Informed investing: Checking registration

ASC CHECKFIRST
brought to you by the Alberta Securities Commission

You have a variety of options when it comes to your investing journey. Whether you plan to work with an advisor at a local bank or investment firm, an online robo-advisor, or plan to do self-directed investing through a discount brokerage, checking registration is a critical first step.

Checking registration at CheckFirst.ca is a free and easy process that can help you determine who you want to work with and avoid fraudsters.

Unregistered individuals or firms offering investments

Unregistered individuals or firms offering investments is a major red flag of fraud. There are very few circumstances where an individual or firm does not require registration.

If you come into contact with an unregistered individual who offers you an investment, or is offering something they don't seem permitted to, please contact the Alberta Securities Commission immediately.

Contact the ASC at:

www.ASC.CA/Complain-or-report

Phone: 403.355.3888

Email: complaints@asc.ca

What is registration?

Investment professionals and firms operating in Canada must register with the securities regulator in each province or territory where they conduct business. This registration process exists so that these individuals and companies are properly qualified and adhere to regulations when selling and managing your investments. In Alberta, anyone selling or managing securities must be registered with the Alberta Securities Commission.

Legitimate investment professionals and firms are registered by category, with each category having different education and experience requirements depending on the types of investments and services they can offer you.

It is strongly advised that you only work with individuals, firms, online discount brokerages and robo-advisors that are registered with the Alberta Securities Commission. By working with registered individuals and firms you also benefit from regulations that, for example, require that they make suitable investment recommendations that put your interest first and provide you with free dispute resolution services through the Ombudsman for Banking Services and Investments (OBSI).

Round out your registration check with additional research

While checking registration is a fundamental first step in your research, you can further qualify the individual or firm you plan to work with by conducting additional background research on CheckFirst and online. This includes:

Checking the Canadian Securities Administrators Disciplined List: to learn if the person or company has violated any regulatory rules in the past.

Checking the Canadian Cease Trade Orders Database: to verify if there are any active security trading bans on the person or company.

Checking the news and searching online: to see if there are any news releases, information or red flags on the company or person.

Remember, even if the investment professional or firm is registered, this does not mean the investment opportunities they offer are suitable for you. Registered investment professionals have varying skills, services, clients and fee structures. Make sure to take the time to explain your financial circumstances and goals and to ask qualifying questions to ensure they are the right fit for you.

Questions to ask when choosing a financial advisor

- What is your background and qualifications?
- Do you work with clients like me?
- How are you and your company paid?
- What kinds of products and services do you offer?
- What level of service can I expect from you? Do you provide one-time or ongoing service?
- How will you help me reach my goals?
- Do you have any conflicts of interest I should be aware of?