

Industry Backgrounder: Travel Services in BC

Overview

In British Columbia, travel agents and wholesalers are required to be licensed by Consumer Protection BC and make contributions to the [Travel Assurance Fund](#) (TAF). The rules and licensing requirements apply to brick-and-mortar businesses and those that operate online as well. The TAF is a possible source of compensation if a consumer doesn't get the travel services they bought through a licensed agent or wholesaler.

Travel services law in BC

BC's laws that speak to travel agents and wholesalers, the [Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act](#) and the [Travel Industry Regulation](#), exist to protect consumers by safeguarding consumer money, ensuring the sector operates by certain standards and providing added protection through the Travel Assurance Fund. The travel laws administered by Consumer Protection BC do not address instances when consumers voluntarily cancel travel services, or when consumers are unhappy with the quality of service.

Travel services by the numbers

	2022	2023	2024
Consumer inquiries ¹	545	493	405
Licenses issued and renewed	978	1,007	1,035
Compliance inspections	151	84	70
Investigations closed	23	15	24

Business obligations and consumer rights

By law, travel agents or wholesalers operating in BC:

- Must be licensed by Consumer Protection BC
- Must provide annual contributions to the TAF for the first three years
- Cannot use their own personal credit cards to pay for consumer travel services
- Must provide consumers with payment or refund receipts that contain specific information including the date, the amount received or refunded, a description of services to be supplied

¹Volumes are based on each unique contact point logged by our tracking system, not on combined interactions with consumers on certain issues. Not all inquiries handled were within our mandate.

- Must include their licence number in any visual advertising about the business

By law, consumers:

- Have the right to seek compensation for the services they paid for but did not receive from a BC-licensed travel agent or wholesaler

Consumer tips

1. **Check licensing status.** By law, anyone offering travel services in BC (either as an agent or as a wholesaler) must be licensed. Visit the Consumer Protection website to [research a business's licensing status](#).
2. **Get a receipt.** By law, you must receive a receipt from your travel agent or wholesaler that includes the amount received, an itemized purchase price for the travel services to be supplied and the conditions for reimbursement. Also, we encourage you to make sure that you can read the content of the receipt if it is handwritten.
3. **Keep proof of payment documentation.** Ask for and keep documentation for your travel services. This could include receipts, contracts, itineraries, boarding passes, hotel vouchers and more.

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](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and in [our blog](#).