

Conquest Vacations

Mr. Rodney:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The holiday is over for Conquest Vacations, and thousands of people are out of luck with their travel plans. Some are even stranded in other countries. Many questions are being asked with respect to what protections are in place for Albertans in situations such as this. My first question is for the Minister of Service Alberta. What strategies are organized within your ministry to assist Albertans who have been impacted in this particular instance?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, this is a very unusual situation, and Service Alberta is encouraging individuals to contact our consumer contact centre so we can speak with them and give them some advice and hear about their experiences. Of course, depending on how they purchased their vacation, there are provisions under Alberta law to help travellers get their money back either from the company or from their credit card company. People can call us, and we'll review their situation and determine how we can best help them.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rodney:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is for the same minister. Other provinces such as Ontario have a travel insurance fund. Why is that not the case here in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Travel insurance funds only cover vacations booked through travel agencies, and we well know that many individuals book their trips online. That certainly has evolved over the years, and it's only growing. Alberta does have a regulation called the Internet sales contract regulation, which does include cancellation rights for consumers doing business with a company on the Internet. Under this regulation if the consumer has booked their vacation with Conquest and they didn't get what they paid for, there are provisions for getting their money back.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rodney:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following that, my final question to the same minister: how is it, then, that someone from this province who has booked their vacation online with Conquest Vacations actually gets their money back?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first step is that these individuals should contact Conquest Vacations first to request their money. If they're not reimbursed within 15 days, under our regulations a credit card company is required to reimburse them. For those who already started their travel plans and are being billed by their hotel, it is more complicated. We encourage them to come home, and then we can look at their situation. For someone else caught in this situation, there are very many variables. This is a new situation, and, again, please call our consumer contact line at 1.877.427.4088.