to arrival. If the driver has an accident on the way to pick up a passenger, is it covered? Few drivers would let the police know that they had their mobile phone on while driving.

Mr. Graham continued that there is no opportunity to engage with the insurance industry in Canada because there are usually two types of drivers: commercial drivers and parent/citizen drivers. It is hard to distinguish between the time you drive as an Uber (commercial) driver and when you are taking your kids to school. The difference can be \$3,000 for personal insurance and \$12,000 for commercial insurance. Most Uber drivers drive fewer than 10 hours a week and will be unwilling to pay \$12,000 a year for commercial insurance. Insurance companies need to evaluate the actual risks of insuring Uber drivers to get to the optimal rate.

In a shift to a broader focus, Mr. Graham explained how five sub-sectors of sharing economy sector affect the traditional rental sector and overall revenue growth. The five sub-sectors in sharing economy sector include peer-to-peer lending / crowd funding, online staffing, peer-to-peer accommodation, car sharing, and music and video streaming. The five sub-sectors in the traditional rental sector include equipment rental, B&B and hotels, book rental, car rental, and DVD rental. Growth rates are extraordinary. In 2013, the traditional rental sector accounted for \$240 billion whereas the sharing economy sector was estimated to be \$15 billion. These numbers are now estimated at \$335 billion for the traditional rental sector and \$335 billion for the sharing economy sector.

Uber is a specific example of a freed market economy, based on trust, and on using new



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technology, to make a profit. A more novel example is room2care where a care-giver lives in another person's home - taking care of the homeowner instead of paying rent. It can be healthier for an older person to continue living in their own home for a longer period. This reduces business for nursing homes and thereby provides an example that highlights how the sharing economy can affect tax revenues.

Networking lunch

Noon-13:00

3B) Social Media and Consumer Empowerment: Successes and New Challenges

13:00-14:00

Session Moderator: Howard Deane, Consumers Council of Canada

Presenters:

“Paying to disappear: Legal and commercial aspects of the right to be forgotten in Canada”

Alexandre Plourde, Option consommateurs

Mr. Plourde summarized ongoing discussions in Canada regarding the creation of a right to be forgotten, defined as the right to ask that the diffusion of irrelevant personal information be stopped after a certain amount of time. This right would not allow deleting the information, but rather would help limiting access to it, in order for it to be forgotten.

In particular, the discussions focus on the establishment of such a right in the digital environment, which would mean a right to ask for the deletion, depersonalization or ‘take-down’ of online information. The main questions regard this last means of enforcing a right to be forgotten, which would allow the removal of information from results captured by search engines (Google), but not removal from the website that originally published the information. As of now, Google refuses to remove any search result, except in some rare cases (sensitive financial information, identity theft, and offensive, cruel or violent content).

Alexandre summarized arguments put forward against the creation of a right to be forgotten, including the need to preserve data for security or historical purposes and the idea that ‘forgetting’ is a form of censorship violating freedom of expression, freedom of press, and the public’s right to information. In response to these arguments, he explained that they are ways to implement a right to be forgotten that are less detrimental to freedom of expression than the deletion of information, for example the ‘take-down’ process. He also remarked that in all probability a right to be forgotten in the Canadian context would be subjected to the same exceptions which apply in privacy protection matters. Finally, he argued against the view that Google does not manipulate search results and delivers only "objective" information, unfiltered, because, as he reminded Workshop participants that Google does remove information in certain cases (mentioned above) as well as in response to legal actions based on intellectual property.

To provoke thought, Mr. Plourde ended his presentation with a brief overview of the current European legal framework, where a right to be forgotten has been in place since the 2014



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Google Spain decision.

“Taste-Makers and Taste-Breakers: Shaping Opinions Through Social Media”

Jui Ramaprasad, McGill University

This presentation focused on online word-of-mouth: decision-making based on information shared on social media. For example, consumers sharing their experience on social platforms like Yelp, Goodreads or Trip Advisor help others decide what restaurants to go to, what books to read, what hotels to book. Research shows that word-of-mouth is amplified online and greatly impacts consumer decisions. One flip-side of this phenomenon is the issue of fake or fraudulent reviews, but techniques are used to counter this trend. For instance, characteristics of fake reviews are identified to help spot them and consumer reviews are plugged into systems that verify the identity of reviewers.

Jui Ramaprasad presented ways to get information from other consumers, distinguishing between “popularity influence” (number of “likes” from the entire community) and “proximity influence” (critics and recommendations from friends). She explained the second form of influence has more impact generally, but “popularity influence” matters more for less popular music or goods (the “tail”). She then presented recommendation agents like Amazon, Spotify and Netflix that recommend something to consumers based on the behavior of a peer group created for them.

Another related phenomenon is the co-creation of a product by consumers. Using the example of Wikipedia, Threadless and Amazon Mechanical Turk, professor Ramaprasad showed how this community-based model is useful, but can sometimes go wrong, as in the case of Amelia Bedelia on Wikipedia.

In conclusion to the presentation, the issue of online activism was addressed, again highlighting the flip-side of this phenomenon, with examples varying from Chick-fil-A and cottage cheese in Israel to the controversy surrounding Starbucks holiday cups. Other more positive forms of online activism include boycott movements on twitter.

Discussion

The first question for professor Ramaprasad regarded the impact of social media on the relevance and credibility of elite opinions (professional critics, academia) and asked when does each type of opinion (popular and expert) matter. Professor Ramaprasad answered that expert opinion matters in specific contexts, where taste matters. She then specified that her research (as most of the research done in the field) focuses on online word-of-mouth (vs face to face), because it is measurable.

A question for Alexandre Plourde asked whether a right to be forgotten could also be invoked by companies, for example when they are subject to unfair criticism from consumers that they want



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removed from the internet. Alexandre Plourde noted that a sort of double-standard exists in that regard, which favors companies, who are able to have content removed, whereas consumers are not. He also remarked that sometimes criticism of companies originates from other companies and not consumers. The issue then becomes one of defamation, dealt with by civil law.

In response to a question by Kernaghan Webb, the discussion then focused on the potential role that standards (like those existing in the privacy field) can play. Alexandre Plourde noted that a consensus on standards can lead to legal initiatives and that some coordination is needed at the international level to harmonize standards.

The discussion then turned to the differences between methods employed to produce change: negotiation vs the “old”, more formal way of legal tools and procedures. The « privacy by design » model was cited as an example of a non-legal method. It was also noted that this method is preferred in the USA, while the legal method is still more prevalent in Europe. Alexandre Plourde expressed the opinion that both methods can function and coexist.

The last commentator addressed the generational perspective in privacy matters, noting that young people (under 30) don't care about privacy because they don't expect it. Alexandre Plourde cited the work of danah boyd, to the effect that this is a false idea and that young people actually care about privacy, but see it in a different way. Older people consider that everything they publish online becomes public; therefore, if they want to keep something private, they don't publish it online. Younger people don't see it that way: when they publish something online, they want to have control over who can see what they publish, as their way of protecting their privacy online.

4. Confronting Consumer Policy Challenges: Continuing the ICT discussion

14:00-14:30

Objective: Discuss the policy challenges stemming from research findings on the sharing economy and social media topics, and how the findings can inform discussions of suggested policy options.

Session Moderator: Vincent Gautrais, Université de Montréal

Les Jacobs first presented his research interests and projects. He summarized his work as empirical studies on “meaningful” access to justice, which look at legal problems and clients rather than access to lawyers and the legal system. Since research shows a lot of legal problems (for instance consumer problems) never get to the formal justice system, the question is how do people solve their legal problems. The answer and solution is about justice rather than law. From a policy perspective, it is about prevention and proaction: solving legal challenges before they become legal problems. One particular study professor Jacobs conducted regards legal information, which is being pushed by policy circles as the solution to access to justice problems, but never questioned. The idea here is to assess whether legal information actually works, i.e. helps people solve their legal problems. Potential obstacles to its efficiency include



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legal capability (literacy, analytical skills, mental health problems) and the complexity of the problems faced.

In reaction to Professor Jacobs's presentation, other related but different research projects were mentioned. Marina Pavlovic spoke about her collaborative work on legal information seeking practices on consumer problems in telecommunications. Sue McGregor mentioned her work on the notion of "consumer justice", looking at "access to consumer justice" rather than "consumer access to justice" and linking the idea of "consumer rights" to that of human rights.

Professor Jacobs was also invited to define the notion of "legal information" and consider a cross-jurisdictional research on access to justice. Another comment warned that consumers sometimes need to be protected against themselves, for instance in the case of home renovations.

The discussion then turned to research on social media, the sharing economy and privacy rights. Geneviève Saumier wondered how to move away from the consumer's perspective, centered around its personal experience and satisfaction ("is this working out for me?") and look at the big picture (global impacts and spillovers on business, economy and other interests at play). As an answer to this question, Robert Kerton mentioned a work in progress on a framework on fair practices in internet commerce.

Vincent Gautrais then wondered if the law is the key to success, for instance in the case of the right to be forgotten. He invited researchers to be more creative in how to apply legal tools. More generally, he noted there is a lot of attention paid to dangers and risks of new technologies, but less to the new opportunities they bring about – especially for younger people – referring to the work of Michel Serres.

In response to the comment about young people, Les Jacobs mentioned a survey on teenagers that shows they understand privacy the way the legislation and the legal profession does – as a personal information and a public, constitutional right – but they choose private justice solutions to problems in that regards, for instance self-regulation (password) or private justice (complaints to Facebook).

5. Perspectives on Connecting PPOCIR to Policy Discussions

14:30-15:00

Objective: Discuss overarching issues (i.e., not subject-specific) and best practices related to the diffusion, access and use of consumer interest research in policy discussions.

Session Moderator: Geneviève Saumier, McGill University

For this panel, selected partners were invited to provide a two-page document in advance of the workshop, responding to the following two questions:



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Q1. What best practices have you experienced with respect to the diffusion, access and use of consumer interest research in policy discussions?

Q2. From your experience, what are the main challenges that need to be tackled in order to enhance PPOCIR's connection to policy discussions?

At the workshop, each partner spoke briefly to the topic of connecting PPOCIR to policy discussions within their organization. The four presentations prepared in advance are provided in the following reports.

Ken Whitehurst, Consumers Council of Canada

Q1. What best practices have you experienced with respect to the diffusion, access and use of consumer interest research in policy discussions?

1. Office of Consumer Affairs has a Consumer Policy Research Database, which has been helpful. However it needs to be modernized to include some new features such as supporting software that allows for automatic citation and document addition to reference management systems, an RSS feed to support notification of additions and enable automated ingestion of content into researchers content review workflows. (See below)
2. Some content management platforms support software that allows for automatic citation and document addition to reference management systems, an RSS feed to support notification of additions and enable automated ingestion of content into researchers content review workflows. However, the best current integrations of research tools and content management systems with meta-described content and automatic reference collection are not economical for consumer groups.
3. The New York Times is one of the few relatively economical sources of primary and secondary research to some extent in the public domain with meta-described content suitable for automated or instant reference access using content acquisition software tools. Canadian news sources do little to support direct day-to-day acquisition of content for fair use
4. Some U.S. Organizations are great at content aggregation, but weak at implementing 21st Century tools for content and reference acquisition. An example is Consumer Action <http://www.consumer-action.org/>

Q2. From your experience, what are the main challenges that need to be tackled in order to enhance PPOCIR's connection to policy discussions?

5. The methods used for diffusion, access and use of consumer interest research are pretty much stuck in the last century. There is a need to make it less expensive for consumer representative organizations to mobilize all research into consumer perspective research or advocacy cheaper and



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faster, for consumer groups to respond to the pace of change. Addressing this would help policy shops of all kinds in a practical way. Automatic reference/citation detection is not supported by web sites of government in Canada and even major international research institutions. (e.g.: OECD) All public institutions website should support standard APIs for searching and retrieving reference data, and non-profit content publishers such as consumer groups should be eligible for public funding to add features to their web sites to do the same.

6. Research is published in online journals kept in online databases operated behind pay walls, making them unavailable to or time consuming to access for non-profit consumer groups.

7. Content creators need to learn to communicate with content mobilizers in policy circles, but they need to match communication to methods and capacity of recipients, especially in the area of consumer protection. Know your audience.

8. Consultants filter research to produce discussion papers in support of consultative processes, but these papers may not contain bibliographies, and referenced research may not be readily available, even when there are bibliographies.

9. The amount of academic research available through Internet search engines appears to be declining, particularly unabridged content.

10. Books go out of print, are expensive to obtain, and even though they are not available in any marketplace, for all practical purposes, they are held accessible only within research libraries, which are prohibitively expensive in time and money to access.

11. Double standards are applied by public finders of research, with penniless organizations expected to host content online for free, while publicly funded academic research costs money to obtain. In fact, some content aggregation services aimed at academics actually obtain content consumer groups must provide for free and then charge access to it, without permission, through their content acquisition sites. Because they layer on a “service” they make money on content a consumer group cannot charge money to deliver online, in order to obtain ongoing recovery of distribution costs. Perhaps government might recognize consumer groups have distribution costs, requiring them, perhaps, to provide service-fee access to the content during an initial release period and then allowing service charging for access after that period. Alternatively, governments could recognize the role consumer groups can play as independent knowledge mobilizers and fund that role through grants.

12. Consumer groups, as independent knowledge mobilizers, could focus more effort on aggregating and providing the public and stakeholders milestone information pertinent to researchers and the public concerning public consultations, information releases, open educational opportunities, etc. Stakeholders of PPOCIR initiatives and opportunities need to consider direct financial sponsorship roles and encouraging public interest financial support from suitable parties to make that happen, opening up a new ‘information exchange’ of PPOCIR initiatives. PPOCIR and its stakeholder community are largely invisible as a discipline in the public eye.



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13. It would be helpful to researchers and policy makers to receive more early warning information about 'hot' consumer problems and opportunities to research potential consumer interest solutions. Consumer groups have natural brands for aggregating such raw evidence, which could then form the basis for more systematic research and analysis.

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Michael Jenkin, retired senior public servant and Past Chair, OECD Committee on Consumer Policy

First, let me say that I am approaching this issue from the perspective of a former public servant who spent his entire career largely in the management of policy development, so what follows is a reflection of that experience and perspective.

What struck me early on with respect to using PPOCIR in my work as a policy maker was the difficulty in finding academic research that was relevant to the issues we were dealing with both on a day-to-day basis and for longer term policy research. Part of this problem was the inevitable difficulty any policy maker faces when using research which is conducted in an academic environment. Curiosity based research, which is the primary focus of most research and writing at the university or college level, is precisely that, and is not necessarily undertaken to address the questions a policy maker might have. In this respect the challenge facing policy makers in the consumer protection domain is not all that different from other policy makers when surveying research work in the social sciences where often only a small portion of the work that is carried out intersects with their interests. You have to be creative in seeing the relevance of the research at hand and in how it can be used in policy making exercises.

One point should be stressed, however, and that is that regardless of the problem of policy relevance, there is certainly a considerable volume of consumer oriented research being carried out in Canada. In fact, a study some time ago indicated that consumer research carried out in Canada was of a significant volume compared to other countries when adjusted to the level of scholarly output. However, when compared to other countries a larger portion of the research carried out in Canada appeared to be conducted in the context of business and commerce studies where the focus is less on public policy issues, but rather on how to market goods and services to consumers or dealing with the role consumers play in corporate strategies for growth and development.

There are, in my experience, two additional specific problems in using curiosity based academic research for policy-makers in the consumer protection area. First, the inherent interdisciplinary nature of consumer research can make it very useful to policy-makers, but ironically, it can also mean that it is more difficult to identify, even to the extent that the word "consumer" may not appear in the work, replaced by terms and perspectives as varied as privacy or equity. Second, as a consequence, in the current academic environment a self-conscious orientation by researchers to consumer issues more generally, and public policy oriented issues more specifically, has been slow to emerge. This has reduced the likelihood that researchers with shared interests in public policy issues related to consumers would work together and form speciality research consortia or develop schools or institutes concerned



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with consumer issues, or even self-identify their work as focussed on consumers. It was not always like this. For example, two or three generations ago there were a number of schools or departments of consumer studies in Canada where research and teaching in the area was encouraged.

Fortunately, at the international level there are a significant number of journals and university based or independent centres and institutes dealing with consumer research, including journals and institutions specifically directed at PPOCIR such as the *Journal of Consumer Policy*¹, and institutes and centres in the US, Australia, Asia and Europe such as Norway's SIFO, the Centre for Competition and Consumer Policy at Australian National University, and the Research Centre for the Policy and Law on Global Consumer Protection at Wuhan University in China. While international journals do act as important clearinghouses for research, as does the OECD's Consumer Policy Committee on international policy developments, they don't provide a great deal of incentive for the development of national networks of researchers nor encourage research about the particular circumstances of Canadian consumers or Canadian public policy issues in the consumer realm.

It appears that despite the fact that consumer issues are of prominence in public discourse today in Canada, researchers here do not seem to be organizing their work thematically around these issues in a significant way. So unlike economists, political scientists, or even sociologists who have well defined disciplinary perspectives and been expanding their self-conscious orientation to public policy issues in their disciplines, there have been no similar trends amongst those involved in consumer interest research. For example, there are no research journals or hardly any institutes or graduate programs dealing with public policy issues facing consumers.

The question then emerges as to what could be done to improve the situation. I have a couple of modest suggestions. First, I think policy makers need to reach out more comprehensively to the research community to communicate their research needs and demonstrate, in a concrete way, how academic research contributes to their work and can improve the public good. Perhaps producing materials that outline current research needs and demonstrate situations where PPOCIR that was undertaken contributed to policy action and an improvement in consumers' welfare would be helpful in convincing researchers of the value in engaging in PPOCIR and in working with other academics and policy makers in the area.

Second, by funding the pilot exercise in creating a PPOCIR network SSHRC has provided policy makers with a vehicle to make their needs known to the academic community. They should be encouraged to actively use this opportunity. Further, perhaps more could also be done to raise the profile of PPOCIR by creating opportunities for research communication and publishing (e.g. a journal) in the area. Certainly the initiatives undertaken and planned in the SSHRC pilot such as the annual workshops and the publication of a list of active researchers in the area will assist in raising the profile of PPOCIR. But more initiatives to promote awareness among researchers of both the extent of PPOCIR work, and the degree

¹ Others include the *Journal of Research for Consumers*, the *Journal of Consumer Research*, and the *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, the *Journal of European Consumer and Market Law*, the *Australian Journal of Competition and Consumer Law* and the *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, amongst others. Several of these have Canadians on their editorial boards.



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to which it has an audience in the broader public realm, would be of considerable help.

**André Allard, Director, Legal Department, Office de la protection du consommateur du Québec
[Consumer Protection Board]**

Consumer protection legislation was enacted during the 1970s and 1980s. The consumer market has undergone extensive changes since then: use of new trade practices, including the use of increasingly complex contracts, the emergence of new technologies, opening of markets, trade agreements and the increase of transborder consumer contracts.

During the 1990s and 2000s, consumer and business associations, academics and in general, consumer market watchers, have demanded that Quebec consumer protection legislation be updated. A group of academics has even proposed an important document which would be the basis of an eventual Quebec Consumer's Code.

Instead of undertaking an overall reform of consumer protection legislation, it was decided to make necessary legislative amendments to settle the most urgent issues. Accordingly, during the 2000s, steps were taken to enact legislative and regulatory amendments. Each of those amendments was preceded by an extensive consultation process.

In 2006, the first step led to the enactment of measures basically dealing with consumer contracts entered into at a distance, including contracts concluded through Internet, the prohibition of compulsory arbitration clauses and the regulation of certain practices in collecting accounts.

The second step, in December 2009, led to the enactment of provisions concerning distance sequential fulfillment service contracts, mainly involving telecommunications contracts (cell and residential phones, Internet access, cable television, etc.), the obligation to advertise all-inclusive pricing, prepaid cards and the recourse to injunctions by consumer protection organizations.

The third step deals with consumer credit and consumer indebtedness. An important bill that was tabled by the government in 2011 unfortunately died on the order paper, as elections were called in the fall of 2012. The government has recently asked the Board to prepare a new proposal. Work is therefore continuing.

A fourth step was undertaken in 2013 with a new consultation. Following this consultation, it was decided to split this step, as there were too many issues to include them all in one bill. Among the issues studied at this step, we may mention as an example, mechanisms for the surveillance and enforcement of laws, consumer financial protection mechanisms and more specifically the sale of time-sharing holidays and the regulation of debt collection agencies.

Lastly, at the same time as this work was being carried on and over time, other issues requiring more rapid intervention were studied and led to legislative or regulatory enactments.

The consumer market is always evolving and legislation must be continuously updated. Because of this, we must be pragmatic in our approach to be able to intervene rapidly to settle issues which arise in the market. As a corollary, this approach has the disadvantage of postponing any in-depth revision of consumer protection legislation, in spite of many demands for such.



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The following very short comments below may answer both questions which it is suggested that we deal with here. Best practices often have major challenges to be met and the purpose of these challenges is to establish best practices for policy development.

Q1. What best practices have you applied regarding the publication of studies about consumers' interests during discussions on policies, access to those studies and their use?

Studies which are a perfect part of the process of development of policies adopted by decision-makers are those which are most likely to influence decisions. This process must accordingly be well understood, as well as the imperatives with which government decision-makers are faced.

The development of policies is a long process which begins with the identification of issues in the consumer market, for example, through consumers' complaints received by the Board, by public denunciation of trade practices used by businesses or by continuous market surveillance. This information is compiled by our systems and allows identifying problem situations, the use of new commercial practices and the emergence of new business models.

Analyses are conducted on specific issues, according to the importance, the seriousness and the impacts which these issues may have on consumers. Once these analyses are completed, and if measures are required, the Board will consult stakeholders and academics. The purpose of these consultations is to obtain on one hand general comments about the problems and possible solutions and on the other hand, what precise solutions the Board considers proposing.

The Board also submits these issues, analyses and recommendations to permanent advisory committees, on which representatives from consumer and business associations and academics sit.

In our context, the development of policies is in reaction to concrete situations, market realities and through input by various actors on the market. For studies done by researchers to be of any use in such an initiative, they must be part of that initiative. A study of one of the issues which is being examined by the Board is likely to influence decision-makers about the corrective measures likely to be applied. The identification of issues which may be the subject of special studies should accordingly result from discussions with the organization which makes recommendations as to policy orientation and the specific measures to be applied.

Q2. Based on your experience, what are the main challenges to be met to strengthen the link between the PPOCIR and policy discussions?

These challenges concern basically two aspects: on one hand, a precise identification of problems and stakes and, on the other hand, the capacity to suggest solutions which are part of the existing framework.

The environment in which policy development takes place is subject to all types of interventions from various actors in the economic, community, media and political fields. These initiatives lead decision-makers to prioritize the issues which, among those that are subject to analysis, must be dealt with immediately and for which corrective measures must be proposed. From the point of view of the Board, the challenges which researchers must meet are first and foremost to ensure that the studies they undertake are part of this initiative and deal with the issues which were identified by the decision-makers.

On the other hand, studies undertaken by researchers must result from well-documented findings about the existence and the nature of the stakes being dealt with. In our opinion, the capacity to identify these



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stakes is a real challenge to be met. Consumer associations and the Board are in daily contact with consumers and are accordingly able to identify the main stakes.

Lastly, any measure proposed by the Board to the government must be subject to a study of its financial impact on businesses as well as on consumers. Therefore, studies dealing with consumers' interests - which include this type of data - are more likely to be used by decision-makers.

Nicki Islic, CSA Group



Supporting Public Policy through Consumer Interest Research and Standards

Consumers frequently face challenges assessing the quality and safety of market offerings. Unexpected low quality or safety concerns can be a serious problem experienced by a consumer. Product or service compliance to a consensus-based standard with consumer stakeholder involvement can help to provide a credible guarantee of performance and safety. The standard can help to solve the consumer's problem and also rewards a seller who provides the expected level of performance and safety.

CSA Group seeks and encourages collaboration with those involved in research. Research can help to identify emerging issues for standards development and can provide the evidence-based information needed for new and existing standards. National and international standards can be an effective way to enable knowledge mobilization through the development of a standard that reflects current research.

Consumer interest research (CIR) has supported the development of several national and international standards that have directly or indirectly supported public policies. Below are some examples where important consumer-related standards have been developed with the aid of CIR.

CAN/CSA-ISO 14021-00, *Environmental labels and declarations — Self-declared environmental claims*. This standard now provides the basic criteria the Competition Bureau uses in assessing environmental claims under the misleading advertising provisions of the *Competition Act*, the *Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act* and the *Textile Labelling Act*.

CAN/CSA Q830 *Model Code for the Protection of Personal Information* (1996). This National Standard of Canada formed the basis for Canada's current privacy legislation - *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA).

CAN/CGSB-32.315 -2004 *Voluntary Labelling and Advertising of Foods That Are and Are Not Products of Genetic Engineering* which was developed to address non-health and safety labelling (labelling for method of production whether a food has or has not been produced through genetic engineering). This standard is currently used by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to provide industry with meaningful



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criteria for labelling, understandable messages for consumers, and a consistent policy to verify the truthfulness of labels.

CAN/CGSB-32.310-2006, *Organic Production Systems – General Principles and Management Standards*, and CAN/CGSB-32.311-2006, *Organic Production Systems – Permitted Substances List* form the basis of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's Organic Food Regulations (2006).

ISO 10377 Consumer Product Safety: practical guidance for suppliers; and *ISO 10393 — Guidance standard on consumer product recall and corrective action — Code of Good Practice*. Referencing both standards will assist Canadian retailers, manufacturers and importers of consumer products in complying with the new general safety provision and incident reporting requirements in the new *Canada Consumer Product Safety Act*.

ISO 26000 (soon to be a National Standard of Canada) – *Guidance on Social Responsibility*. This guidance standard is used widely throughout the world as a reference document for organizations that wish to bring their policy development and operations in line with the principles of sustainable development.

Some standards under development that have potential to support public policies and have used CIR include:

CSA's national home inspection standard is being developed in response to consumer and trade complaints regarding the thoroughness, comparability and uniformity of inspection. The Technical Committee (TC) responsible for the development of this future standard includes several representatives of consumer interest from across Canada, including representative from Consumer Advisory Council for Technical Standards & Safety Authority, Consumers Council of Canada, The Homeowner Protection Centre, and government representatives from provincial ministries concerned with consumer issues. A number of research papers, guidelines, and consumer information guides have been considered throughout the standards development process. For example, the province of Ontario established an expert panel made up of consumers and home inspectors and produced a 72 page report that made recommendations for all aspects of the home inspection industry in the province. Also, a research paper titled, *Pre-Purchase Home Inspection in Real Estate Better Protection for Buyers and Sellers*, was produced by the Association des consommateurs pour la qualité en construction (ACQC) which is a consumer group concerned with residential construction work quality in Ontario and Quebec.

ISO TC 294 is developing an international standard that will promote uniformity, accuracy and clarity of unit price shelf labelling that helps consumers compare prices of consumer products. Option Consommateurs (OC) did a study on unit pricing under the Industry Canada, Office of Consumer Affairs contributions program. An ISO Consumer Policy Committee (COPOLCO) Task Group made numerous references to the OC study as they developed their New Work Item Proposal for the development of an international standard on unit pricing. The NWIP was accepted by ISO Technical Management Board and a Technical Committee, TC 294, was created. When completed the standard will provide guidance to business and regulators contemplating the introduction of unit pricing systems that help consumers compare prices between several size offerings of prepackaged products within and between brands.



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The OC study demonstrated that unit pricing is very important to low income consumers.

How else does research complement standards development work?

The Mental Health Commission of Canada launched a three-year, national Case Study Research Project to better understand how workplaces across Canada are implementing *CAN/CSA-Z1003-13/BNQ 9700-803/2013 - Psychological health and safety in the workplace*. The goals of this project are to monitor progress, identify promising practices, as well as challenges and barriers to implementation, and develop tools that will enhance adoption of the Standard across Canada.

A group of researchers at Ryerson University are developing a guide on how to conduct post-occupancy evaluation (POE) of Canadian health care facilities, which includes observing patients interacting within the health care facility spaces that were designed and constructed based on *CAN/CSA Z8000 – Canadian health care facilities*. The guide will be provided to CSA as a seed document for the development of a CSA Guideline and research results and results from future POEs, can then be used as input into improving the Standard.

CSA Group has partnered with researchers at McMaster University to submit a joint grant application for the development of a CSA Standard and associated implementation tools, using their research on *Care-Giver Friendly Workplaces* as a seed document. The CSA Standard and implementation tools will be the key knowledge mobilization piece for the research. Following publication of the CSA Standard, the intent is to conduct a research project on the implementation of the CSA Standard across Canada.

Nicki Islic, CSA Group

Discussion

Given the period available for formal discussion, there was not sufficient time for fulsome discussion. Some questions and suggestions were advanced during summary comments by presenters. The overall consensus can be summarised in two points:

1. There are currently insufficient links between academics and policy makers.
2. Partnerships such as PPOCIR are one means of seeking to bridge that gap and increase the linkages between academic research and policy makers.

Health Break

15:00-15:15



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6. Roundtable of Partners' Top Priorities for PPOCIR

15:15-15:45

Objective: Inform future discussions of the Year 3 Partnership research projects by pre-workshop materials regarding i) research needs of PPOCIR partners and ii) academic views on existing research.

Session Moderator: Ellen Goddard, University of Alberta

Ellen Goddard first summarized consumer issues participants identified as priorities for research, highlighting how academic investigation at the undergraduate and graduate level could be useful in conducting such research and pointing to a tool that academics use to share their work (Agecon Search).

She then opened the floor to a discussion about such priorities. Some participants mentioned the state of consumer finances (debt overload and credit, "pay-day loans") as another priority for research. The rest of the discussion revolved around ways to share opinions/information about priorities and harmonize efforts between universities and policy makers, but also amongst researchers in academia. For instance, participants asked where (on what platforms) the material would be shared and how people would identify their priorities. A suggestion was made that specific issues be defined, as opposed to general topics (headings), and that each participants identifies 5 burning questions and ranks them. Other suggestions included maximising the use of the PPOCIR website and creating a LinkedIn group and a Twitter account.

Professor Goddard summarized the discussion as having emphasised the need for information sharing. She pressed that this be a dynamic (vs static, once a year) process, with regular updates and consultations.

7. Planning for the PPOCIR Partnership's Third Year and its Post-PDG Future

15:45-16:15

Objective: Discuss an outline of Year 3 Partnership activities and begin exchanges regarding potential next steps at the end of the Partnership Development Grant (PDG).

Session Moderator: Robert Kerton, University of Waterloo
The Public Policy-Oriented Consumer-Interest Research Initiative

Opening Comments: Kernaghan Webb, Ryerson University

Dr. Webb explained that the purpose of SSHRCC "Partnership Development Grants" is to test a research-partnership concept to see if a larger grant would be feasible - and valuable - by contributing to the development of evidence-based public policy. He went on to review the



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results of a survey filled by members of the PPOCIR network. The survey had responses from seven Partners and all agreed with the partnership continuation. Some participants asked for more specific goals for the future, warned that leaving the partnership in a few hands may be risky, and noted that members of the partnership are learning to work together, that is, we are developing and deepening partnership relations among researchers and policy-makers.

Existing Partners were asked which of the ongoing PPOCIR partnership activities, would you, as a Partner, want to keep. All respondents replied 'yes' to the Directory of Academic PPOCIR Experts, and yes to holding an Annual Workshop. Six of the seven respondents replied yes to the funding of graduate student research and yes to the preparation of a compendium of disciplinary surveys in PPOCIR fields.

The survey asked participants to comment on existing PPOCIR partnership activities. All respondents had recommendations for the future. Some participants described the activities as extremely useful for an initiative in its birthing stages suggesting that it is better to build on existing activities than starting new ones. Some participants had the following comments: activities are too spread out, a better job could be done to connect activities to policy initiatives in government and internationally, and a greater priority is attracting more people to attend the annual workshop and have some sub-sessions on particular subject areas, like normal annual meetings of learned societies.

In terms of participants' views on applying for a full partnership grant from SSHRC as the next step, all participants were interested in applying for the grant. Some suggestions were made emphasizing the need to start working on this project, as it would require a long lead time, building on the foundation and successes from the first grant, and emphasizing on developing more intensive levels of scholarly communication and linkages with practitioners.

Dr. Webb explained responses on additional potential avenues of funding. Other suggested funding sources were governmental and private sectors funding as CMA, OCA, Law Foundation of Ontario, CBA's law. Some respondents recommended network building and diffusion of research through a journal, conferences, and workshops. An annual report on PPOCIR activities was supported. Another suggestion was the development of a program of research beyond the development grant in a way that would involve a principal investigator, collaborators, and partners.

In the Workshop discussion, some participants agreed the most promising support will come from currently-committed Partners and from comparable agencies, some of which have already shown an interest. One proposal placed a focus on the inclusion of additional Canadian researchers from even more disciplines so that augmented research capability could justify new funding.

The general consensus emerging from the session, drawing on the survey results, was strong support for moving ahead with a full SSHRC partnership grant. This may involve enlarging the research agenda and range of policy applications, as well as including even more disciplines.



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8. Conclusion – Triumphs and Challenges

16:15-16:30

Robert Kerton

University of Waterloo

TRIUMPHS AND CHALLENGES TO DATE

T1. (Triumph #1). Functioning Partnership. PPOCIR has met the partnering goal in spirit and in practice. We participated in a dozen formal conference calls in 2015 to manage the Partnership and subsequent activity provides impressive evidence of co-operation. The willingness to give time, to listen and discuss, and to share experience is impressive, and a real benefit. Two compelling examples of valuable Partner input come from this 2015 Workshop: the sessions Workshop on “Perspectives on Connecting PPOCIR to Policy Discussions” and the “Roundtable of Partners’ Top Priorities for PPOCIR.”

Challenge: The most convincing illustration comes from clear example of where PPOCIR provided measureable evidence for an improvement in policy. We have some evidence and need to be systematic in assembling cases where we made a difference.

T2. Surveys of Research. With strong support from our Partner, Industry Canada, the PPOCIR initiative has sponsored the creation of three field surveys: Technology Law; Behavioural Sciences; and Business Models of ICT-Consumer-Protection. Triumph is the right word: These surveys are remarkably well done.

Challenge: Our hope was to create at least seven field surveys. Five new surveys seem impossible, given time and financial constraints. If we can find Partner support, two more are achievable within 12 months.

T3. Network of Consumer Interest Researchers. We met our promise with 52 researchers at <http://ccird.uwaterloo.ca/fr/researcher> and <http://ccird.uwaterloo.ca/researcher>

Challenge: The goal has been met – but we should continue to look for motivated experts.

T4. Capacity-building is a key promise we made. So far, PPOCIR has financed and worked formally with twelve different graduate students in at least six different disciplines. Nine graduate students are present at this Workshop and five of the nine are presenting research right on the program. Success has taken a slightly different path than expected: it has a broader base in many disciplines.

Challenge: Will this success be sustained when the current SSHRC grant expires?

T5. Academic Research. The 2008 study by Science Metrix found Canadian output of consumer studies was a) above the average of comparable countries; b) published in non-



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Canadian journals; c) in several disciplines; d) more interested in business issues; and e) lower than the average of other countries in its focus on policy. With that in mind, our goal was to increase the amount of “consumer-interest” research (CIR), and particularly high-quality research useful for Canadian public policy. The PPOCIR initiative has facilitated understanding of each other’s work. Moreover, NGOs and other Partners from the public and private sectors have had a major role in attracting research to policy issues. This has been a stimulating development for participants.

Challenge: We have built capacity and have made progress in exchanging research among scholars and policy-makers – but we have not changed the overall incentive structure favouring international journals.

T6. ‘Mobilization’. We argued that the PPOCIR initiative can make research results available in plain language to Canadian policy-makers, consumer NGOs, and firms. The seventeen summaries of the 2014 Workshop do meet this objective, and our web site makes our material available. <http://ppocir.uwaterloo.ca/2014-workshop-summaries-public-policy-oriented-consumer-interest-research/> Further, graduate students who conduct research with policy agencies help to deliver mobilization in their work with Partners.

Challenge: To live up to the national potential of a Partnership approach, we need even more CIR transformed to plain language. We need to reach more firms and policy-makers beyond our Partnership. An interactive web site - or regular blogging - takes considerable time and such measures are impractical, given current resources. This challenge needs more attention.

Overall, the Partnership approach has been enlightening, mutually beneficial to participants and it has given a boost for CIR and for consumer-interest policy in Canada.

Geneviève Saumier
McGill University

Geneviève thanked all participants for their engagement and contributions over the course of the day. She underscored the importance of a continued dialogue between academics and partners in the identification of relevant and promising areas of future research and the particular usefulness of Panels 5 and 6 to that end. Finally, she extended her thanks to McGill doctoral student Anne Iavaronne-Turcotte, whose assistance was critical to the logistical organization of the Workshop, along with numerous other staff members in the Faculty.

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