

Attention News Editors:

StopStickingItToUs Coalition Commends Parliamentary Scrutiny of Credit Card Companies

- Unprecedented number of government inquiries seek justification of fee practices -

OTTAWA, April 21 /CNW/ - This week, members of the StopStickingItToUs Coalition will appear before the Senate Banking Committee in Ottawa on behalf of more than 200,000 Canadian businesses to expose the skyrocketing fees merchants pay to accept credit cards and the negative impacts these fees have on businesses and consumers alike. The Coalition's testimony will also address dangers posed by the impending introduction of VISA and MasterCard debit schemes to the Canadian market, which could spell the end of our country's current low-cost, efficient debit service.

There has been an unprecedented level of activity on Parliament Hill around the issue of merchant fees for credit and debit acceptance in recent months. In addition to an ongoing Senate Banking Committee inquiry on credit card fees, the Competition Bureau is investigating VISA and MasterCard for possible "abuse of dominance" and the House of Commons Finance and Industry Committees are moving forward with hearings focused on merchant fees.

"It is clear that the concerns of hundreds of thousands of Canadian businesses and the communities they serve have resonated with parliamentarians

from all parties," says Diane J. Brisebois, President and CEO, Retail Council of Canada. "The stakes are high and Canadians are looking for decisive government action that will rein-in the runaway fees charged to merchants who have no choice but to pass along these out-of-control costs to consumers in the form of higher prices."

Canada is not the only country with governments focusing attention on the issue. Renewed efforts by governments in the United States and recent action in the European Union illustrate a global push to hold credit card companies to account for their fee practices.

"We are calling on parliamentarians to act quickly to regulate interchange fees" says David Wilkes, Senior Vice President, Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors. "Our government has a chance to show real leadership by regulating these fees in Canada and putting in place measures that will help protect businesses and consumers."

About the StopStickingItToUs Coalition

The StopStickingItToUs Coalition is a group of Canadian associations, led by Retail Council of Canada and backed by over 200,000 businesses from coast-to-coast, that is standing up to the Big Credit Card Companies to put a stop to skyrocketing fees. Its members include: Retail Council of Canada, Alberta Liquor Store Association, Canadian Booksellers Association, Canadian Convenience Stores Association, Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, Canadian Jewellers Association, Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, Hotel Association of Canada, Ontario Accommodation Association, Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, Retail B.C, The Canadian Independent Petroleum Marketers

Association, The British Columbia Restaurant and Food Services Association, The Retail Merchant's Association of Canada (Ontario). Wine Council of Ontario, Mega Group Inc. Bicycle Trade Association of Canada, Canadian Oil Heat Association, Conseil québécois du commerce de détail, Camping in Ontario, Tourism Industry Association of Canada, and the Canadian Association of Chain Drugstores.

Québec affiliate members: Association des marchands dépanneurs et épiciers du Québec, Association des détaillants en alimentation du Québec, Association des détaillants en matériaux de construction du Québec, Association des hôteliers du Québec, Conseil des chaînes de restaurants du Québec, Conseil canadien de la distribution en alimentation-Québec

About Retail Council of Canada

Retail Council of Canada (RCC) has been the Voice of Retail in Canada since 1963. We speak for an industry that touches the daily lives of Canadians in every corner of the country - by providing jobs, career opportunities, and by investing in the communities we serve. RCC is a not-for-profit, industry-funded association representing more than 40,000 store fronts of all retail formats across Canada, including department, specialty, discount, and independent stores, and online merchants. RCC is a strong advocate for retailing in Canada and works with all levels of government and other stakeholders to support employment growth and career opportunities in retail, to promote and sustain retail investments in communities from coast-to-coast, and to enhance consumer choice and industry competitiveness. RCC also provides its members with a full range of services and programs including education and training, benchmarking and best practices, networking, advocacy, and industry information.

About The Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors

The Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors (CCGD) is a not-for-profit organization committed to advancing and promoting the grocery and foodservice distribution industry in Canada, at both the regional and national level. The food distribution industry is Canada's second largest commercial sector. Member sales represent \$71.8 billion in retail and \$12 billion in foodservice. Members employ over 428,100 Canadians, and represent over 85% of all grocery (i.e. food, non-food, non-alcoholic beverages) distribution sales in Canada.

For further information: or to arrange an interview, please contact Mark Beazley, Director, Communications, Retail Council of Canada at (416) 922-0553 ext. 228, or mbeazley@retailcouncil.org; or Krista Pawley, Vice President, Communications, Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors at (416) 922-6228 ext. 323, email kpawley@ccgd.ca