

CANADIAN CHARITY LAW

Complaints about Registered Canadian Charities



Posted by Mark Blumberg on 11/21 | [comments \(0\)](#) | [permalink](#) | [forward to a friend](#)
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Charities do a lot of great work. But with over 85,000 of them, and a few hundred bad apples amongst the lot, there will be times that you will be disappointed in a charity. When you have a concern about a charity or a charity does something wrong here are some ideas about how you can complain.

If you have a complaint about a registered Canadian charity the first thing to do is to discuss the complaint with the charity. In the vast majority of cases, registered charities are responsible and respond to queries and concerns. The charity may have a very legitimate reason for their action or there may have been a misunderstanding etc. As well, sometimes charities make mistakes just like people or businesses - it is inevitable. Before proceeding to another level it is a good idea to discuss the complaint with someone who knows a lot about charities - whether it be a person working for a different charity or your own professional advisor etc. Having an independent voice to discuss the complaint can be helpful.

Next if you have not achieved a satisfactory response see whether the charity is a member of an organization that has a code of conduct and whether the actions of the charity may contravene such code of conduct. In some cases the codes of conduct or codes of ethics also provide for a mechanism for complaining about the particular conduct to another body eg. Imagine Canada, Association of Fundraising Professionals, etc.

Another way to complain about charities is to contact the media. Send a note to a reporter interested in charities and who has written about charities. You may wish to read some of the articles by Kevin Donovan of the Toronto Star or David Baines of the Vancouver Sun. No disrespect to umbrella organizations or charity regulators but charities are far more concerned about these two people than all the others combined.

If you wish to complain about the conduct of a Canadian registered charity then you can also call the Charities Directorate of CRA. Alternatively you can e-mail your complaint to CRA. See the CRA Website at <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/cntct/cmplnts-eng.html> or you can e-mail CRA at CharitiesComplianceDivisi.LPRA@cra-arc.gc.ca Unfortunately, registered charities are treated like individuals and they are accorded lots of privacy rights - does not make much sense to me but CRA will not be able to tell you if they are investigating a charity because of someone else's complaint, whether because you have complained they are investigating a charity etc. But complaining to the CRA is almost a last resort.

As the regulation of registered charities is both a provincial and federal responsibility, your provincial public guardian and trustee, or equivalent, may also be prepared to act on a complaint. For example, in Ontario you can contact the Public Guardian and Trustee <http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/pgt/charbullet/bullet4.asp>

If the complaint involves fraud you may wish to contact your local police or the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre of the Canadian Government at or at http://www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca/english/recognition_ Charities.html

GlobalPhilanthropy.ca was created by Mark Blumberg, a lawyer at Blumberg Segal LLP in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. If you require legal services with respect to non-profit (tax exempt) organizations or charities in Canada he can be contacted at mark@blumbergs.ca or at x. 237. To find out more about legal services that

Blumbergs provides to Canadian charities and non-profits please visit the Blumbergs' Non-Profit and Charities page at http://www.blumbergs.ca/non_profit.php or <http://www.globalphilanthropy.ca>

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