

# How Can I Get My Money Back? A Guide for Investors

Investment Industry Regulatory  
Organization of Canada

Protecting Investors and Supporting  
Healthy Capital Markets Across Canada

## The Ombudsman for Banking Services and Investments (OBSI)

### Seeking Financial Compensation



If you've suffered a financial loss because your investment advisor or firm acted improperly, you will likely ask, "How can I get my money back?"

First of all, it's important you act promptly. There are **time limits** attached to all of the options available to you.

The first step in seeking compensation is to make a **written complaint** directly to your investment advisor and his/her firm. They must provide you with a substantive response to your claim **within 90 days**. But if you've tried that and haven't heard back, you can go to OBSI or consider the other options outlined in this brochure.

OBSI is Canada's free, independent service for resolving investment and banking disputes with participating firms.

IIROC requires all the investment firms it regulates to take part in the OBSI process.

**Some firms may suggest you use their own internal ombudsman first, but it is your choice whether or not to participate in that process. It is voluntary.**

If you've already formally complained to your investment firm and feel your complaint wasn't resolved to your satisfaction, you have **up to 180 days** from the time you receive the firm's written response to submit a complaint to OBSI.

It is important to know that if you choose to use a firm's internal ombudsman, you will have less than 180 days to complain to OBSI as the 180 time limit begins to apply **after** the firm's written response to you. You do not need to appeal the firm's decision to the internal ombudsman before going to OBSI.

OBSI can recommend compensation up to \$350,000 but its decisions are not legally binding. Many firms will compensate the complainant but some choose not to.

#### You can contact OBSI at:

1-888-451-4519

[ombudsman@obsi.ca](mailto:ombudsman@obsi.ca)

[www.obsi.ca](http://www.obsi.ca)

## Going to Court



There is no limit to the amount of compensation you can claim. It is a good idea to get advice from a lawyer before pursuing legal action, as this can be an expensive option.

There is also a statute of limitations on legal action. This means there are legal time limits and you could run out of time to pursue some of your claims in court.

If you choose legal action, your provincial law society can help you find a lawyer. For a list of provincial law societies, go to [www.flsc.ca](http://www.flsc.ca).

## Arbitration

Arbitration is a process where a qualified arbitrator – chosen in consultation with both you and the investment firm – hears both sides and makes a final, **legally binding decision** about your complaint.

IIROC requires all the investment firms it regulates to take part in this option if you choose to go to arbitration.

The arbitrator acts as the judge in the proceedings and reviews facts presented by each side of the dispute. Either side can choose to be represented by a lawyer, though this is not required. Arbitrators can award up to \$500,000.

There are **costs** to using arbitration, often less than the cost of going to court. The arbitration fees themselves are usually divided between the two parties. When you file your case, you can decide whether to give the arbitrator the added power to award legal costs on top of any other award, in which case the unsuccessful party would pay the other party's legal costs.

**IIROC has designated two independent arbitration organizations:**

**ADR Chambers**  
1-800-865-5154  
[www.adrchambers.com](http://www.adrchambers.com)

**In Québec:** Canadian Commercial  
Arbitration Centre  
1-800-207-0685  
[www.ccac-adr.org](http://www.ccac-adr.org)

# Compensation Options



CHANNEL	TIME LIMIT TO COMPLAIN	AWARD LIMIT	COST	DECISION BINDING
OBSI	Yes	Up to \$350,000	No	No
Court	Yes	None	Yes	Yes
Arbitration	Yes	Up to \$500,000	Yes	Yes
Québec / AMF	Yes	Up to \$200,000	No	No

## In Québec: AMF Mediation Services

If you live in Québec you can use the free services of the **Autorité des marchés financiers** (AMF). You must first make a formal complaint to your investment firm. If you are not satisfied with its response, you can ask the firm to transfer your complaint to the AMF.

The AMF will assess the complaint and may offer mediation services, though firms are not required to participate.

### For more information on the AMF:

1-877-525-0337

[reseignementsconsommateur@lautorite.qc.ca](mailto:reseignementsconsommateur@lautorite.qc.ca)

[www.lautorite.qc.ca](http://www.lautorite.qc.ca)

## Other options if you live in Manitoba, New Brunswick or Saskatchewan

Securities regulators in these provinces can order a person or company that has broken provincial securities law to pay compensation. These orders are enforced similar to court judgements.

### For more information, contact:

Manitoba Securities Commission:

[www.msc.gov.mb.ca](http://www.msc.gov.mb.ca)

New Brunswick Financial and Consumer Services Commission: [FCNB.ca](http://FCNB.ca)

Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan: [www.fcaa.gov.sk.ca](http://www.fcaa.gov.sk.ca)

## Understanding IIROC's Role



As an investor you can complain to IIROC and we will review your complaint to determine whether or not your advisor and/or firm has broken our rules. If we find that our rules have been broken, we may take disciplinary action including fines, suspensions or permanent bans. However, IIROC cannot provide compensation to you or force an investment firm or individual advisor to reimburse you.

**If you have questions, please call IIROC at 1-877-442-4322 or email us at [InvestorInquiries@iroc.ca](mailto:InvestorInquiries@iroc.ca)**

# Questions?

## **CONTACT US:**

1-877-442-4322

[investorinquiries@iiroc.ca](mailto:investorinquiries@iiroc.ca)

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## **MONTREAL**

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## **CALGARY**

Bow Valley Square 3

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Suite 800

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## **VANCOUVER**

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