

News Release

CANADA'S NEW GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES TAXPAYER BILL OF RIGHTS AND TAXPAYERS' OMBUDSMAN

Toronto, Ontario, May 28, 2007... The Honourable Carol Skelton, Minister of National Revenue, joined by the Honourable Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance and Regional Minister for the Greater Toronto area, today announced two new initiatives, a Taxpayer Bill of Rights and a Taxpayers' Ombudsman, to ensure Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) is more accountable to Canadians.

"All taxpayers will be better served by these new initiatives that will enhance the services delivered to Canadians by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)," said Minister Skelton. "We want taxpayers to know they have rights and that we at the CRA take these rights seriously. By introducing a Taxpayer Bill of Rights, we are ensuring that taxpayers are served with a higher standard of service, and if that fails, they have a Taxpayers' Ombudsman to turn to."

"When it comes to taxes, this government not only believes in strong accountability, but fairness," said Minister Flaherty. "We have introduced the Tax Fairness Plan and the Anti-Tax Haven Initiative. Our next important step is introducing a Taxpayer Bill of Rights and a Taxpayers' Ombudsman, which will ensure fair treatment of all taxpayers by the CRA."

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

The Taxpayer Bill of Rights includes 15 rights, plus 5 new commitments for small businesses. Taxpayers now have the right to (see the fact sheet for more detail):

1. Receive entitlements and to pay no more and no less than what is required by law.
2. Service in both official languages.
3. Privacy and confidentiality.
4. A formal review and a subsequent appeal.
5. Be treated professionally, courteously, and fairly.
6. Complete, accurate, clear, and timely information.
7. As an individual, not to pay income tax amounts in dispute before you have had an impartial review.
8. Have the law applied consistently.
9. Lodge a service complaint and to be provided with an explanation of our findings.
10. Have the costs of compliance taken into account when administering tax legislation.
11. Expect us to be accountable.
12. Relief from penalties and interest under tax legislation because of extraordinary circumstances.
13. Expect us to publish our service standards and report annually.
14. Expect us to warn you about questionable tax schemes in a timely manner.
15. Be represented by a person of your choice.



The CRA has outlined a commitment to small businesses, which includes being committed to:

1. Administering the tax system in a way that minimizes the costs of compliance for small businesses.
2. Working with all governments to streamline service, minimize cost, and reduce the compliance burden.
3. Providing service offerings that meet the needs of small businesses.
4. Conducting outreach activities that help small businesses comply with the legislation we administer.
5. Explaining how we conduct our business with small businesses.

Taxpayers' Ombudsman

Canada's New Government is creating the position of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman to enhance accountability and service to the public, and provide taxpayers with assurance that they will be treated fairly and with respect. The Ombudsman is expected to be operational by fall 2007, and will operate independently and at arm's length from the CRA. Taxpayers who are unsatisfied with the action or response from the CRA may request the Taxpayers' Ombudsman, to undertake an independent review.

Taxpayers' Ombudsman responsibilities include:

- Considering whether or not CRA officials have properly handled a service complaint in cases where taxpayers feel they have not been treated fairly or appropriately;
- Providing advice to the Minister of National Revenue about service-related matters in the CRA (including submitting an annual report to the Minister, which will be tabled in Parliament);
- Identifying and reviewing systemic and emerging service-related issues that have a negative impact on taxpayers;
- Providing information to taxpayers about the complaint resolution mechanisms within the CRA.

In addition to introducing these two new measures, the CRA will now track the types and number of complaints received through a new service complaints process, and will increase awareness among Canadians on how to complain to the CRA.

These new measures build on the work done by Canada's New Government to strengthen Canada's democratic institutions, increase transparency and accountability, and ensure fair treatment to all Canadians.

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