



**PEFC Canada —
Complaints and Appeals Procedures
April 18, 2025**

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The official language of this procedure is English. A French version is also available. If there is an inconsistency between versions, the English version shall take precedence.

Preface

In 2008, PEFC Canada was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and applied to PEFC International to become the PEFC National Governing Body for Canada, effective on January 21, 2009.

This procedure was prepared by PEFC Canada and has been formally approved by the PEFC Canada Board of Directors.

The PEFC Council (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes) is a worldwide organization promoting sustainable forest management through forest certification and labelling of forest-based products. A product with a PEFC claim and/or label offers assurance that raw materials used in the manufacture of that product originated in a sustainably managed forest.

The PEFC Council endorses national forest certification systems that comply with PEFC Council requirements. These systems are regularly evaluated.

This procedure cancels and replaces the Complaints & Appeals section of the PEFC Canada Technical Committee Terms of Reference, V3 March 2024.

Scope

This procedure applies to complaints related to the PEFC Canada standard setting process, complaints and appeals against PEFC Canada, and complaints against certified entities certified to a PEFC Canada standard or PEFC chain of custody standard that are unresolved by the certification body's complaint resolution process.

PEFC Canada will strive to assist in other complaints as noted below.

Definitions

- Accreditation Body — organization that formally recognizes the competence of other organizations, such as certification bodies, to perform specific conformity assessment activities based on established standards. In Canada, the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) and ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB) provide accreditation services within Canada.
- Certification Body — organization that assesses and certifies that products, services, or systems meet specific standards or requirements. Certification bodies are evaluated for their competence to make certification decisions within their accredited scopes, ensuring their quality systems consistently deliver reliable services. Also known as external or third-party auditors.
- Certified Organization — an organization that has obtained certification verifying its adherence to PEFC standards. The certified organization must hold a current and valid certificate.

- National Governing Body (NGB) — an independent, national organization responsible for developing and managing the country’s forest certification system. PEFC Canada is the National Governing Body for Canada for the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).
- PEFC Canada Board of Directors (BOD) — primary governing body of PEFC Canada, responsible for overseeing the organization’s operations, ensuring the alignment of its activities with the principles of PEFC, and providing strategic direction. The BOD is composed of diverse representatives ensuring a broad range of perspectives.
- PEFC Canada Board of Directors Executive Committee — Directors that have roles and responsibilities, typically comprises key leaders involved in the day-to-day operation of PEFC Canada, providing guidance on important matters related to forest certification, standards development, and stakeholder engagement, as well as representing PEFC Canada’s interests within the broader international PEFC network.
- PEFC International — an international non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting sustainable forest management through independent third-party certification.
- Complaint — a formal complaint or request for appeal is made in writing or through the PEFC Canada web site, in response to a perceived issue, grievance, or violation of rights, rules, or requirements. In the context of certifications or accreditation, a complainant might challenge the actions of a certified organization or a certification body if they believe there has been non-compliance with established standards or requirements.
- Concern — a question or issue of concern that may need formal intervention or action, may pertain to a potential non-compliance, may be escalated to a formal complaint or resolved through other means of communicating or resolving concerns.
- Appeal — a formal request for review and reconsideration of a decision, typically with the goal of overturning or modifying it. Appeals are often made when an individual or organization believes that a decision was unfair, incorrect, or based on insufficient information and usually involves presenting new evidence or arguments, that challenge the initial decision. In certification or accreditation contexts, an appeal might be lodged if a individual or organization disagrees with the outcome of an audit, certification process, standard setting process or a ruling made by a certification body or accreditation authority.

Procedure

To ensure the integrity of its certification system, PEFC Canada has developed this procedure to welcome, investigate, and resolve complaints and appeals. In addition to correcting any such issues on the ground, complaints and appeals also provide an opportunity to implement corrective and preventive measures and help improve our services.

PEFC Canada accepts inquiries, complaints and appeals related to the standard setting process and PEFC COC and SFM certifications in Canada as follows:

- Complaints related to the PEFC Canada standard setting process, or complaints or appeals against PEFC Canada.
- Complaints against certified entities that are unresolved by the certification body's complaint resolution process.

These complaints must be submitted in writing and should be sent to **info@pefccanada.org** as posted on the PEFC Canada website.

Other complaints and appeals should be directed as follows:

- Complaints against certified organizations should first be referred to that organization. If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, then the complaint may be referred to the relevant certification bodies' complaints and appeals procedures. PEFC Canada can assist in identification of the correct Certification Body for the entity. To find out certification bodies' contact details, please visit Find Certified on the PEFC website www.pefc.org and search for the certified organization.
- Complaints against an accredited certification body must be referred to the certification body's own complaints/appeals resolution procedure. If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, then the complaint may be referred to the relevant accreditation body. To find out certification bodies' contact details and who is the relevant accreditation body, please visit Find Certification Bodies on the PEFC website www.pefc.org.
- Complaints submitted regarding a specific accreditation body must be referred to the complaints/appeals resolution procedure of the accreditation body. If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, then the complaint may be referred to the International Accreditation Forum.
- PEFC International will only receive complaints related to the compliance of PEFC International and/or PEFC Canada with PEFC's requirements for forest certification systems and appeals that are related to the decisions made by the PEFC International Board of Directors or Secretary General, except where decisions are a result of a resolved appeal. Complaints or appeals against PEFC Canada are first dealt with at the national level using the PEFC Canada complaints and appeals procedure. If it cannot be resolved at the national level, complainants can call upon PEFC International's complaints and appeals mechanism.

Complaints and Appeals to PEFC Canada

The following are steps of the complaints and appeals investigation and resolution procedures followed by PEFC Canada.

1. Upon receipt of a complaint or appeal in writing, the PEFC Canada Board of Directors Executive Committee will review the complaint or appeal and determine the jurisdiction and identify any potential conflicts of interest. They will also communicate with the PEFC Canada Board of Directors as appropriate.
2. The PEFC Canada Board of Directors Executive Committee will assign the investigation to a PEFC Canada Board of Directors member who is free from conflict of interest with both the complainant and the content of the complaint.
3. Upon receipt of a complaint, PEFC Canada will respond to the complainant in writing to acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 10 working days. All parties involved in the complaint will be notified of the receipt and acceptance of the complaint, outlining next steps. Where a complaint is not accepted, justification will be provided to the complainant.
4. Upon receipt of a complaint, PEFC Canada will determine if a complaints resolution process would be appropriate or if other means of communicating or resolving concerns will be necessary. Where a complaints resolution process is initiated, PEFC Canada will aid in ensuring the complaint is directed to the correct process.
5. As required, PEFC Canada will investigate complaints or appeals identified within the scope of PEFC Canada. The investigation will include:
 - a) Requesting detailed evidence from the complainant and other parties, as necessary to evaluate and validate the complaint and make decisions on the complaint;
 - b) Gathering and verifying all necessary evidence to validate the complaint or appeal;
 - c) Evaluating the subject matter of the complaint or appeal impartially and objectively;
 - d) Determining the resources required to effectively respond to the complaint or appeal; and
 - e) Making a decision regarding the complaint or appeal.
6. On completion of the investigation, a member of the PEFC Canada Board of Directors Executive Committee will formally communicate the decision on the complaint to the complainant where contact information is provided and any other relevant parties, including the complaint handling process. Where 'whistle blower protection' is relevant, the complaint will be considered anonymous.
7. Where necessary, corrective and preventive actions to address the complaint will be developed through the PEFC Canada Board of Directors or PEFC Canada Technical Committee as appropriate; action items will be tracked through meeting minutes.

8. Complaints or appeals against PEFC Canada that cannot be resolved through the complaints and appeals process will be referred to the PEFC International complaints and appeals mechanism.

9. The PEFC Canada Board of Directors will periodically review the complaints and appeal handling process to ensure that it is effectively and efficiently maintained and continually improved.

PEFC Canada has established an easy to access and readily available single point of contact for enquiries, complaints and appeals on the PEFC Canada web site at <https://www.pefccanada.org/contact-us.htm>.

Complaints and Appeals to PEFC International

Further information on the PEFC International complaints and appeals investigation and resolution please review ***PEFC Council procedures for the investigation and resolution of complaints and appeals 2007***. If you wish to raise a concern, a complaint, or an appeal, please contact: **technical@pefc.org**.