

**SEARCHING THE “CONSUMER BEWARE” LIST**  
**Published in ACE Newsletter, Spring/Summer 2012 Vol. 9, No. 1**

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The Ontario Ministry of Consumer Services maintains a list of businesses that have had verified complaints by consumers. You can search the list using the name of the individual that you are dealing with or using the name of the business or the corporation that you are dealing with. You can also do a search under the business type that you are dealing with. The Ministry of Consumer Services lists over 100 different business types, from air cleaners to water heater rental and water treatment devices. If an individual or a company is listed on the “Consumer Beware” list, you can click on the name of the individual company and find out particulars of what violations or complaints were confirmed.

The Ministry also has a list of companies that have had charges laid against them. In 2011, the Ministry laid 823 charges under the *Consumer Protection Act, 2002* and other Acts enforced by the Ministry. Thirty-three (33) individuals were sentenced to probation or jail. There was over \$421,000 in fines ordered against violators. Over \$377,000 in restitution was ordered for victims.

I would recommend that people never sign a contract that is presented by a door-to-door salesman. In my experience, the cost of services purchased through a door-to-door salesman is higher than the cost of comparable services purchased elsewhere. If individuals are presented with a door-to-door contract to sign, I would suggest that they ask to keep a copy of the contract to review. They should then do some comparison shopping to see what the cost of similar goods or services would be if purchased through other vendors. Most individuals wouldn't dream of buying a refrigerator without comparison shopping for the price of different refrigerators in different stores. No less attention should be paid in comparison shopping for the purchase of other goods and services.

Before signing any contract, individuals should check to see whether the name of the vendor is on the “Consumer Beware” list. Finally, individuals should consider whether or not they really need the goods or service that is being offered. The Ministry of Consumer Services' website contains a great deal of well organized consumer information.

Their general website is <http://www.sse.gov.on.ca/mcs/en/Pages/default.aspx>.

The “Consumer Beware” website is  
<http://www.consumerbeware.mgs.gov.on.ca/catsct/start.do>.