

TICO'S Role In Consumer Complaints

The Travel Industry Council of Ontario (TICO) is responsible for administering the *Travel Industry Act, 2002* and its Regulation in the best interest of the public. Our mission is to “**promote a fair and informed marketplace where consumers can be confident in their travel purchases**”.

We hope that the travel services you receive from Ontario's registered travel retailers (agents) and travel wholesalers (tour operators) are excellent. However, if you are unsatisfied with an aspect of your travel services, first contact your travel agent or the travel wholesaler involved. TICO will address a complaint only after the consumer has made an attempt to resolve the matter with the travel agency or travel wholesaler. Remember to provide any documentation that supports your complaint.

TICO accepts complaints from consumers against Ontario registered travel retailers and/or travel wholesalers, and its role is to facilitate the flow of information between the consumer and the travel company to assist in resolving a dispute. Pursuant to its mandate of administering and enforcing the *Travel Industry Act, 2002*, TICO also reviews all information received to determine if regulatory action is required*. If such is the case, this will be dealt with separately from assisting with the resolution of the complaint.

It is important to note that TICO does not have the authority to settle a dispute, or to impose a settlement, and it does not have the authority or mandate to act as an arbitrator in any complaint matter.

TICO recommends that you put your complaint in writing to the travel company involved, explain why you are not satisfied and explain how the matter could be resolved to your satisfaction. If the company's response is not satisfactory to you, then you have the option of filing a written complaint with TICO.

* Subject to the provisions of the *Travel Industry Act, 2002* and Ontario Regulation 26/05.

The Travel Industry Council of Ontario (TICO) is an organization mandated by the Ontario government to administer the *Travel Industry Act, 2002*.



The Complaint Process

Tell Us About Your Complaint:

If you are not sure of the obligations of the travel agent or travel wholesaler, you can call TICO and speak with one of our Complaints Officers. They can provide you with information about the *Travel Industry Act, 2002* and the Regulation that may assist you in determining your next steps.

Initiating A Formal Complaint:

If you have attempted to resolve your complaint by contacting your travel retailer or travel wholesaler, and after speaking with our Complaints Officer you would like to submit a formal complaint, TICO will send you a complaint form. Complete the complaint form in full and return it to TICO with all your supporting documentation.

Investigating Your Complaint:

Once we know your concerns, we can begin looking into your complaint. TICO examines complaints against the requirements of the *Travel Industry Act, 2002* and Ontario Regulation 26/05 to determine whether regulatory action is required. In most cases, TICO will contact the travel agent or travel wholesaler you dealt with regarding your complaint and ask that they provide TICO with their position on the matter. We will then advise you of the outcome and TICO's

position.

TICO's goal is to assist both you and the travel company involved in reaching a resolution that is satisfactory to both parties.

What Happens Next?

TICO will always strive to reach an equitable resolution agreeable to both parties involved; however, if it has been determined that a mutual resolution between the parties is not possible, TICO can only recommend that you consider discussing the matter with legal counsel. If you are not satisfied with the way your complaint was handled by TICO you may proceed to TICO's Consumer Complaints Committee whose responsibility is to examine the manner in which your complaint was handled by TICO staff and determine if further action is necessary.

When On Vacation

If you encounter any problems while vacationing, retain any documentation so that you can effectively deal with your complaint when you return home.

Keep in mind that much of the success of your trip depends on you. We strongly recommend that before purchasing any travel services, you should research the destination, hotel and other aspects of travel, to ensure that it meets with your individual expectations as travel brochures cannot cover 100% of the information regarding your destination. Book only with an Ontario registered travel agent and read all information material carefully.

Things you can do to help avoid disappointment

Keep in mind that travel can be complex. However, with careful planning and the travel rules in place in Ontario, disappointments can be minimized.

Understand the “Star Rating” system:

There is no international standard rating system for hotels. Variances can occur from one rating system to another and from one country to another. Ask what the rating system is and for a description of what each number or symbol represents.

Research the standard of living of your destination:

Do your research to ensure that the destination meets your expectations to avoid disappointment.

Ask for a Brochure:

This is a great tool to find information about your destination. Ensure you receive one and review it prior to booking your travel.

Know the Terms & Conditions of your Reservation:

This is where you will find out about the parameters of your reservation including cancellation and change fees.

Call your airline ahead of time:

Flight schedules and/or carriers can and do change! Call and re-confirm your flight times with the airline.

Ensure you possess the required travel documentation before you depart:

By not having the correct travel documentation, you risk being denied

boarding when you reach the airport.

Don't sweat the small stuff!

Be realistic and be positive; try not to let little things adversely affect your vacation.

SOME EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINT ISSUES WHERE TICO CAN ASSIST

- Not advised of proper travel documentation required
- Travel arrangements changed without notice
- Accommodations changed without notice
- Standard of accommodation not as advertised
- Improper cancellation of your travel services
- Terms & conditions were not provided
- Incorrect invoicing
- Unauthorized charge
- Travel insurance was not offered

If there is any contravention of the *Travel Industry Act, 2002*, TICO will deal with the matter separate from the complaint.

For other tips on travel, contact TICO and we will be happy to send you our Consumer Travel Tips booklet, or visit our website at www.tico.ca to receive travel tips online.



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Travel Industry Council of Ontario

Assisting Consumers with Travel Agency & Travel Wholesaler Complaints



If you have attempted to resolve your complaint with your travel agent or travel wholesaler and were unable to reach an equitable resolution, contact TICO for assistance in dealing with your complaint.