

Will you use my information in Court?

Yes. If our investigation results in a court action, your complaint as well as any other documents collected during the investigation may be used as evidence. Contracts, warranties, pictures and videotapes are a few examples of evidence that may be used during legal proceedings.

Will I have to be a witness?

Both you and the business involved will be interviewed during the investigation. If the matter results in a prosecution you may be required to testify.

Can I withdraw my complaint?

No. Once a complaint is received and Service Alberta has grounds to believe that a business may have violated consumer protection legislation, the complaint will be investigated.

If I settle with the business will you stop the investigation?

No. However, if the business settles with you, it may be taken into account when recommendations for further enforcement action are considered.

For more information

For more information about Alberta's consumer protection legislation and the complaint process, visit our website: www.servicealberta.ca or call the Consumer Contact Centre toll-free in Alberta 1-877-427-4088.

Investigating Your Consumer Complaints

Keeping you informed

If this is the first time you have filed a complaint with Service Alberta you probably have some questions about what will happen next. This brochure explains the investigation process we follow. You can also read about the range of actions that can follow an investigation.

Are all complaints investigated?

- You must send us your complaint in writing. You can use the complaint form on our website www.servicealberta.ca or send us a letter. We also need copies of any documents you have that relate to the problem.
- We review every complaint we receive. If we need more information about your complaint we will contact you.
- We use the information you provide to determine if it appears that the business you have named in your complaint may have violated one of Alberta's consumer protection laws.
- We are not able to investigate every complaint we receive. Each complaint is evaluated to determine if an investigation is warranted.
- We will tell you if we are going to conduct an investigation. We will also tell you if we are not proceeding with an investigation and let you know what other options are available to you. We only have the authority to investigate complaints that relate to the consumer protection laws we are responsible to administer.

What happens during an investigation?

- The primary focus of all our investigations is to ensure that the rules set out in Alberta's consumer protection laws are being followed. Your interests may be different. Please keep in mind that our investigation may not give you the personal outcomes you are hoping for.
- The investigator's job is to find out all the facts about the consumer transaction you described in your complaint. The investigator may need to contact you again and he or she will also talk to other people to add to the information you provided in your complaint.
- You may contact us during the investigation if you have questions or concerns.
- At the end of the investigation, the investigator may recommend a follow-up action based on the facts of the case.

What happens after an investigation?

There is a range of actions that may follow an investigation. The type of action will depend on the facts of the case and the law that applies to the complaint.

- No further action may be warranted.
- Service Alberta may reprimand a business.
- Restrictions or conditions may be imposed on a regulated business. This could include suspending or cancelling the business's licence.
- A business could be required to change or stop a practice in order to comply with provincial consumer legislation.

- Some enforcement actions may require a business to compensate a person who has suffered a loss. The business may also be required to pay for all or part of the investigation costs.
- Application may be made to the Court for legal action including injunctions and compliance orders.
- If warranted, the matter may be sent to the Courts for prosecution.

How long does an investigation take?

We make every effort to conclude investigations promptly. However, the time it takes to complete an investigation will vary depending on the complexity of the issue and the number of investigation files that are open at the same time.

Will you get my money back?

The focus of our investigation is to determine if the business named in the complaint is meeting the requirements of Alberta's consumer protection legislation. If your interest is to seek financial compensation, you may wish to consider filing a civil action against the business. If your complaint involves a licensed business that has a security in place, it may be possible for you to file a claim against the security. The investigator would advise you if this applies to your case.