

Make the Right Move During the Pandemic

*Better Business Bureau (BBB) and the Canadian Association of Movers (CAM)
provide tips for hiring a mover*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2020- (Location) - Families are facing price-gouging, poor service, and movers not taking instructed COVID-19 safety precautions. A recent challenge is the inability in some instances to confirm the proper weight of a long-distance shipment (thus determining the contracted cost) as many of the country's weigh scales are not in operation.

Whether you are moving across town or across province, choosing a mover should not be taken lightly. In 2019, close to 600 complaints and almost 200,500 inquiries about movers and moving companies were registered with Better Business Bureaus across Canada and the Canadian Association of Movers. Common complaints included damaged or missing items, bills that were higher than estimates, late deliveries and in some cases, goods held hostage for additional payments.

"Unfortunately, fly-by-night and no-name "truck-for-hire" types can take advantage of the fact that consumers are under emotional, financial and time pressures when moving, says Mary O'Sullivan-Andersen, president and CEO of BBB Serving Southern Alberta and East Kootenay. She adds that "by working together with the Canadian Association of Movers to help organizations set standards for ethical business practices, we can connect consumers with trustworthy businesses."

Finding a trusted and reliable mover is even more important during the current COVID-19 pandemic. As with other sectors, the moving industry is also experiencing those who are taking advantage of unsuspecting consumers.

Nancy Irvine, president of the Canadian Association of Movers, says the key to a smooth move is research. "We strongly urge consumers to do their due diligence before hiring a mover, as they would before purchasing any other major service, she says. "It's not like buying a pair of shoes. You are entrusting your entire lifelong belongings to someone you likely don't know. There are many factors to look at - not just price. Remember that the cheapest price might turn into the costliest move."

When moving a number of things could go wrong including missed delivery or pick-up dates, lost or damaged belongings, charges that exceed estimates provided and claim disputes for lost or damaged items.

To avoid these and other mishaps, BBB and CAM encourages people who are moving to:

Check out the company's rating with BBB and standing with CAM. BBB and CAM provide trustworthy and relevant information about moving companies and contractors. Check out a company's rating with BBB, complaint history, verified customer reviews and other important information. Check with CAM for a detailed consumer checklist for hiring a qualified mover.

Ask the mover about replacement valuation protection. Replacement valuation protection (RVP) is the total value of a shipment based on the weight of the goods you are moving. Generally, you have two choices – refuse any protection coverage or arrange for full valuation protection at an additional, but necessary cost. Check with your homeowners insurance to determine what coverage is required and ensure that any high value items are disclosed in advance so that extra precautions can be taken. The number one complaint at CAM is damage to a consumer's shipment that was not covered correctly under the RVP.

Get it in writing. Get three written estimates from different movers based on personal visits to your home or, most commonly during the pandemic, virtual surveys. Though most professional movers do give quotes over the phone, it's still a good idea to get written documentation of all the services that both parties agree on. If an estimate seems too good to be true, it likely is. If at any point the services change, whether on your part or the part of the professional, ensure that these changes are documented and understood. Changes to a moving contract affect the final charges.

Talk about the money. Find out how and when payment is required. Many companies may ask for up to a 10 per cent deposit to secure your moving date and then require the remaining payment before your belongings are delivered. Find out what your payment options are and what method of payment is available. Let your bank know that you are in the process of relocating in the event they notice increased or unusual charges on your credit card.

Assess and Inspect. Assess your current and new residence for any accessibility challenges and discuss with your mover to determine if accessibility will be an issue. Many times, a residence cannot be accessed by a large tractor trailer. If people the mover cannot access your current or new residence, there may be additional charges for the use of a smaller truck (shuttle) that can easily get to your home. Also be sure to provide the mover with details of the new space you are moving into to ensure the movers can easily access it and properly place your belongings.

Prepare for damage. Though trustworthy movers are trained to handle your belongings and your home with care, it is difficult to move an entire household without at least some damage. Be sure to inquire about inadmissible and non-protected items, such as hazardous materials. It's best to take valuables such as photos, jewelry and currency with you. Determine what is covered under your homeowner's insurance policy and your replacement valuation protection through the moving company. If you are arranging for other trades to be in and out of your home, consider taking photos or documenting on a condition report before and after access in the event any property damage takes place.

Watch for red flags. If a mover doesn't provide replacement valuation protection details, a company street address, proof of worker's compensation or a GST/HST number, keep looking for a mover. If you are getting a "funny feeling" about your mover, cancel the move and find a new mover. Keep all of your emails until your move is complete and you are satisfied.

File a complaint. If you do run into trouble with your mover, file a complaint with BBB. Not only can BBB help facilitate a resolution, but your complaint could also help future consumers looking for a mover. CAM also has a complaint process for their certified moving members.

Moving is stressful. Make moving easier by checking with the BBB and the Canadian Association of Movers to see if a mover holds good standing reputations with professional organizations.

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About BBB: For more than 100 years, Better Business Bureau has been helping people find trustworthy businesses and charities. BBB is a nonprofit, business-supported organization that sets and upholds high standards for fair and honest business behavior. Visit bbb.org for more information.

About CAM: Canadian Association of Movers (CAM), Canada's only moving industry trade association, is working hard to ensure that consumers receive quality, professional services, by setting ethical standards, using trained staff and equipment, and being attentive to consumer needs and existing legislation. CAM is identifying rogue movers that are cheating and abusing Canadian consumers and helping consumers find trusted, reputable movers.

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