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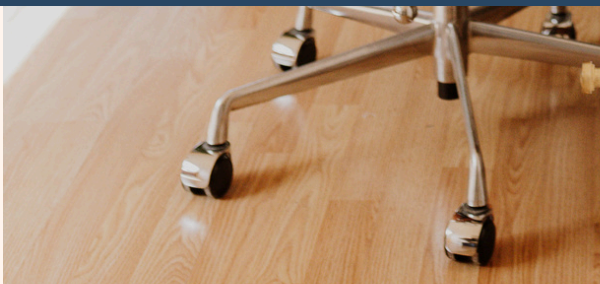
IN THE ACT

MAKING MARKETS WORK WELL



INTERIOR FIRMS CAUGHT FOR FURNISHING FABRICATED BIDS

Two interior fit-out firms pay price of nearly **\$10m** for collusion



NO FREE LUNCH

Food delivery platform agrees to refunds

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03

CE'S NOTE

04

SPOTLIGHT

16

SHOWCASE

17

HIGHLIGHTS

ABOUT CCCS

The Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore ("CCCS") is a statutory board of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. CCCS administers and enforces the Competition Act 2004 which empowers CCCS to investigate and adjudicate anti-competitive activities, issue directions to stop or prevent anti-competitive activities and impose financial penalties. CCCS is also the administering agency of the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act 2003 or CPFTA which protects consumers against unfair trade practices in Singapore. Our mission is to make markets work well to create opportunities and choices for businesses and consumers in Singapore.

18

GLOBAL ACT

20

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S NOTE



A very Happy New Year to our readers. In this issue of "In the Act", I am pleased to reflect on the significant strides we have made over the past few months since I have taken over as Chief Executive in April 2024. CCCS's commitment to fostering fair competition and protecting consumer interests has driven my team to accomplish a series of impactful decisions.

To begin, CCCS imposed nearly \$10 million in financial penalties against two contractors, Flex Connect Pte Ltd (formerly known as Facility Link Pte Ltd) and Tarkus Interiors Pte Ltd, for engaging in bid-rigging conduct. Spanning a five-year period, their actions affected 12 separate tenders with a total value exceeding \$34 million. Separately, CCCS issued two Proposed Infringement Decisions, first against Hunan Fengtian Construction Group Co., Ltd and Trust-build Engineering & Construction Pte Ltd for engaging in bid-rigging conduct between August and October 2022, and in November against Remittance Service Providers ZGR Global Pte. Ltd. and Hanshan Money Express Pte. Ltd for unlawful exchange of price information. These action showcases our steadfast commitment to combating anti-competitive practices.

In our first case under the streamlined process for collaborations pursuing environmental sustainability objectives, CCCS gave positive guidance in early January 2025 for the joint establishment and operation of Beverage Container Return Scheme Ltd, by Coca-Cola Singapore Beverages Pte. Ltd., F&N Foods Pte Ltd and Pokka Pte. Ltd. We expect that this case will be significant in advancing Singapore's national climate target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

In the aviation sector, upon recognising the evolving market dynamics since our original 2013 Decision, we released Qantas and Emirates from their capacity commitments on key routes. In the same industry, CCCS also approved an expanded joint venture between Singapore Airlines and Deutsche Lufthansa AG, subject to proposed commitments. This decision balances competitive concerns with potential economic benefits in Singapore's aviation industry.

We also issued several merger clearances. These included the acquisitions of Dyna-Mac Holdings Ltd, PropertyGuru Group Limited, and ZT Group International. Each decision reflects our thorough assessment processes and our role in facilitating beneficial market developments while safeguarding competition.

A major milestone was marked by our recommendation to the Minister for Trade and Industry to renew the Competition (Block Exemption for Liner Shipping Agreements) Order for another five years, supporting Singapore's maritime sector while ensuring fair competition. Our recommendations were accepted. Vessel sharing agreements for liner shipping services and price discussion agreements for feeder services will continue to qualify for block exemption until 31 December 2029.

On the consumer protection front, CCCS conducted unannounced visits at HairFun Salons in October 2024, demonstrating our vigilance in protecting vulnerable consumers, particularly the elderly, and reinforcing our stance against deceptive marketing practices. Foodpanda was warned over misleading "Unlimited Free Delivery on All Restaurants" advertisements. This action emphasises the importance of transparent pricing for informed consumer decisions and fair business competition.

On the international front, CCCS participated in the 33rd ASEAN Experts Group on Competition ("AEGC") in Phuket, Thailand, as well as the inaugural OECD Consumer Policy Ministerial Meeting in Paris, France. We will continue to engage at such high-level events which encourage knowledge sharing and collaboration with global competition authorities.

As we move forward in 2025, CCCS remains committed to adapting to new challenges and opportunities. We will continue to balance business needs with protecting competition and consumer protection, ensuring that Singapore's markets remain competitive, innovative, and fair.



INTERIOR FIRMS CAUGHT FOR FURNISHING FABRICATED BIDS

Two interior fit-out firms pay price of nearly \$10m for collusion

Interior fit-out firms, Flex Connect Pte Ltd (formerly Facility Link Pte Ltd) and Tarkus Interiors Pte Ltd, were found to have engaged in bid-rigging conduct relating to several non-residential property tenders between August 2016 and August 2021. For infringing the Competition Act, CCCS imposed financial penalties of nearly \$10 million in total for their anti-competitive conduct.

CCCS's investigations, which began in November 2020, uncovered bid-rigging activities affecting 12 tenders across Singapore, valued at approximately \$34 million. The tenders involved various non-residential properties such as retail spaces, food and beverage outlets, and offices.

The bid-rigging typically involved one designated winner providing pricing details to the other firm, which would then submit a higher bid to improve the designated winner's chances. This practice eliminated genuine competition and potentially led to customers overpaying for services.

CCCS Chief Executive Mr Alvin Koh stressed the seriousness of bid-rigging, as it distorts the competitive bidding process and harms both businesses and consumers. He advised businesses to refuse participation in anti-competitive agreements and publicly distance itself from such discussions. He also highlighted CCCS's leniency programme for businesses currently involved in a cartel to come forward.



If you have information and would like to come forward for a leniency application, click on this link <https://go.gov.sg/ccclsleniency> to find out more.

[Scan or
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read more](https://go.gov.sg/ccclsleniency)





CONSTRUCTION FIRMS IN BID-RIGGING TROUBLE

Two construction firms accused of bid-rigging in public sector tenders

CCCS has issued a Proposed Infringement Decision ("PID") against two construction companies, Hunan Fengtian Construction Group Co. Ltd and Trust-Build Engineering & Construction Pte Ltd, for alleged bid-rigging activities between August and October 2022.

The firms are alleged to have colluded on three People's Association's Invitations to Tender for upgrading works at the Bukit Batok, Cheng San, and Eunos Community Clubs. The parties now have an opportunity to make their individual representations to CCCS regarding the PID. CCCS will consider any representations received before making its final decision.



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NO FREE LUNCH

Food delivery platform agrees to refunds and future advertising compliance

Delivery Hero (Singapore) Pte. Ltd. (“Foodpanda”) was issued a formal warning for misleading consumers with its advertisement promoting “Unlimited Free Delivery on All Restaurants” during its Pandapro subscription campaign from 1 July to 30 September 2024. The campaign which appeared across various platforms including Instagram, in-app marketing, and billboards, misrepresented the nature of the discounts available to Pandapro subscribers.

CCCS’s investigation, prompted by a complaint in August 2024, revealed that contrary to the advertisement, more than 40% of transactions required additional payment for delivery. In reality, subscribers received only a \$3 discount on delivery fees for all restaurants, or up to \$6 for selected ones.

Following the investigation, Foodpanda has agreed to provide full refunds to affected customers, clarify terms, and review its existing and future marketing materials for compliance with fair trading laws. CCCS has emphasised the importance of accurate advertising, particularly with terms like “free,” and warned that any further violations could result in stronger enforcement actions.



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SKY'S THE LIMIT

SIA and Lufthansa's expanded joint venture takes off

CCCS has granted conditional approval for an expanded joint venture between Singapore Airlines Limited ("SIA") and Deutsche Lufthansa AG ("Lufthansa"). This decision follows a thorough review process that began in December 2022 when the airlines filed a joint application to expand their existing 2016 joint venture.

The proposed expansion aimed to enhance passenger numbers, offer more competitive fares, and improve connectivity, particularly in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, CCCS identified potential competition restrictions on the Singapore-Frankfurt and Singapore-Zurich routes, where SIA and Lufthansa are the sole operators of direct flights.

To address these concerns, the airlines provided commitments, including maintaining seat capacity at stipulated levels and ensuring a minimum number of Singapore passengers on these routes annually. They also agreed to appoint an independent auditor to monitor compliance.



Following a public consultation in late 2024, CCCS considered these commitments sufficient to mitigate competition concerns. Consequently, in January 2025, CCCS approved the expanded joint venture, subject to adherence to the proposed commitments.

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THE PROPERTY INVESTMENT

Hedychium given green light to purchase PropertyGuru

The proposed acquisition of PropertyGuru Group Limited (“PropertyGuru”) by Hedychium Group Limited and Hedychium Limited (collectively, “Hedychium”) has been cleared by CCCS. The deal involves Hedychium, indirectly owned by the EQT investment fund, acquiring PropertyGuru, a Southeast Asian property technology platform offering online property marketplaces, digital marketing services, and other real estate-related services.

CCCS’s review, which began on 1 November 2024, determined that the transaction would not harm competition in the digital real estate advertising services market. The main reasons for this conclusion included the lack of overlap between the products and services offered by the two companies in Singapore, the absence of vertical integration concerns, and no complementary offerings that could raise competitive issues. CCCS also conducted a public consultation, where most stakeholders did not raise any objections.



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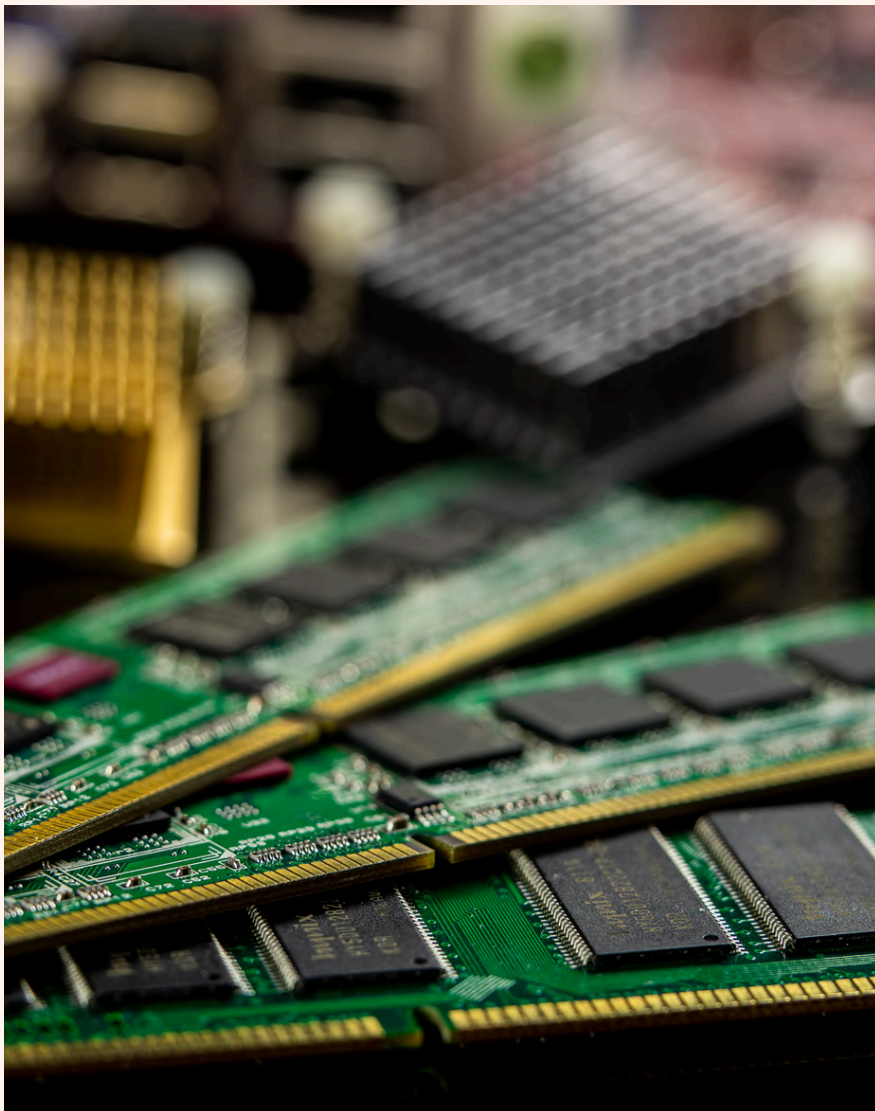
AMD POWERS UP WITH ZT GROUP ACQUISITION

Review finds substantial lessening of competition unlikely in semiconductor and data centre server markets

The proposed acquisition of ZT Group Int'l, Inc. ("ZT"), a provider of server and storage solutions for data centers, by Advanced Micro Devices, Inc. ("AMD"), a leading semiconductor company, has been approved by CCCS.

The review, which included a public consultation, determined that while the two companies operate in related sectors—AMD in semiconductor products for data centres and ZT in server manufacturing—there is no overlap in the products they supply in Singapore. The main concern was whether the merger could lead to market foreclosure through tying or bundling strategies on customers of semiconductor products and data centre servers.

However, after analysing market data and competition conditions, CCCS concluded that neither AMD nor ZT possesses significant market power in their respective markets, and therefore, the merged entity would unlikely be able to leverage any competitive advantage through such strategies.



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PROMPT NOD FOR SUSTAINABLE COLLABORATION

Positive guidance given to beverage establishment under new streamlined ESCGN

CCCS has provided positive guidance on the joint establishment and operation of Beverage Container Return Scheme (“BCRS”) Ltd. by Coca-Cola Singapore Beverages Pte. Ltd., F&N Foods Pte Ltd, and Pokka Pte. Ltd. This collaboration is deemed unlikely to infringe sections 34 and 47 of the Competition Act 2004.

BCRS Ltd., a not-for-profit company licensed by the National Environment Agency, will operate Singapore's Beverage Container Return Scheme, set to launch on 1 April 2026. The scheme involves a \$0.10 refundable deposit on pre-packaged beverages in plastic and metal containers.

This case marks the first application of CCCS's streamlined process for assessing environmental sustainability collaborations, as outlined in their Environmental Sustainability Collaboration Guidance Note (“ESCGN”). The assessment was completed swiftly within a defined timeframe of 30 working days.



CCCS Chief Executive Mr Alvin Koh emphasised the organisation's support for environmental sustainability goals while ensuring fair competition. He encouraged businesses to engage with CCCS early with complete information so that CCCS can respond promptly on whether their environmental sustainability initiatives comply with the Competition Act.

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EXCHANGING MORE THAN RMB

ZGR Global and Hanshan Money Express accused of exchanging remittance rates over six-year period

For unlawfully exchanging remittance rates, ZGR Global Pte. Ltd. and Hanshan Money Express Pte. Ltd. have been issued a Proposed Infringement Decision (“PID”) by CCCS.

The alleged infringement involves the exchange of information between the two companies on outward remittance rates for the Chinese Yuan over a six-year period, from at least 1 January 2016 to 22 February 2022.

CCCS views this conduct inherently restrictive of competition, as it reduces competitive pressures on competing providers to offer competitive rates to consumers.

Both parties now have an opportunity to make representations to CCCS in response to the PID.



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ACQUISITION OF TOPSIDE MODULE MANUFACTURING COMPANY GIVEN GO-AHEAD

Assessment finds acquisition unlikely to lead to substantial lessening of competition in supply of offshore plant market

CCCS has cleared the proposed acquisition of Dyna-Mac Holdings Ltd (“Dyna-Mac”) by Hanwha Ocean SG Holdings Pte Ltd (“Hanwha”) after assessing that the transaction will not infringe the Competition Act’s provisions against mergers that substantially lessen competition.

Hanwha, part of the South Korean Hanwha Group, operates in the shipbuilding and offshore industry. Dyna-Mac specialises in manufacturing topside modules for the energy and marine sectors.

In its assessment, CCCS focused on the risk of input foreclosure as topside modules which Dyna-Mac supplies, are input components in the construction of offshore plants which Hanwha is in the business of. Alongside a public consultation, CCCS also sought feedback from various stakeholders, including competitors and customers of Hanwha and Dyna-Mac.



CCCS concluded that the acquisition is unlikely to significantly impact competition in the offshore plant supply market. Key factors in this decision include Dyna-Mac’s likely low market share in global topside module supply, sufficient alternative suppliers for customers, and the small proportion of Dyna-Mac’s modules in global offshore plant supply.

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NAVIGATING THE FUTURE FOR MARITIME GROWTH

CCCS recommends renewal of Liner Shipping Agreements Block Exemption Order for five years

CCCS has recommended the renewal of the Competition (Block Exemption for Liner Shipping Agreements) Order (“LSA BEO”) for five years, from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2029. This renewal retains exemptions for vessel sharing agreements and price discussion agreements for feeder services, as these generate net economic benefits for Singapore. The scope will be updated to cover only port-to-port transport, excluding inland carriage. This decision follows a public consultation and considers market trends, international regulations, and Singapore's maritime developments. The five-year duration balances industry needs for legal certainty in view of Singapore’s upcoming maritime developments and allow CCCS to undertake timely assessment of the LSA BEO to respond to any change in the industry.



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CLEARED FOR TAKEOFF

Qantas and Emirates released from capacity commitments on Singapore-Brisbane and Singapore-Melbourne routes as markets evolve

CCCS has released Qantas and Emirates from capacity commitments on the Singapore-Melbourne route, and Qantas from commitments on the Singapore-Brisbane route. This decision follows a 2013 conditional clearance for their alliance, which required maintaining minimum seat capacities. The airlines requested termination or variation of these commitments in March 2024. CCCS's assessment found significant changes since 2013: Emirates' withdrawal from both routes, decreased market share for both airlines, expansion by Singapore Airlines, and new competition from Turkish Airlines.

A public consultation in August 2024 found no significant concerns from third parties. CCCS concluded that the original capacity undertaking is no longer necessary due to material changes in market circumstances. The withdrawal of the capacity commitments also removed the immunity accorded by the 2013 decision on the alliance.



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CUTTING THROUGH THE COMPLAINTS

HairFun Salons under scrutiny following multiple consumer complaints and failed resolution attempts

CCCS made unannounced visits to three HairFun Salons on 2 October 2024 after unsuccessful attempts by the Consumers Association of Singapore (“CASE”) to resolve consumer complaints concerning unfair sales tactics at the salons. An invitation by CASE to the HairFun Salon management to sign a Voluntary Compliance Agreement to cease any unfair trade practices and refund affected consumers was also ignored.

At the unannounced visits, CCCS obtained information and documents at three HairFun Salons operating at Ang Mo Kio Avenue 10, Toa Payoh Central and Tampines Central, and issued a notice to the director of the operator of HairFun Salons to produce information and documents.



Investigations by CCCS revealed that HairFun Salons had previously operated under the name “Scissor & Comb”, with similar complaints dating back to 2018. CCCS will continue its investigations and determine whether enforcement action needs to be taken. Consumers who would like to report cases of unfair trade practices by HairFun or Scissor & Comb salons may contact CASE.

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STOPPING DECEITFUL BUSINESSES



Tricked by fake reviews and false discounts? Meet the people who stop deceitful businesses



Mr Alvin Koh took over as chief executive of the Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore in April 2024. (Photo: CNA/Davina Tham)

INTERVIEW WITH ALVIN KOH

In an interview with CNA, CCCS Chief Executive Mr Alvin Koh highlighted the organisation’s intensified efforts to combat unfair business practices, spurred by a rise in consumer disputes and complaints. He also mentioned “bolder steps” undertaken to deter dishonest retailers, including stepped-up enforcement actions and enhanced investigative capacity within CCCS.

Read the article: go.gov.sg/cna-stop-deceitful-businesses



WORD SEARCH: THE CCCS EDITION

CCCS held its first year-end giveaway where 20 winners would win a set of CCCS-branded items. Participants were required to find the 10 listed words in a word search puzzle designed to raise awareness of competition rights and consumer protection.

Congratulations to our lucky 20 winners!



HIGHLIGHTS



27TH ANNUAL SME CONFERENCE & INFOCOMM COMMERCE CONFERENCE & EXPO 2024



CCCS participated in the 27th Annual SME Conference & Infocomm Commerce Conference & Expo 2024 ("SMEICC 2024"), a flagship event for Small and Medium Enterprises ("SMEs") organised by the Singapore Chinese Chambers of Commerce & Industry ("SCCCI"). This marked CCCS's fourth involvement in the event. The conference, themed "Navigating Change Today: Embrace, Overcome, Grow", was graced by Dr Tan See Leng, Minister for Manpower and Second Minister for Trade and Industry.

ENGAGING SMES

During the two-day conference, CCCS officers raised awareness about the organisation's work in competition and consumer protection. The team engaged participants from various industries and distributed collaterals, including the summary brochure on Environmental Sustainability Collaboration Guidance Note ("ESCGN").



Building Agility and Maximising Business Potential with Government Initiatives

On day 2 of SMEICC 2024, Ms Lo Hwei Rong, Senior Assistant Director of Business & Economics, presented on CCCS's ESCGN, highlighting how it can support businesses pursuing collaborations with environmental sustainability objectives.





ASEAN EXPERTS GROUP ON COMPETITION (“AEGC”)



33rd Meeting of the ASEAN Experts Group on Competition

CCCS attended the 33rd ASEAN Experts Group on Competition (AEGC) meeting in Phuket from 28 October to 1 November 2024. ASEAN Member States discussed project implementations and held dialogue sessions with partners. CCCS Chief Executive Mr Alvin Koh also participated in the 5th ASEAN Heads of Competition Agencies Meeting. CCCS provided updates on various projects, including the Virtual ASEAN Competition Research Centre and the ASEAN-Canada Free Trade Agreement.



5th ASEAN Heads of Competition Agencies Meeting

OECD COMPETITION COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND OECD GLOBAL FORUM

CCCS attended the OECD Competition Committee meetings and OECD Global Forum in Paris from 2 to 6 December 2024. Chief Executive Mr Alvin Koh represented Singapore as one of the lead examiners of the Peer Review of Thailand where he posed questions and provided comments and observations on Thailand’s Competition and Law. He also presented on CCCS’s government advocacy efforts at the OECD-Meeting of High-Level Representatives of Asia-Pacific Competition Authorities, which was held on the sidelines of the OECD Competition meetings.



OECD CONSUMER POLICY MINISTERIAL MEETING



CCCS Assistant Chief Executive (Legal, Enforcement and Consumer Protection) Mr Loke Shiu Meng represented Singapore at the inaugural OECD Consumer Policy Ministerial Meeting in Paris, France from 8 to 9 October 2024. As Chair of the ASEAN Committee on Consumer Protection, he made an intervention for ASEAN on the topic “Protecting and Empowering Consumers in the Digital Transition”. The event saw the gathering of ministers, senior officials, and business representatives. Singapore's delegation also held bilateral meetings with French and Argentinian consumer protection authorities.

VISIT BY COMMISSIONER OF COMPETITION BUREAU CANADA

CCCS hosted a visit by the Commissioner of Competition Bureau Canada on 28 October 2024, where they discussed recent competition policy and law developments in their respective jurisdictions and areas of collaboration. The Commissioner also gave a speech on “Competition: A Driver for Productivity and Economic Growth”.



BLUEPRINT



ILLUSTRATING COMPETITION LAW

We've created six infographics that simplify the Competition Law and its main prohibitions. These infographics are designed to help everyone grasp and visualise these concepts more easily.

To discover more, connect with us on our social media channels!

BID-RIGGING

When competitors agree who wins, the tender is no longer competitive. The buyer may end up paying more.

PRICE FIXING

When competitors agree to fix prices, the rest of us pay the price.

PRODUCTION CONTROL

When competitors limit supply, prices rise, and consumers pay more.

MARKET SHARING

Competition fades when markets are divided. You may not get the best deal.

ABUSE OF DOMINANCE

When one rules the market, where is the competition?

ANTI-COMPETITIVE MERGERS

Reduced competition could lead to higher prices and fewer options. Companies may lack the drive to improve or innovate.

Connect
WITH US!

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