

 CONSUMER PROTECTION BC	Inquiry Assessment and Case Management Policy	Version: 1.0 Created: February 1, 2026 Modified: Approved: March 13, 2026
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1.0 Purpose

This policy is intended to clarify the link between Consumer Protection BC’s public interest mandate set by the Government of BC in our enacting legislation¹ and our administrative agreement, and our inquiry handling and regulatory activities.

Consumer Protection BC is a statutory authority established under the *Business Practices and Consumer Protection Authority Act* and operates under an Administrative Agreement with the Attorney General to deliver consumer protection services in British Columbia. Consumer Protection BC administers and enforces specific provincial statutes and their associated regulations that have been delegated to it, including the *BC Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act* (BPCPA), the *Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Act* (CIFSA) the *Motion Picture Act* (MPA) and the *Ticket Sales Act* (TSA) and associated regulations.

Consumers and members of the public regularly contact Consumer Protection BC with inquiries and concerns about marketplace issues. These contacts may relate to matters that fall within Consumer Protection BC’s legislated mandate, as well as matters that fall outside that mandate. BC consumer law is broad, and inquiries received by Consumer Protection BC may therefore include both in-mandate and out-of-mandate issues.

Where an inquiry or concern is determined to be outside Consumer Protection BC’s mandate, Consumer Protection BC does not take enforcement or regulatory action and instead refers the consumer to other appropriate organizations, regulators, or dispute-resolution bodies, as applicable.

Where an inquiry falls within Consumer Protection BC’s mandate, the matter is assessed and managed in accordance with this policy.

Consumer Protection BC is a risk focused regulator, and we act in the public interest – meaning our actions and decisions must protect the broader community’s welfare and maintain public trust in BC’s regulatory system. For this reason, Consumer Protection BC prioritizes issues that pose substantial or systemic harm to vulnerable consumers or overall market integrity.

This policy outlines how Consumer Protection BC responds to inquiries from consumers within our mandate and applies risk-based criteria – such as the scale and severity of harm, the number of people affected and the potential impact on public confidence – to determine when an issue warrants intervention. By concentrating on high-impact, systemic cases while ensuring individual inquiries are resolved through proper channels, Consumer Protection BC upholds the public interest and reinforces trust in our oversight.

This policy supports Consumer Protection BC’s accountability by ensuring its processes are public.

¹ *Business Practices and Consumer Protection Authority Act*, S.B.C. 2004, c. 3, s. 4.

Guiding Principles

Consumer Protection BC is committed to high standards of practice in its work and continuously strives to improve its processes and services. Our administration of the law is guided by the following principles:

Accessibility	Consumer Protection BC's policies and procedures are publicly available on its website, and consumers and businesses are informed of processes related to inquiries, cases, inspections and enforcement.
Impartiality	All issues are handled in an impartial manner. Consumer Protection BC's process provides the opportunity for consumers and businesses to submit relevant information and, prior to a decision or order being made, an opportunity to be heard. Staff thoroughly and objectively review received inquiries and are committed to keeping consumers informed of the progress of their inquiry or case.
Person focused	Consumer Protection BC recognizes that consumers and businesses have different needs, and each person has their own unique history that they bring to their interactions with Consumer Protection BC. Staff commit to listening to concerns from its consumers and businesses, treating all with dignity and respect and maintaining confidentiality throughout our processes.

2.0 Definitions

Assessment – an assessment is a review of specific details of an issue to decide whether it falls within BC consumer protection law administered by Consumer Protection BC. If the assessment determines it does not, then no further action will be taken and the inquiry referred to another resource for resolution.

Case – a case is the result of an assessment determining that an inquiry falls within BC's consumer protection laws and warrants further review and inspection to determine the nature of the breach, the public interest impact, and need for education or enforcement action to resolve the issue.

Inquiry – Specific to this policy, an inquiry is a contact from a consumer requesting advice, direction and information related to a marketplace issue. An inquiry can include allegation by a consumer, and in some cases by a supplier, that a consumer transaction, or the circumstances related to a consumer transaction, have resulted in a breach of BC's consumer protection laws. In many situations, Consumer Protection BC refers inquiries to other regulators and consumer protection agencies that are best able to respond to the issue.

Inspection – An inspection is a specifically designated activity under consumer protection laws to determine compliance with an Act or regulation and other purposes. Inspections can include entering business premises of a person at any reasonable time; inquiring into any business, affairs or conduct of a person; inspecting, auditing or examining any record, goods or other thing or the provision of services in premises; requiring any person who has possession or control of any records, goods or other things in the premises, vehicle or vessel to produce the records, goods or things; and other activities necessary to determine compliance.

Public interest – the public interest means objectives or actions that serve the collective benefit of current and future citizens, as opposed to purely personal interests. In practice, public interest decisions focus on correcting systemic issues or matters that cause widescale harm to consumers as a whole, rather than on one person's issue. Refer to section 3.0 (4) of this policy for details.

Self-help tool – A self help tool is advice, forms, templates and even actions with related agencies such as the courts and BC Civil Resolution Tribunal, that will assist consumers in resolving their issue before Consumer Protection BC assesses an inquiry, opens a case, conducts an inspection or takes possible enforcement action.

3.0 Policy Statements

Consumer Protection BC will:

1. Where appropriate, require that consumers use self help tools and other remedies to resolve inquiries with suppliers before taking further action to receive, assess and open cases for inspection. This includes potentially using the courts or Civil Resolution Tribunal to address inquiries that are not in the public interest.
2. Receive inquiries from the public via its public facing online form. In special circumstances, and to support accessibility, Consumer Protection BC may accept inquiries through phone and email channels.
3. Not respond to interpretation or legal analysis that have been developed using Artificial Intelligence such as Large Language Models and Generative AI. Prompts and responses that attempt to interpret consumer protection laws are prone to misinterpretation and may include irrelevant information/allegations.
4. Assess inquiries in the basis of the facts presented and decide whether to open a case for further inspection. Decisions will consider the applicability of consumer protection laws, relevant risk factors and the broader public interest. Factors may include whether:
 - a. The matter includes indicators of systemic issues or patterns of harm affecting multiple consumers
 - b. The issue involves potential harm to vulnerable individuals or groups
 - c. The alleged financial loss or overall impact is significant
 - d. The issue raises concerns about market fairness, transparency, or integrity
 - e. Review of the case would support maintaining public confidence in the system
5. Open cases related to inquiries in the public interest (high risk) first, and in some circumstances, individual or private interests (low risk) inquiries, depending on the nature of the issue and allegations.
6. Retain information about low-risk inquiries for future assessment should the issues appear to escalate into high-risk public interest issues.
7. Close cases determined not to be in the public interest and provide written reasons and/or guidance to consumers on other avenues of resolution such as self-help tools including the courts and the Civil Resolution Tribunal.
8. Inspect the specific issues as part of a case and attempt to resolve the issue through progressive discipline and escalation to enforcement where appropriate.

4.0 Procedures

Submitting inquiries

In most cases, inquiries are initiated by consumers. Prior to submitting an inquiry, consumers are encouraged to review and take action to resolve the issue themselves using self-help tools and resources available on the Consumer Protection BC website.

Inquiries must be submitted in writing and using a prescribed form on the Consumer Protection BC web site.

<https://www.consumerprotectionbc.ca>

Inquiries typically include copies of any documents that are relevant to the issue, such as a copy of a contract, receipts or bill of sale.

Acknowledging inquiries

Consumer Protection BC will acknowledge receipt of inquiries with an automated response.

Assessing inquiries

Consumer Protection BC will conduct a preliminary assessment of the inquiry including any statements, facts and evidence provided, to confirm whether the issues raised by the complainant fall within the scope of consumer protection laws and the public interest risk factors outlined in the policy.

Dismissing inquiries

Inquiries may be dismissed for the following reasons:

- The issue is not within Consumer Protection BC's mandate and the legislation it administers.
- The issue falls within the legislation, however, it does not currently meet the criteria of a high-risk or high-impact issue at the time of the inquiry. These low-risk, individual inquiries may be closed with additional information on self help tools and resources that consumers can use to resolve the issue themselves. These inquiries will be retained by Consumer Protection BC for future reference and assessment should the issues raised escalate into high-risk public interest issues.
- The concerns raised have previously been inspected by Consumer Protection BC and no new issues have been reported.
- The issues raised are currently before the courts.
- The inquiry details, comments or images are of a derogatory or discriminatory nature or contain profanity or offensive language. If an inquiry contains offensive language, the consumer will be contacted in writing, requesting that they resubmit the inquiry after removing the offensive language.
- The remedy sought by the consumer is not achievable.

When an inquiry is dismissed for any of the reasons above, the consumer will be notified in writing with reasons by email or mail (if an email address has not been provided).

Initiating Cases and Inspections

Assuming the inquiry involves a violation of consumer protection laws, the consumer has attempted to resolve the issue using self help tools, and the issue falls in the public interest, Consumer Protection BC will open a case file and assign an inspector.

Inspectors' Authority

The BPCPA, CIFSA, MPA and TSA give inspectors their authority. Generally, inspectors are permitted to make any inquiries necessary to help further determine whether there is a violation of the legislation. Inspectors are permitted to enter a business and ask questions, seek copies of relevant documentation and temporarily take possession of any material to examine it and make copies, if necessary.

Inspection

Once an inspection commences, the inspector will typically contact the consumer to clarify aspects of the report and ask questions to assist in understanding the issue. Inspectors will also contact the respondent (business) and provide them with an opportunity to know and respond to the allegation(s). Many inspections are “desk based” reviews which means that information is exchanged via email or paper mail. As information is gathered and reviewed, the inspector will make notes and collect as much evidence as possible to complete the case.

Once sufficient evidence is compiled to either prove or disprove the allegations, the inspector will complete the case and review the findings. If the evidence indicates a violation of the legislation, the inspector will commence a more formal process to obtain compliance, either through voluntary or by taking a licensing and/or enforcement action against the business. This can include a formal report to a director for commencement of a hearing.

The inspector may also decide that no enforcement action is warranted. Or, if the business agrees to satisfy the issue by, for example, cancelling the contract or reimbursing money, the inspector may close the case.

Consumers may be contacted several times during the inspection to clarify information.

Consumers will also typically be notified of Consumer Protection BC's findings and the status of the case. While the parties to the inspection are welcome to contact the inspector at any time with questions, Consumer Protection BC is rigorous about ensuring that no other information about the inspection is shared with 3rd parties, including government or the media while the inspection is ongoing.

Enforcement

Depending on the seriousness of the situation, Consumer Protection BC may, after going through a formal process, take enforcement action under the legislation. These steps are outlined in the enforcement tools section of the website. [Our complaint handling & inspection processes - Consumer Protection BC](#)

5.0 Continuous Quality Improvement

Consumer Protection BC monitors inquiry trends and conducts regular reviews to identify any systemic public interest issues, making necessary adjustments in inquiry handling policies and procedures. Consumer Protection BC is committed to learning from the inquiries it receives.

6.0 Authority

Administrative Agreement

Article 3 of the [Administrative Agreement](#) between Consumer Protection BC and the Attorney General requires Consumer Protection BC to (a) to administer the Legislation in the public interest; (b) in respect of the BPCPA, the CIFSA and the TSA, to (i) carry out the powers, duties and functions of a director under those statutes; (ii) deliver consumer protection services throughout British Columbia; (iii) promote fairness and understanding in the marketplace; and (c) in respect of the MPA, to carry out the powers, duties and functions of a director under the MPA. In carrying out its responsibilities under the Legislation and this Agreement, the Authority will be guided by the overriding consideration of promoting consumer protection.

Business Practices and Consumer Protection Authority Act

Section 4 of the *Business Practices and Consumer Protection Authority Act* establishes the purpose of the Authority (doing business as Consumer Protection BC), which are “to deliver consumer protection services throughout British Columbia, to promote fairness and understanding in the marketplace and to administer in the public interest any Act, the administration of which is delegated to the authority.”

Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act

Part 10 of the *Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act* sets out the requirements for inspections and enforcement.

Part 11 of the *Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act* provides the Director with the power to delegate powers of enforcement to a person or class of persons as well as the power to designate persons or classes of persons as inspectors.

Part 12 of the *Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act* sets out the power of the Director to publish information respecting enforcement actions.

Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Act

Part 11 of the *Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Act* adopts various sections of the *Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act* related to inspections, enforcement, delegation of authority and administration including publishing.

Motion Picture Act

Section 12 of the *Motion Picture Act* sets out the requirements for inspections and enforcement.

Section 12.1 of the *Motion Picture Act* provides the Director with the power to delegate powers of enforcement to a person or class of persons as well as the power to designate persons or classes of persons as inspectors.

Ticket Sales Act

Part 4 of the *Ticket Sales Act* sets out the requirements for inspections and enforcement.

Part 5 of the *Ticket Sales Act* provides the Director with the power to delegate powers of enforcement to a person or class of persons as well as the power to designate persons or classes of persons as inspectors. It also sets out the power of the Director to publish information respecting enforcement actions.



Rob Gialloredo, President & CEO

March 13, 2026

Date