



ECOJUSTICE COMPLAINTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Ecojustice Canada is a registered Canadian charity that is committed to high standards of conduct. We recognize that from time to time there may be concerns or complaints and we believe our donors and other public stakeholders have a right to provide them to us. We further believe that the process for resolving concerns and complaints should be timely, fair and respectful. Furthermore, complaints are a good source of data for continuous improvement.

This policy is not intended to govern complaints about the legal services provided by lawyers which should be reported to the lawyer's regional law society.

POLICY

From time to time, Ecojustice Canada may receive complaints about our activities, programs, and services relating to our policies and procedures, the application of those policies and procedures or the conduct of the organization or its representatives, including staff, volunteers and third party fundraisers.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to create a transparent and fair method of receiving and responding to external complaints.

SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy applies to complaints from public stakeholders expressing dissatisfaction about the service, actions, or lack of action by Ecojustice Canada as an organization or a staff member or volunteer acting on behalf of Ecojustice Canada. This policy does not apply to those expressing dissatisfaction with the nature of or principles underlying our work.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Staff, volunteers and stakeholders are aware of the complaints policy and the policy is made available to them. The policy is available online for the general public and is easily accessible.

All staff and volunteers dealing with supporters and the public at large have working knowledge of the complaint policy and co-operate with the processing of complaints.

Staff and volunteers involved in a complaints procedure declare any perceived or real conflict of interest and prior knowledge of the complaint and refrain from participating in the resolution procedures, as required.

Complaints are resolved in a confidential and timely fashion.

Review of complaints is fair, impartial and respectful to all parties.

Complainants are advised of their options to escalate their complaint to a more senior staff person if they are dissatisfied with treatment or outcome.

Complainants are provided clear and understandable reasons for decisions relating to complaints.

Updates are provided to complainants during review processes.

Complaints are used to assist in improving services, policies and procedures.

TYPES OF COMPLAINTS

Definition: A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service, actions, or lack of action by Ecojustice Canada as an organization or a staff member or volunteer acting on behalf of Ecojustice Canada.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- perceived failure to do something agreed upon;
- failure to observe policy or procedures;
- error made by a staff member/volunteer/ third party fundraisers; or
- unfair or discourteous actions/statements by staff member/volunteer/ third party fundraisers;

Anyone personally affected can complain and their complaint will be reviewed in accordance with this procedure.

COMPLAINT RECEIPT AND HANDLING

1. A complaint may be received verbally (by phone or in person) or in writing (by mail, fax, email) contact information can be found at www.ecojustice.ca/contact. You are encouraged to talk with the staff person at Ecojustice Canada who is most connected to the concern or situation. Many problems can be resolved easily and quickly, often at the time they arise, by contacting Ecojustice Canada's general inquiries line at 1-800-926-7744. If the complaint cannot be acted upon immediately, and needs to be transferred, then a timeframe for action is determined and is included in the acknowledgement. Basic personal information including name, address, phone number and email address of the complainant is captured at this stage.
2. Ecojustice Canada will acknowledge the receipt of a complaint within three (3) business days.

RESOLVING THE COMPLAINT

3. Every effort should be made to resolve complaints received in a timely fashion. When receiving a verbal complaint, staff should listen and seek to understand the complaint, and may attempt to resolve it immediately. Complaints received by mail or email should be acknowledged within 3 business days and staff should attempt to resolve the matter within 5 business days.
4. Once the details of the complaint are received from the complainant, the respondent (staff or volunteer member being complained about) is informed of the complaint.
5. Appropriate steps for resolving the complaint will be determined and implemented, taking into account any suggestion towards resolution received from the complainant and any respondent.



6. Where a complaint cannot be easily resolved, it should be escalated to the relevant Manager. If the Manager cannot resolve the complaint, it will be escalated to the Executive Director. If the complaint is about the Executive Director, it will be handled by Chair of the Personnel Committee of the Board of Directors.
7. Complainants will be kept informed of the status of their complaint.

DOCUMENTING THE COMPLAINT

8. In an effort towards continuous improvement, Ecojustice Canada will keep a database of complaints received, including a description of the complaint, who handled it, what was done to resolve the complaint, timeframe, and a description of the resolution. The data will be reviewed to determine whether there are frequently recurring complaints of a similar type. If there are, an investigation will be initiated to determine whether there are systemic process issues within the organization that need to be addressed to eliminate reoccurring incidences.
9. A summary of the complaints received including number and type will be reported to Ecojustice Canada's Board of Directors, annually.