

# Information about Price Gouging 2020 Spring Flooding

## Types of price gouging

The Consumer Investigations Unit often hears reports of inflated prices for goods and services during an emergency, including:

- Retail stores inflating prices for high-demand products, such as bottled water, food, and hardware rentals (e.g. steam cleaners).
- Contractors or tradespeople charging more for high-demand services such as home repairs, painting, and appliance repairs.
- Private individuals purchasing mass quantities of supplies and re-selling them at an inflated premium.
- Service industry businesses inflating prices for such services as hotel accommodations or short-term rentals.

## Price gouging from a business

### **Consumer Protection Act**

The *Consumer Protection Act* prohibits businesses from:

- grossly raising prices beyond what is reasonable for goods that are readily available, with no explanation;
- applying terms or conditions that are harsh, oppressive, or excessively one-sided;
- conducting transactions where the consumer will receive no reasonable benefit.

Albertans have the right to a fair marketplace, particularly in times of uncertainty. Sellers can reasonably raise prices, as long as they aren't taking unfair advantage of the situation.

If a seller is increasing prices substantially, the seller should be prepared to provide an explanation for the increase if a consumer or investigator asks.

If you see prices for products and services (such as hand sanitizer and toilet paper) in Alberta skyrocket due to the spring floods, you can report it through our Report a Rip-Off phone line or website.

- 1-877-427-4088
- [www.alberta.ca/file-consumer-complaint.aspx](http://www.alberta.ca/file-consumer-complaint.aspx)

## Price gouging from a private individual

The *Consumer Protection Act* will generally not cover private sales between individuals, but if someone is determined to be operating a business online (by selling to multiple individuals) and overcharging, misleading or otherwise exploiting buyers, the *Act* will typically apply.

### **Please be cautious and considerate**

Please act with consideration and caution, and find ways to support each other during this time.

## Active emergency updates

For the most updated information, please visit [alberta.ca/emergency](http://alberta.ca/emergency)