



Competition Bureau  
Canada

Bureau de la concurrence  
Canada

Canada

# Why Competition Became a Political Issue in Canada

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and legislators*  
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# Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this presentation are entirely those of the presenter and do not represent any policies or positions of the Commissioner of Competition, the staff of the Competition Bureau, the Department of Justice or the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.



# WHY COMPETITION HIT PARLIAMENT'S RADAR

## The Kitchen Table Issue

- Canada long ranked near the bottom of the OECD on barriers to competition while also seeing productivity stagnation, high consumer prices and low business dynamism
- During and after the pandemic, the status of Canada's economy, like many others, was uncertain.
- Canadians were seeing price increases in most sectors of the economy
- Rising affordability issues led to discussions at home, in the community, in the media, and ultimately in Parliament
- Affordability concerns became a bipartisan issue for Parliamentarians



# THE BUREAU'S ADVOCACY PLAYBOOK

## **Clear Public Messaging**

- The Bureau used bold, straightforward messages to emphasize the need for more competition nationally.

## **Parliamentary Engagement**

- Regular appearances before parliamentary committees allowed for extended conversation, highlighting the resource and legal challenges in competition policy.
- Important to use plain, clear and direct language in these contexts. Identify the problem– identify the solution.
- Provided briefs and recommendations to committees and public consultations on the Competition Act.

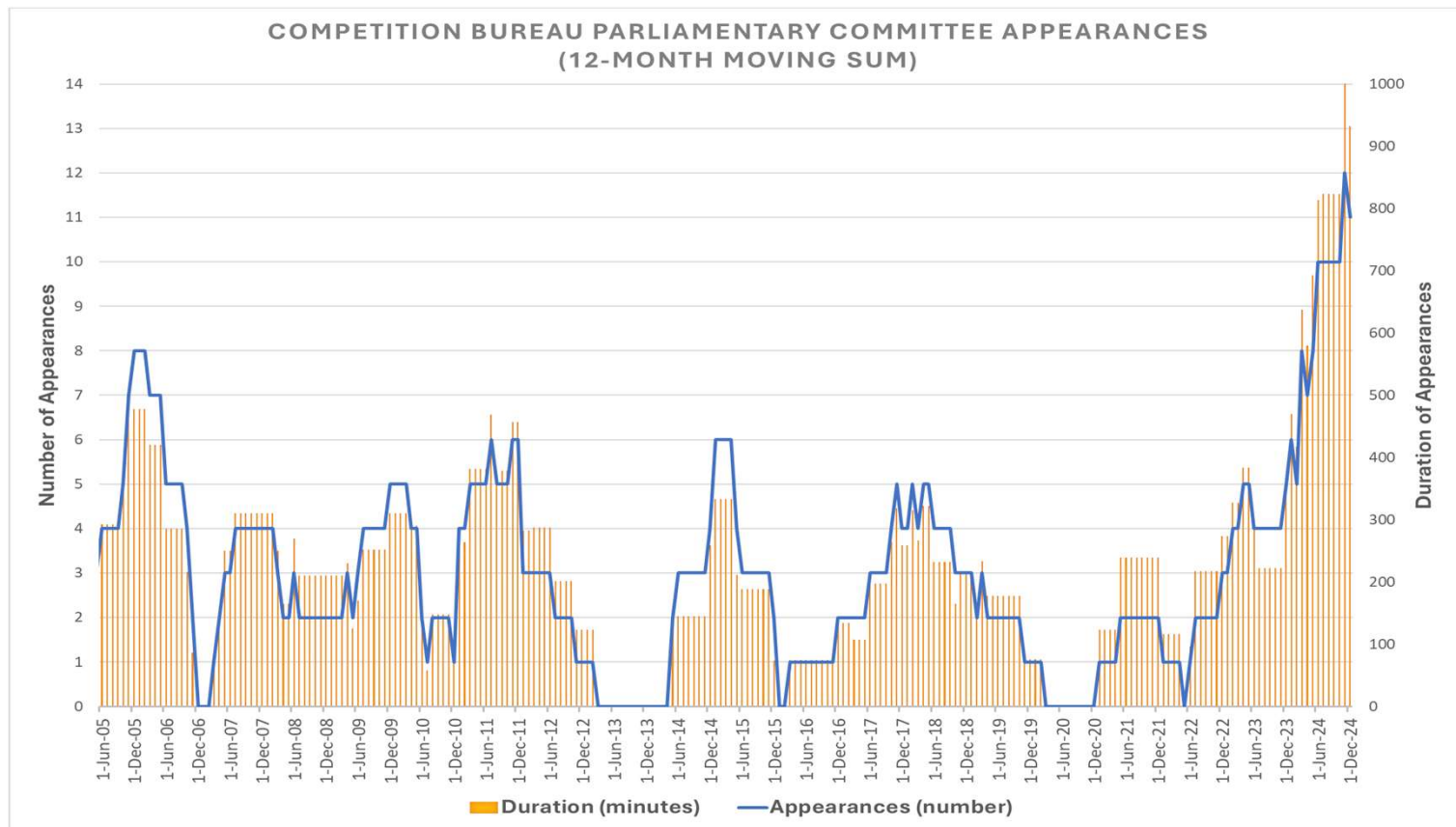
## **Evidence-Based Recommendations**

- Comprehensive public submissions offered data-driven recommendations during policy consultations.

## **Broad Coalition Building**

- Outreach extended beyond legal circles to engage diverse audiences and build broad support for reform.

# INCREASED PARLIAMENTARY INTEREST



# WHY THE ADVOCACY WORKED

## **Strategic Communication**

- Relentless advocacy linked competition to societal issues, making reform arguments compelling and relevant.

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

- Wide engagement with academics, civil society, and think tanks built a strong coalition supporting reforms.

## **Proactive Implementation**

- Publishing guidelines and launching cases promptly showed readiness and reassured policymakers

## **Credibility and Momentum**

- The Bureau's credibility and preparedness translated advocacy into successful legislative action.



# LEGISLATIVE GAME-CHANGERS

## Funding and Three Waves of Amendments

- In 2021, the Government made significant investments in the Bureau's budget, restoring resources to early 2000s levels for stronger enforcement.
- Beginning in 2022, three pieces of government legislation included changes to Canada's Competition Act.
- Among other changes, the legislation criminalized wage-fixing and no-poaching agreements; scrapped the efficiencies defence; strengthened the abuse of dominance provisions and gave the Bureau more effective merger controls.
- The piece of legislation containing the greatest number of amendments to the Act received a unanimous 3rd Reading vote in the House of Commons.



# CLOSING THOUGHTS

## **Advocacy and Engagement**

- Persistent advocacy and strategic engagement were key to modernizing the Competition Act successfully

## **Transformation in Policy**

- The Bureau's efforts helped usher in a new era of competition policy, demonstrating that meaningful change is achievable

## **Clear Communication**

- Clear communication was essential in the Bureau's efforts to modernize Canada's competition law.

## **Importance of Advocacy**

- The journey shows how advocacy shapes public policy and delivers better outcomes for citizens.

