

1.0 Purpose

Consumer Protection BC actively promotes a culture of inclusion and a workplace free of discrimination and harassment. The organization is transparent in this belief as evidenced by its Standards of Conduct, Collective Agreement and corporate values. Consumer Protection BC expects that its employees, and the people who engage with the organization, will behave in an appropriate, open, honest, ethical and transparent fashion.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure Consumer Protection BC provides a fair, effective and transparent response to conduct concerns raised by consumers, businesses and others. This policy sets out the procedures for receiving, reviewing, recording and responding to complaints about employee conduct. This policy complements Consumer Protection BC's policy on case management complaints which deals with concerns about file management processes and interpretation of consumer protection laws.

This policy ensures Consumer Protection BC's accountability and that its processes are public. It applies to complaints about employees conduct from members of the public and from businesses regulated by the *Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act*, the *Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Act*, the *Motion Picture Act* and the *Ticket Sales Act* regarding the way Consumer Protection BC employees conduct themselves in administering delegated legislation.

2.0 Guiding Principles

Consumer Protection BC is committed to high standards of practice in its work. Consumer Protection BC values feedback and complaints from others and continuously strives to improve its services. The complaints process is guided by the following principles:

Accessibility	Consumer Protection BC's complaints process is publicly available on its website, and consumers and businesses are informed of their right to complain. Complaints are accepted in a variety of ways, including phone, mail and email.
Impartiality	All complaints 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 the review of complaints being finalized, have an opportunity to be heard. Employees thoroughly and objectively review received complaints and are committed to keeping complainants informed of the progress of their complaints.
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. Employees commit to listening to concerns from its consumers and businesses, treating complainants with dignity and respect and maintaining confidentiality throughout the complaints process.
Responsive	Employees will respond to complaints within five (5) business days and try to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity. Complaints that cannot be resolved at first contact, or those that raise more serious concerns about Consumer Protection BC, will be forwarded for further review/investigation within 10 business days. Employees are committed to these timeframes and will inform consumers and businesses of the progress of their complaints and reasons for any delay in the complaint resolution process.

3.0 Definitions

Complaint – A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with an aspect of Consumer Protection BC’s programs, services or people. It can include concerns about an employee’s conduct, quality of service, delay in providing a response or action taken by an employee. It can also include the response provided by a team member to a complaint or concern raised about Consumer Protection BC.

A complaint under this policy does not include an expression of disagreement with the interpretation and application of law or the reasonableness of a decision to cease review or inspection of a marketplace issue.

4.0 Policy Statement

Consumer Protection BC will:

- Receive, investigate and respond to complaints about the conduct of its employees who are engaged in the administration of BC’s consumer protection laws.
- Advise members of the public and businesses regulated by Consumer Protection BC about its conduct complaint handling policy and procedures.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Our process for addressing complaints is as follows:

Step 1	The operational, public relations and communications teams (collectively known as “the teams”) are primarily responsible for initially receiving, recording and assessing complaints, and will attempt to resolve the matter if possible. At this stage, team members have responsibility for explaining the complaints process to the person reporting the complaint. If these individuals are not able to resolve the complaint, then employees will proceed to step 2 of the complaint process.
Step 2	The teams will forward complaints that are not resolved or that require further review/investigation to their supervisors. If these individuals are not able to resolve the complaint, they will proceed to step 3 of the complaint process.
Step 3	The Chief Operating Officer is responsible for receiving and forwarding complaints to the CEO. The CEO, or delegate, will review and conduct investigations of complaints that are not resolved by the teams. If, following an investigation, a complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the person raising the concern, the complaint can be directed to the BC Ombudsperson.

6.0 Procedures

Frontline Resolution

Complaints about Consumer Protection BC’s service or conduct can be submitted in the following ways:

Mail: PO Box 9244, Victoria BC, V8W 9J2
Email: info@consumerprotectionbc.ca
Telephone: 1.888.564.9963

Translation services are provided through [Mosaic Translation Services](#) when requested.

Acknowledging complaints – All complaints will be acknowledged within five (5) business days by email or by mail (if an email address is not provided). This acknowledgement will include information about the employee who has primary responsibility for handling the complaint, as well as information about the complaints process, including applicable timeframes. Information provided to Consumer Protection BC is subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Assessing complaints – The teams will conduct a preliminary assessment to confirm whether the issues raised by the complainant fall within the scope of this policy. Teams will try to resolve complaints early wherever possible. Issues suitable for early/informal resolution include concerns about:

- An employee’s conduct, where that conduct is not abusive or discriminatory, but is not consistent with reasonable levels professionalism and courtesy.
- A delay in providing a response.

Complaints raising issues of a more serious nature are prioritized and responded to within 10 business days. These include allegations of abusive, threatening or discriminatory behaviour.

Dismissing complaints – Complaints that are not accepted for review under this conduct complaints policy may be dismissed by the teams for the following reasons:

- Case management and interpretation. These complaints must be addressed under the Case Management Complaints Policy.
- The concerns raised have previously been investigated by Consumer Protection BC and no new issues have been reported.
- The issues raised by the complainant are currently before a related tribunal or the courts.
- Complaints, comments or images that are of a derogatory or discriminatory nature or which contain profanity or offensive language will not be accepted. If a complaint contains offensive language, the complainant will be contacted in writing, requesting the complainant resubmit the complaint after removing the offensive language.
- The remedy sought by the complainant is not achievable.

When a complaint is dismissed for any of the reasons above, the complainant will be notified by email or mail (if an email address has not been provided) within five (5) business days of receiving the complaint, with reasons provided for the decision to dismiss the complaint.

Recording complaints – When recording the complaint in Consumer Protection BC’s complaint tracking system, the following information will be documented:

- The complainant’s name and contact information.
- When and how the complaint was received (by email, telephone or mail).
- The main issues raised in the complaint, including all relevant facts provided by the complainant.
- Any documentation submitted or interview notes taken during interaction with complainant.
- The outcome sought by the complainant (if known).
- Any attempts made to resolve the complaint informally, including action taken by the original team member receiving the complaint.

- Any barriers or additional support the person making the complaint may need, such as access to an interpreter.

Investigation

Investigating complaints – If a complaint is not resolved by the teams or their supervisors at step 1 or 2, the complainant may ask for it to be forwarded for further review by the Chief Operating Officer and CEO. The written complaint will be directed to the Chief Operating Officer, to log, track, file and ensure that timeframes are met. The Chief Operating Officer will refer the complaint to the CEO. If the complaint is about the Chief Operating Officer, it should be sent directly to the CEO. If the complaint pertains to the CEO, the complainant may make a formal written complaint to the Chair of the Board of Directors, through the Chief Operating Officer.

Requests for review will be acknowledged within five (5) business days and include information about the team member responsible for conducting the review and the anticipated timeline for completion of the review.

The CEO will assign the complaint to the appropriate department head for investigation. If the complaint pertains to that person, the CEO will either investigate the complaint or assign it to a person not involved in the complaint. The department head will investigate the complaint and provide recommendations to the CEO for approval.

Complaint investigations will be guided by the principles of administrative fairness and will be conducted in a fair, timely and impartial manner. Before commencing a formal investigation of a complaint, the Chief Operating Officer will be responsible for developing an investigation plan that will outline:

- An assessment of the main issues raised in the complaint.
- What evidence is required and how it will be gathered (including the names of witnesses and order in which they will be interviewed, as well as other records and evidence needed for the review).
- How confidentiality will be maintained throughout the complaint investigation.
- How people who are impacted by the investigation process will be notified of the outcome.
- The outcome or remedy the person is seeking.
- The investigation timeline.
- Any other relevant requirements.

All relevant evidence will be considered by the investigator during the review process, and the complainant will be provided an opportunity to be heard and comment on any preliminary findings prior to the Consumer Protection BC concluding the review of their complaint.

Documentation requirements for the investigation file include:

- A copy of the original complaint.
- All interviewer's notes with the date, time, and names of those present.
- Copies of all records reviewed during the investigation.
- A statement about any action taken in response to the complaint, or specific resolution reached on the matter, including clear reasons for decisions made.
- A final report outlining the investigative process and outcome.

The CEO will advise the complainant in writing about the decision and the reasons for it within 90 calendar days of receiving the complaint or will notify the complainant about the reason for the delay.

Concluding complaints – A final report/letter is due at the conclusion of a complaint investigation and is provided to the complainant within 10 business days. This report/letter will be written in clear and accessible language, and include information about:

- The issues raised by the complainant.
- The evidence considered during the review of the complaint, including the information provided by the complainant. If certain evidence was discounted in the review process, an explanation why (for example, issues with witness credibility or reliability of evidence).
- The analysis of this information in the context of Consumer Protection BC's rules and standard procedures.
- What decision was reached (i.e., whether the complaint was substantiated or not).
- Any action taken by the agency in response to the complaint.
- Information about any appeal or review options.

Copies of this correspondence will be provided to the Chief Operating Officer for filing.

Remedies – The complaint may be: dismissed, including the reasons; upheld, including planned action; or require further investigation. If the investigation reveals that employees have violated this policy or a related conduct requirement in our Standards of Conduct or under the Human Rights Code, Consumer Protection BC will take steps to fix the problem. The following remedies may be appropriate for substantiated complaints (for example):

- An acknowledgement and apology for the error.
- Changing organizational policies and procedures to prevent reoccurrence.

Appeal and Review Options

If the person continues to have concerns at the end of the complaint resolution process, employees will advise them of their right to seek further review of the matter through the Office of the Ombudsperson. The Ombudsperson has the discretion both to decide which complaints to investigate and to make recommendations to resolve an unfairness. Information on how to complain to the Office of the Ombudsperson is available at <https://bcombudsperson.ca/complaints/how-to-make-a-complaint/>.

The complainant may also wish to send the complaint to the Attorney General, which has an oversight role with respect to Consumer Protection BC.

7.0 Continuous Quality Improvement

Consumer Protection BC monitors complaint trends and conducts regular reviews to identify any systemic service issues and makes necessary organizational improvements. Consumer Protection BC is committed to learning from the complaints it receives from the public.

8.0 Dealing with Unreasonable Conduct

Consumer Protection BC commits to responding fairly to complaints and treating people with dignity and respect throughout the complaint resolution process.

Due to the nature of the business, Consumer Protection BC sometimes experiences unreasonable conduct from its licensed businesses, consumers or other interest holders (typically displayed as abusive, threatening and/or discriminatory behaviour). Consumer Protection BC does not, under any circumstances, tolerate these types of behaviour. People making complaints to Consumer Protection BC are expected to treat employees reasonably.

In cases where a consumer or business becomes unreasonable in their interactions with Consumer Protection BC employees, such that it creates health, safety, resource or equity issues for the organization, employees will take steps to address the behaviours and may, as necessary, limit access to services.

Consumer Protection BC may limit access to its services in the following ways:

- Terminating or limiting voice contact with consumers or businesses where the nature and content of the communication is abusive or discriminatory.
- Requiring contact in writing only.
- Terminating contact in verbally or in writing where the communication continues to be abusive or discriminatory.
- Terminating contact verbally or in writing where there is no further information or communication that can be provided on the issue, and all remedies and resources for resolving a particular issue have been exhausted.

Access restrictions must be considered as a last resort, and the person who is subject to the restriction must continue to be able to receive services by contacting the Manager or Director of the teams involved. Prior to issuing an access restriction, the person will be informed of:

- The reason for the restriction, including a description of their concerning behaviour.
- Details of any earlier warnings issued about their conduct.
- How the person can contact Consumer Protection BC, including the name and contact information for the person they are permitted to contact, and any limits to the frequency of such contact.
- How long the restriction is in place.
- How the person can request a review of the restriction.
- What is required for the restriction to be lifted.
- That threats of violence will be reported to law enforcement.

9.0 Authority

Consumer Protection BC's Collective Agreement and Conditions of Employment

Article 1.6, Respectful Workplace, of the Consumer Protection BC and BCGEU Collective Agreement states that the parties respect the rights and interests of all individuals and are committed to providing a working environment free of bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment. Bullying and harassment in any form, by any person, including peers, subordinates, supervisors, or managers, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated in any workplaces.

Consumer Protection BC, in cooperation with the Union, is committed to providing a workplace free of bullying and harassment (including sexual harassment), and to comply with the *Workers Compensation Act* and the Human Rights Code as amended from time to time.

The Consumer Protection BC conditions of employment for excluded employees require that they observe all written administrative policies, procedures and program descriptions now in force, or from time to time promulgated by resolution or by law by Consumer Protection BC, or by operation of

law, governing the operation of Consumer Protection BC’s undertaking or duties. Similarly, excluded employees must cooperate fully with the senior employees, CEO and other employees of Consumer Protection BC and members of the public and not promote disharmony or discontent.

Administrative Agreement

Article 10, Section 10.01, of the [Administrative Agreement](#) between Consumer Protection BC and the Attorney General requires Consumer Protection BC to establish appropriate policies and procedures for reviewing and addressing complaints raised by members of the public or any business regulated by or under the Legislation or otherwise affected by the Consumer Protection BC’s administration of the Legislation.

Under the Communications Protocol (Protocol 3) of the Administrative Agreement, the role of the Attorney General with respect to correspondence on corporate issues related to Consumer Protection BC, including complaints about Consumer Protection BC performance, is to notify Consumer Protection BC and draft a ministerial response indicating that correspondence was referred to Consumer Protection BC. The Attorney General may respond if the complaints are about conduct and performance. The role of Consumer Protection BC is to respond directly to such correspondence, including complaints, and notify the Attorney General as appropriate.

Ombudsperson Act

Complaints to the Office of the Ombudsperson are governed by the *Ombudsperson Act*. The Ombudsperson receives inquiries and complaints about the practices and services provided by public bodies and may investigate to determine if the public body is being fair to the people it serves. The Business Practices and Consumer Protection Authority established under the *Business Practices and Consumer Protection Authority Act* is specifically identified in the Schedule to the *Ombudsperson Act* (as #32).

The Office of the Ombudsperson does not have jurisdiction to handle consumer complaints about statutory matters under the various pieces of consumer protection law, but may investigate a complaint about a Consumer Protection BC process.

//original signed by//

April 1, 2025

Rob Gialloreto , President & CEO

Date