

CONSUMER COMPLAINTS



It's normal to have a strong emotional reaction when you realize a company isn't being fair with you, but while these feelings can be motivating, they can get in the way of effective problem-solving.

(NC) We've all experienced bad service at some point. While we have our thresholds of what we're willing to tolerate, sometimes issues go beyond high prices or impolite customer service. If a company ignores their policies or doesn't follow the rules, by overcharging you on a bill or not giving you a refund you're owed, you may want to make a complaint. Here are some tips to make sure it's effective and you get what you're due.

Acknowledge your feelings. It's pretty normal to have a strong emotional reaction when you realize a company isn't playing fair and square with you. Take the time you need to vent, to feel that frustration or anger, before you

take the next steps. While these feelings can be motivating, they can sometimes get in the way of effective problem-solving. Plus, no one wants to be that person screaming at the customer service representative.

Get organized. For any chance of a resolution, you need to be able to explain what the problem is. So, write down the concern to get it straight. Point to what policy, rule or aspect of an agreement has been violated beyond simply saying, "this company owes me money" or "I'm out a hundred bucks." These details could be a reality check or provide important evidence to back up a complaint.

Start at the source. If it still seems like something might be off, contact the company. Most companies want to keep customers happy and maintain their service standards. While you might be tempted to start ranting about the company on social media, see if they might have a solution to your problem before looking for help anywhere else. You might be pleasantly surprised by their response.

Take notes. You should always document what happens when addressing an issue. Make detailed notes on any communications you have with the company, including the company's response to your explanation of the problem. Save emails and take screenshots of any online messages. Keeping a detailed timeline of events will also provide a record of your interactions if you need to take the problem further.

Escalate to an ombudsman. If the company doesn't take appropriate action to solve your problem, take your complaint to an organization that can help. Many sectors have a regulatory body or ombudsman to hold them accountable. For phone, internet and TV providers in Canada that's the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services.

This organization helps service providers and customers resolve problems. It has the power to tell providers how to fix the problem, and often, to issue a credit or refund to the customer. Its services are available in English or French and are provided free of charge. Most complaints filed with the organization are resolved within 30 days.

Find more information or get action on a complaint at ccts-cprst.ca.



Aunt Leah's Christmas tree sales support young people transitioning from foster care and vulnerable mothers at risk of losing custody of their children.

30th season for Aunt Leah's Christmas Tree Lot in Marpole

This holiday season, let your Christmas tree symbolize hope and renewal for local youth and young moms. Aunt Leah's Trees, a cherished South Vancouver tradition since 1994, transforms Christmas tree sales into vital support for young people transitioning from foster care and for vulnerable mothers at risk of losing custody of their children.

A Legacy of Hope at St. Stephen's United Church

Thirty years ago, Aunt Leah's Trees began operations at St. Stephen's United Church, 7025 Granville St., which still proudly hosts the Vancouver lot right in the neighbourhood. Over the decades, tree lot sales have become one of Aunt Leah's most important fundraisers.

"This season, our goal is to sell 5,000 trees to raise \$750,000 for crucial housing and support programs," says Lesley Anderson, Aunt Leah's Director of Development and Communications. "Profits from tree sales provide safe, stable housing, life skills, and educational support, positively impacting the lives of hundreds of young people and families."

In 2023 alone, Aunt Leah's provided 432 former foster youth with essential support and offered secure housing for 14 young moms and their 18 children. Youth like S.T., who have found a path to independence with Aunt Leah's programs, show the life-changing power of this support. "Before Aunt Leah's, I was surviving on bottle returns and saw no future for myself," S.T. shares. "Today, I'm a trained cook and living independently. Aunt Leah's changed my life."

More Volunteers Needed at Aunt Leah's Marpole Tree Lot

This season, Aunt Leah's is calling for more volunteers to help at the Vancouver lot—especially on weekends when the lots tend to be very busy. Shifts are available for opening weekend and early December.

Aunt Leah's welcomes individuals, families, and community groups making it a wonderful opportunity to give back to the community. Volunteer shifts are four hours long, with access to a heated tent, hot drinks, and water. Sign up at auntleahs.org/treelotsignup.

Aunt Leah's Trees is open from Nov. 22nd- Dec. 20th with locations in Vancouver, Burnaby, and Coquitlam with shifts available daily.

For more information or to make a donation to Aunt Leah's programs, visit auntleahs.org

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

...and How to Fight For Them



If you think someone is being unfair or trying to take advantage of you, here's how to find recourse for three common aspects of adulthood.

(NC) Nobody likes to get pushed around. As a kid, we're taught to speak to a teacher, parent or guardian if we're being bullied. But, as an adult, who do you turn to if you think someone is being unfair or trying to take advantage of you? Here's how to find recourse for three common aspects of adulthood.

Employee's rights. Getting fired or laid off from a job is extremely stressful, particularly if it comes as a surprise. Your employer will likely offer you some sort of compensation package as part of the termination. But you don't necessarily need to settle for whatever the company offers.

Before you sign anything, speak with an employment lawyer. Many offer free initial consultations where you can explain the circumstances, and they'll tell you if they think you have a legitimate case to seek, and receive, a better package.

Tenant's rights. If you live in a rental apartment, you should know that there are rules around what a landlord can and can't do. Rules vary by province but, generally, they must maintain a safe environment, notify you ahead of time before they enter the unit and, in many cases, there are limits on how much they can raise the rent each year. They also have to give you sufficient notice if they want to evict you so they can move in themselves, and they may have to compensate you for the inconvenience.

Check out the website of the landlord-tenant board in your province or territory to learn more about your rights as a tenant. And, if you think your landlord has violated the rules and regulations, contact them to set up a hearing.

Telecom user's rights. We rely on technology for an endless array of tasks, from entertainment and finding directions, to communicating with loved ones and getting our jobs done. So, it's a major inconvenience if the company that provides your phone, internet or television service doesn't deliver what you're paying for.

If you've contacted your service provider about a problem and they haven't resolved it, there's a national and impartial dispute resolution service you can turn to: The Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services.

This organization helps service providers and customers resolve problems. It has the power to tell providers how to fix the problem, and often, to issue a credit or refund to the customer. Its services are available in English or French and are provided free of charge. Most complaints filed with the organization are resolved within 30 days.

Find more information at ccts-cprst.ca.

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WISHING
EVERYONE
LOVE
PEACE
HEALTH
HAPPINESS

For assistance with provincial issues, be sure to contact my community office.

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