

BACKGROUNDER: CREDIT REPORTING IN BC

OVERVIEW

A credit report is a record about an individual that includes identifying information (such as name, address, employer, etc.); financial obligations (including name of the creditor, amount owed, details regarding payment history, etc.); financial and legal information about bankruptcies, court judgments, debts assigned to collection agencies, repossessions, etc.); and requests for information about the individual from creditors and others. The information in the report is continually updated as it becomes available from creditors, applications for credit, etc.

THE CREDIT REPORTING LAW IN BC

Credit reporting has been regulated in BC since 1973. The first act was called the *Credit Reporting Act* which not only regulated credit reporting activities in BC, but also required companies engaged in credit reporting to be licensed. As of 2004, the *Credit Reporting Act* was repealed and the [Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act](#) addressed credit reporting, with respect to what may be included in a credit report and who can see the information. The law applies to reporting agencies that are either located in British Columbia or are providing reports about BC individuals.

2015 - 2017: CREDIT REPORTING BY THE NUMBERS

Consumer inquiries:

- 2015: 159 inquiries about the credit reporting sector, representing 2% of all calls and emails (8,777). Topics of interest included alleged inaccurate information on credit report (48% of all credit reporting-related inquiries), general inquiry (28%), and quality of service (6%).
- 2016: 163 inquiries about the credit reporting sector, representing 2% of all calls and emails (10,882). Topics of interest included inaccurate information on credit report (57% of credit reporting-related inquiries), general inquiries (17%) and statute barred inquiries (3%).
- 2017: 141 inquiries about the credit reporting sector, representing 1% of all calls and emails (11,068). Topics of interest included inaccurate information on credit report (50%), general inquiry (15%), identity theft (5%) and quality of service (5%).

BUSINESS OBLIGATIONS AND CONSUMER RIGHTS

By law, credit reporting agencies located in BC or providing reports about BC individuals:

- May provide a credit report only to those specified in the law (including companies who have a legitimate reason such as credit grantors and debt collectors).
- Must not include information prohibited by law in the report, including information not based on the most reliable evidence reasonably available or adverse information that is more than six years old.

By law, BC consumers:

- Have the right to see their own credit report.
- Must provide consent before anyone can access their credit report and that consent must be given in a manner that provides proof consent was given.
- Can give a 100-word statement to a reporting agency that relates to information they feel is incorrect and the reporting agency must include the statement in the credit report.

CONSUMER TIPS

- 1. Know your rights.** There are laws in place to ensure the right people are accessing your credit report. Visit www.consumerprotectionbc.ca to learn more about your rights.
- 2. Get a copy of your credit report.** In BC, you can request a copy of your credit report from each of the two major credit-reporting agencies, Equifax Canada and TransUnion, to ensure they are accurate. Credit reporting agencies will mail you a copy of your credit report free of charge (online versions may have a fee).
- 3. Where to start to get help.** If you have a concern about the information in your credit report, please contact the reporting agency in writing first.
 - a. Contact Consumer Protection BC if you believe that information has been on your report for over 6 years, there has been unauthorized viewing of your credit report; or you were denied the opportunity to provide an explanation on your credit report.
 - b. If you have concerns about the accuracy of your personal information in a credit report, the [Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner](#) (OIPC) may be able to assist you. Before submitting your complaint to the OIPC, you must have already contacted the organization that provided your personal information to the credit reporting agency and attempted to resolve your accuracy dispute by requesting that the information in dispute be corrected.

ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS

To maintain the integrity of our investigative processes, we do not share detailed information about open files. Visit the [Enforcement Actions section of our website](#) to explore our recent licensing and enforcement actions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Explore www.consumerprotectionbc.ca for more information for both consumers and regulated businesses. Additional statistical information is also available in our [annual reports](#). We also share information and consumer tips on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and in [our corporate blog](#).

Have a consumer question or complaint? Contact our information services team, toll free, at 1.888.564.9963 or info@consumerprotectionbc.ca.