

Dispute Resolution – Before Applying



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What to consider before applying, so you can decide if engaging in the process feels worth your time and resources:

Dispute resolution is a process at the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB) where an arbitrator, who is the RTB-appointed decision-maker, rules on legal disputes between tenants and landlords. It is usually over the phone and less formal than a court hearing.

Approved Forms

There are mandatory forms for certain notices, like rent increases and evictions, that landlords are required to use.

Service Methods

Landlords and tenants must also follow rules for how documents can be “served”, or given, to each other.¹

Written Communication

Have you already communicated in writing with your landlord? Have you given them a reasonable chance to address your issue?

Deadlines

Have you or your landlord missed any important deadlines? There are strict deadlines for tenants to dispute evictions and for landlords to return deposits.²

Preparation Time

Do you have enough time to prepare for and participate in the hearing? The RTB schedules hearings based on the urgency of the issue.

Service of Evidence

Are you prepared to submit evidence to the RTB and serve the evidence to your landlord after you apply for dispute resolution?³

Law vs Opinion

Not all issues or injustices faced by tenants are addressed by the law. Research what the RTA says about your issue and what legal remedies are available. You can also call the RTB info line or the TRAC info line.

Jurisdiction

Is your issue covered by the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA)? If not, your application may be dismissed because the RTB does not have “jurisdiction” – the authority – to make decisions.⁴

Evidence vs Allegations

Do you have enough strong and relevant evidence to convince an arbitrator to rule in your favour?⁵ You may want to create a table with the facts in one column and evidence to prove them in the other column.



Will the decision from the dispute resolution process help me resolve my issue?



1. Arbitrators can make binding orders and decisions, including:

- Order a party to follow the law and/or tenancy agreement.
- Order a party to pay monetary compensation.
- Order a landlord to repair a rental unit or property.
- Give a tenant permission to withhold money from future rent payments.
- Cancel or uphold an eviction notice.
- Grant an Order of Possession to a tenant or landlord.

2. Multiple Claims.

An arbitrator can make decisions for multiple claims at the same hearing **ONLY IF** the claims are related and have been included in the same application. Before filing multiple claims, assess if it would be better to file separate applications. Arbitrators can dismiss unrelated claims.

3. Settlement Negotiations.

Tenants and landlords can sometimes settle disputes, even after applying for a dispute resolution, without an arbitrator or hearing. Find more information on negotiating a settlement on TRAC's webpage, "Alternatives to Dispute Resolution."

Important things to note about the RTB before you apply!

- There are strict deadlines to dispute eviction notices. If you are approaching a deadline, it may be better to apply as soon as possible and submit your evidence afterwards.
- There are strict deadlines for submitting documents to the RTB portal and serving your landlord – make sure you know your deadlines ahead of time!
- Hearings typically take place on the phone. You will not be called – you will have to call in yourself.

For More Information

- 1 See TRAC's webpage, "Serving Documents" and the RTA Section 88 and 89 for a list of methods of service.
- 2 See the "Tenancy Calculators" on the RTB website to help calculate deadlines.
- 3 See Rules of Procedure Section 3 for information on exchanging evidence.
- 4 See TRAC's webpages, "Am I covered by the Law" and "Applying for Dispute Resolution."
- 5 To learn what quality evidence looks like, see TRAC's webpage, "Preparing for a Hearing."

Need a language interpreter or an accessibility accommodation?

After submitting your dispute resolution application, you can email form RTB-36 "Request for Alternate Dispute Resolution Proceeding Format" with supporting evidence to the RTB at HSRTO@gov.bc.ca.

If you need assistance during a hearing, you can bring an agent, assistant, advocate, or lawyer.

TRAC receives ongoing support from:

English



Department of Justice
Canada

Ministère de la Justice
Canada

This is general information that applies to British Columbia, Canada. TRAC cannot guarantee that it is current or complete. This fact sheet is not meant as legal advice for specific legal problems. Use at your own risk and consult a lawyer if you need legal advice. V1 July, 2025.