



Complaints

How to Complain Effectively

Consumers are often faced with several challenges when they wish to complain about a product or service. A good resource to help you complain effectively is the Complaint Road Map which is featured at ConsumerInformation.ca. The Complaint Road Map is a handy information tool which helps you complain more effectively and directs you to the right complaint handling body when dealing with businesses, service providers, and retailers. Use the Complaint Roadmap's step-by-step approach to help you present your product or service complaint to a business. If after dealing with the business your complaint hasn't been resolved, consider using the Roadmap's next steps to find an organization to help you.

First Things First

- Give the merchant the first chance to solve the problem. Contact the salesperson, retailer or business when you have a complaint about any goods or services you bought. When there is a complaints department, use it. When there isn't, talk to someone in authority, such as a manager. A face-to-face discussion is best. Be firm and businesslike, but polite. Calmly and accurately describe the problem and what you want the company to do to resolve it.
- If the problem is not resolved that way, ask for the telephone number of the company headquarters and contact the customer service department. Request specifics about how and when something will be done, and get the company representative's name in case you have to refer to the conversation later. Write down any details of your complaint and keep them in a file. Make sure to date your notes.
- If your call doesn't produce satisfactory results, write a letter to someone higher up, such as the general manager or owner (see sample letter). Provide all the details of the problem and explain your efforts to resolve it. Ask for action. In the case of products, send a copy of your letter to the manufacturer, and be sure to keep a copy of it yourself.
- If none of these steps work to your satisfaction, consult the key consumer contacts of this Handbook for government offices and consumer organizations that apply to your situation. If you don't know where to start, call the [federal-provincial-territorial government consumer affairs](#) office where you live. Someone there will direct you to the right organization. Or visit the [Complaint Road Map](#).
- Taking legal action should be your last choice. If you decide to sue, remember that there are often time limitations on filing lawsuits. You may wish to check with a lawyer about the legal process and any limitations that may apply to your case in your province or territory.

Strategies for Success

- Do not be afraid to complain. Good businesses will be pleased to correct any mistake on their part. They know that customer goodwill is the best form of advertising.
- Always keep a file of important information related to your purchase, include the sales receipts, repair orders, warranties, cancelled cheques, contracts and any letters you have written to or received from the company concerned.
- Do not procrastinate. When a product is defective or unsatisfactory, it is important that you return it quickly so that you do not lose the right to get your money back or to collect damages in some cases. Always check the return policy before you buy.

Sample Complaint Letter

(Your Address)

(Your City, Province or Territory, Postal Code)

(Your Email Address, if you have an email address where you can be contacted)

(Date)

(Name of contact person, if available)

(Title, if available)

(Consumer Complaint Division, when you have no contact person)

(Company name)

(Street address)

(City, province or territory, postal code)

Dear *(Contact Person)*:

Re: *(account number, if applicable)*:

On *(date)*, I *(bought, leased, rented or had repaired)* a *(name of the product with serial or model number or service performed)* at *(location)*.

Unfortunately, your product has not performed well *(or the service was inadequate)*. I am disappointed because *(explain the problem: for example, the product does not work properly, the service was not performed correctly, I was billed the wrong amount, something was not disclosed clearly or was misrepresented at the time of sale)*.

To resolve the problem, I would appreciate *(state the specific action you would like: money back, charge card credit, repair or exchange, for example)*. Enclosed are copies *(do not send originals)* of my records *(include receipts, guarantees, warranties, cancelled cheques, contracts, and any other documents associated with the purchase)*.

I look forward to your reply and to your resolving my problem, and will wait until *(set a time limit: usually 10 working days is sufficient)* before seeking help from a consumer protection agency or filing a complaint with the Better Business Bureau. Please contact me at the above address or by telephone at *(home and/or office number with area codes)*

Sincerely,

(your name)

Enclosure(s)

cc: (indicate to whom you are sending a copy of this letter, e.g., product manufacturer)

What to Do When You Have Complained Without Any Results?

If you feel you have given the company enough time and that your problem has not been resolved, send a copy of your complaint letter and copies of supporting documents (not originals) to, or file a consumer complaint with, your [provincial or territorial consumer affairs office](#) or [Better Business Bureau](#).

Small Claims Court

Small claims court can be an informal and relatively inexpensive way to resolve disputes when the amount involved is less than \$3,000 or, in some provinces, up to \$25,000. However, you will have to pay a fee to file a claim. Once the suit is launched, you may have costs for such things as serving orders, payments to witnesses and travel expenses.

You do not need a lawyer to go to small claims court, although in most provinces and territories the help of a lawyer is allowed. The court staff is experienced in helping consumers prepare the necessary forms, and the judges have the power to settle disputes. This court allows each side to explain its story and does not expect consumers to know legal technicalities.

For information on how to proceed, contact the small claims or provincial or territorial court nearest you (look in the government listings in your phone book). The websites of these courts also often list the procedures to follow and have copies of the forms you will need to complete.

Class Action Suits

The purpose of a class action is to permit a large number of individuals who have suffered similar losses or injuries to band together in an attempt to recover damages.

This means that individuals who might not be able to afford to sue on their own can act with others in the same situation against the same defendant. All the participants in the class action suit share both the costs and the outcome.

With a class action, consumers with legitimate cases can afford what could otherwise be an expensive legal procedure. Currently, class actions are only allowed in some provinces in Canada. There are a number of steps to a class action, including having the suit certified by a court in order for it to proceed. Seeking advice from a lawyer on the process and the costs involved is a good first step.

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Contacts For This Topic

Provincial and Territorial Consumer Affairs Offices

Alberta

Service Alberta, Consumer Contact Centre

3rd Floor Commerce Place
10155-102 Street

Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4G8

Telephone: 780-427-4088

Toll Free: 1-877-427-4088

Email: service.alberta@gov.ab.ca

Website: www.servicealberta.ca

British Columbia

Consumer Protection BC

#307-3450 Uptown Blvd
PO Box 9244

Victoria, British Columbia V8W 9J2

Telephone: 604-320-1667

Toll Free: 1-888-564-9963

Fax: 250-920-7181

Email: info@consumerprotectionbc.ca

Website: www.consumerprotectionbc.ca

Manitoba**Consumer Protection Office, Manitoba Family Services and Consumer Affairs**

302-258 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0B6
Telephone: 204-945-3800
Toll Free: 1-800-782-0067
Fax: 204-945-0728
Email: consumers@gov.mb.ca
Website: www.manitoba.ca/fs/cca/cpo

New Brunswick**Department of Justice and Consumer Affairs**

Kings Place (King Tower)
440 King Street

Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 5H8
Telephone: 506-453-2659
Fax: 506-444-4494
Email: justice.comments@gnb.ca
Website: www.gnb.ca/0062/rentalsman/index-e.asp

Newfoundland and Labrador**Service NL**

PO Box 8700
St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador A1B 4J6
Telephone: 709-729-4834
Toll Free: 1-877-968-2600
Fax: 709-729-6998
Email: gsinfo@gov.nl.ca
Website: www.gs.gov.nl.ca/index.html

Northwest Territories**Consumer Affairs, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs**

5201-50th Avenue, Suite 600
PO Box 1320

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories X1A 3S9
Telephone: 867-873-7125
Fax: 867-873-0309
Email: michael.gagnon@gov.nt.ca
Website: www.maca.gov.nt.ca/operations/consumer_affairs/index.html

Nova Scotia**Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, Public Enquiries**

Mail Room, 8 South
Maritime Centre
1505 Barrington Street

Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3K5
Telephone: 902-424-5200
Toll Free: 1-800-670-4357
Fax: 902-424-0720
Email: askus@gov.ns.ca
Website: www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/access/individuals/consumer-awareness.asp

Nunavut

Consumer Affairs, Department of Community and Government Services
267 Qaiqtuq Building
P.O. Box 440

Baker Lake, Nunavut X0C 0A0
Telephone: 867-793-3303
Toll Free: 1-866-223-8139
Fax: 867-793-3321
Email: Laupaluktuq@gov.nu.ca
Website: www.gov.nu.ca/english/

Ontario

Consumer Protection Branch, Ministry of Consumer Services

5775 Yonge Street, Suite 1500
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2E5
Telephone: 416-326-8800
Toll Free: 1-800-889-9768
Phone (TTY): 416-229-6086
Phone (TTY) 2: 1-877-666-6545
Fax: 416-326-8665
Email: consumer@ontario.ca
Website: www.ontario.ca/consumerprotection

Prince Edward Island

Consumer Services, Office of the Attorney General

Shaw Building, 4th Floor
95 Rochford Street
PO Box 2000

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island C1A 7N8
Telephone: 902-368-4580
Telephone: 902-368-4550
Toll Free: 1-800-658-1799
Fax: 902-368-5283
Website: www.gov.pe.ca/jps/index.php3?number=1002799&lang=E

Quebec

Office de la protection du consommateur

400 Jean-Lesage Boulevard, Suite 450
Québec, Quebec G1K 8W4
Telephone: 418-643-1484

Toll Free: 1-888-672-2556
Fax: 418-528-0976
Website: www.opc.gouv.qc.ca

Saskatchewan

Consumer Protection Branch, Ministry of Justice and Attorney General

1919 Saskatchewan Drive, Suite 500
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 4H2
Telephone: 306-787-5550
Toll Free: 1-888-374-4636
Fax: 306-787-9779
Email: consumerprotection@gov.sk.ca
Website: www.justice.gov.sk.ca/cpb

Yukon

Consumer Services, Department of Community Services

Andrew Philipson Law Centre
2130 Second Avenue, 3rd Floor
PO Box 2703 (C-5)

Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6
Telephone: 867-667-5111
Toll Free: 1-800-661-0408 ext. 5111
Fax: 867-667-3609
Email: consumer@gov.yk.ca
Website: www.community.gov.yk.ca/consumer/index.html

Better Business Bureaus

Canadian Council of Better Business Bureaus

2 St. Clair Avenue East
Suite 800

Toronto, Ontario M4T 2T5
Telephone: 416-644-4936
Fax: 416-644-4945
Website: www.bbb.org/canada

Better Business Bureau of Central and Northern Alberta

888 Capital Place
9707-110 Street

Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2L9
Telephone: 780-482-2341
Toll Free: 1-800-232-7298
Fax: 780-482-1150
Email: info@edmontonbbb.org
Website: www.edmonton.bbb.org

Better Business Bureau of Southern Alberta

Suite 350
7330 Fisher Street SE

Calgary, Alberta T2H 2H8
Telephone: 403-531-8784
Fax: 403-640-2514
Email: info@betterbusinessbureau.ca
Website: calgary.bbb.org

Better Business Bureau of Mainland B.C.

Suite 404
788 Beatty Street

Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 2M1
Telephone: 604-682-2711
Fax: 604-681-1544
Email: contactus@mbc.bbb.org
Website: mbc.bbb.org/

Better Business Bureau of Vancouver Island

220-1175 Cook Street
Victoria, British Columbia V8V 4A1
Telephone: 250-386-6348
Toll Free: 1-877-826-4222
Fax: 250-386-2367
Email: info@vi.bbb.org
Website: vi.bbb.org

Better Business Bureau of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

1030B Empress Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 3H4
Telephone: 204-989-9010
Toll Free: 1-800-385-3074
Fax: 204-989-9016
Email: bbbinquiries@mts.net
Website: manitoba.bbb.org

Better Business Bureau of the Maritime Provinces

Suite 805
1888 Brunswick Street

Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3J8
Telephone: 902-422-6581
Fax: 902-429-6457
Email: bbbmp@bbbmp.ca
Website: www.bbbmp.ca

Better Business Bureau of Eastern, Northern Ontario and the Outaouais

505-700 Industrial Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario K1G 0Y9
Telephone: 613-237-4856
Toll Free: 1-877-859-8566
Fax: 613-237-4878
Email: info@ottawa.bbb.org
Website: ottawa.bbb.org

Better Business Bureau of Mid-western and Central Ontario

354 Charles Street East
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 4L5
Telephone: 519-579-3080
Toll Free: 1-800-459-8875
Fax: 519-570-0072
Email: info@bbbmwo.ca
Website: mwco.bbb.org

Better Business Bureau of Mid-western and Central ontario

1 Eva Road
Toronto, Ontario M9C 4Z5
Telephone: 416-621-9184

Better Business Bureau of Western Ontario

Suite 308
200 Queens Avenue
PO Box 2153

London, Ontario N6A 4E3
Telephone: 519-673-3222
Toll Free: 1-877-283-9222
Fax: 519-673-5966
Email: info@london.bbb.org
Website: london.bbb.org

Better Business Bureau of Saskatchewan

980 Albert Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4R 2P7
Telephone: 306-352-7601
Toll Free: 1-888-352-7601
Fax: 306-565-6236
Email: info@bbbsask.com
Website: sask.bbb.org

Better Business Bureau of Mainland B.C. - B.C. Interior

Toll Free: 1-888-803-1222

Fax: 604-681-1544
Email: contactus@mbc.bbb.org
Website: www.interior.bbbvan.org

Better Business Bureau of the Maritime Provinces - Yarmouth Office

Telephone: 902-742-2432
Fax: 902-742-1248

Better Business Bureau of Mid-western and Central Ontario - Business Office

1 Eva Road
Toronto, Ontario M9C 4Z5
Telephone: 416-621-9184

Better Business Bureau of Windsor and Southwestern Ontario - Chatham Office

Telephone: 519-351-0592
