

For Immediate Release  
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## **MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT STRENGTHENS CONSUMER PROTECTION** *Sweeping Legislation Creates New Rights For Consumers*

TORONTO — The McGuinty government is introducing the most sweeping and comprehensive changes to Ontario's consumer protection laws in more than 30 years, Government Services Minister Gerry Phillips announced today.

“It's a new age for consumers. The new law will restore balance and provide consumers with new rights for the 21<sup>st</sup> century while creating a more level playing field for businesses, driving consumer confidence and competition,” said Phillips. “The old legislation didn't consider the evolution of the Internet and the new ever-changing marketplace. As of July 30, consumers will be granted the same protection for online agreements as all other types of agreements.”

Negative-option billing, a practice where consumers were charged for goods or services they did not request, will not be allowed under the new law. Misleading estimates for home renovations and moving services will also be against the law, and maximum fines for offending individuals and corporations will double or more.

Consumers and businesses will have new rights and responsibilities. The new Consumer Protection Act will significantly improve protection for consumers and strengthen confidence in the marketplace.

To help consumers understand their rights, the government has developed a user-friendly website – [www.mgs.gov.on.ca](http://www.mgs.gov.on.ca) – with quick tips and a wealth of useful consumer protection information.

When the new act comes into force on July 30, 2005, consumers will have the right to:

- Refuse to pay for goods or services that they did not request (negative-option billing)
- The same protection when buying or leasing services, as when buying or leasing goods
- Receive goods or services within 30 days after they are promised in agreements, or get a refund
- Cancel agreements due to unfair business practices within one year
- Receive written contracts for goods or services worth more than \$50 to be delivered or paid for in the future
- Cancel agreements for fitness, dance clubs or most door-to-door sales worth more than \$50 within 10 days of signing the agreement
- Full disclosure about the cost of long-term leases and interest on purchases in agreements
- The same protection for online agreements as all other types of agreements

- Final cost estimates of no more than 10 per cent of the original agreed estimate for home renovations or moving services
- Cancel timeshare and vacation club agreements, for any reason, within 10 days after receiving a written copy of the agreement.

“This legislation is a significant advance in consumer protection,” said Joan Huzar, president of the Consumers Council of Canada. “Ontario’s new consumer laws are a model for other jurisdictions to follow.”

“The Retail Council of Canada is pleased to work with the Ministry of Government Services and our members to guide them through this new legislation,” said Diane J. Brisebois, president and CEO of the Retail Council of Canada. “The new Consumer Protection Act ensures Ontarians can be confident with the goods and services they receive, and that’s good business for everyone.”

The new Consumer Protection Act also doubles enforcements with maximum fines of \$50,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for corporations. Imprisonment for individuals will be up to two years less a day.

The government is also publishing seven consumer brochures in eight languages: English, French, Italian, Korean, Tamil, Vietnamese, Chinese and Punjabi. The brochures will be available after July 30 at Government Information Centres, MPP offices, public libraries and the ministry’s website.

For a copy of the new Consumer Protection Act, visit the Ontario government’s e-laws website at [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca). For more information about consumer protection, visit [www.mgs.gov.on.ca](http://www.mgs.gov.on.ca).

– 30 –

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[www.mgs.gov.on.ca](http://www.mgs.gov.on.ca)