

South Glengarry				POLICY	
Policy Number:	01-18	Review Frequency:	3 Years		
Approved By:	Council of the Township of South Glengarry	Date Approved:	May 7, 2018		
		Revision Date:			
Subject:	Corporate Complaint Policy				

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The Township of South Glengarry is committed to a consistent and uniform process to respond to complaints received from members of the public regarding programs, facilities, municipal services, staff or operational procedures. This policy outlines the process to be followed for the handling of public complaints.
- 1.2. The Township of South Glengarry recognizes the importance of public input and welcomes complaints as a valuable form of feedback regarding our services, operations and facilities. The information gained from complaints helps improve the quality of services provided by the Township and the client experience of residents.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. Complaints are expressions of dissatisfaction about the action or lack of action taken, operations, facilities or the service provided by the Township of South Glengarry or by a person or body acting on behalf of the Township.
- 2.2. Any written complaint filed will necessitate a response. Anyone who uses or is affected by Township services can make a complaint. This may include:
- Residents
 - People who work in or visit the Township
 - Local businesses
 - Community Groups
 - Members of Council
- 2.3. The Township of South Glengarry will deal with all written complaints promptly (as per the Service Standards outlined in Section 7), courteously, impartially and professionally. All complainants will be treated with respect and will not receive adverse treatment or any form of reprisal.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1. Customer-focus

- The Township is committed to continuous improvement in service delivery by being honest, empathetic, helpful and professional in our dealings with people.

3.2. Accountability

- Complaints are handled in a fair, respectful and transparent manner as quickly as possible.

3.3. Responsiveness

- Complaints are tracked and the Complainant is informed of each step.

3.4. Accessibility

- Information on how to submit a complaint is easily found on the Township's website.

3.5. Simplicity

- The process must be simple to understand and easy to use. Complainants are guided on what to include in the complaint (e.g. the "five W's").

3.6. Confidentiality

- Complaints will be dealt with in a confidential manner according to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). Information will be collected, used and disclosed in accordance with the *Act*.

3.7. The complaints process **will not deal with:**

- Service Requests
- Feedback and compliments
- Inquiries
- Anonymous complaints

3.8. In these cases, the Complainant will be referred to the proper forum (if possible). Early and informal resolution is encouraged but not guaranteed. Staff must have clear delegation and authority to resolve complaints in an informal manner at first contact, without the necessity of engaging in this formal process.

4. COMPLAINTS

- 4.1. A formal complaint is generated when an informal resolution cannot be successfully achieved. It is the responsibility of Township employees to attempt to resolve issues or concerns before they become formal complaints. Every effort should be made by staff to resolve matters informally. However, should the complainant continue to be unsatisfied, the complainant has the option of filing a formal complaint.
- 4.2. Complaints regarding the conduct of municipal employees are to be submitted in writing with contact information and processed in accordance with the provisions of the applicable Code of Conduct, as deemed applicable (ie. Code of Conduct for Members of Council, Employees or Building Officials).
- 4.3. Complaints regarding the conduct of Members of Council are to be submitted in writing and processed in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct and will be referred to the Township appointed Integrity Commissioner.
- 4.4. Complaints regarding the conduct of closed meetings are to be submitted in writing and will be referred to the Township appointed Closed Meeting Investigator.
- 4.5. Complaints regarding by-law violations are to be submitted in writing and will be investigated by the Township's Property Standards and By-law Enforcement Officer.
- 4.6. Complaints regarding municipal services or facilities are to be submitted in writing to the appropriate Department Head.
- 4.7. Complaints lacking sufficient information may not be investigated.
- 4.8. Frivolous and vexatious complaints, as determined by the CAO or designate in consultation with the appropriate Department Head, may not be investigated. A complaint may be considered vexatious or frivolous if it is pursued in a manner that is reasonably perceived to be malicious, intended to embarrass or harass the recipient or intended to be a nuisance.
- 4.9. Complaints that cannot be resolved through the Township's complaint process may be submitted to the Provincial Ombudsman's office in accordance with the provisions of Bill 8.

5. SUBMITTING A COMPLAINT

- 5.1. A complaint may be submitted:
 - In person at the Township office, located at 6 Oak Street in Lancaster
 - E-mail
 - Mail

- Fax – (613) 347-3411
- Phone – (613) 347-1166
 - Verbal complaints received by phone must be documented in writing by the staff member receiving the complaint and must include the same information that is required for complaints submitted in writing.

5.2. Some individuals may require assistance to make a complaint, and complaints can be made on their behalf provided that the complainant has given their consent in writing and provides the required information, including their name and contact information.

6. FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS

6.1. Formal complaints must be in writing and include information such as:

- Details of what happened.
- Where the event happened. Is it within the Township's area of responsibility?
- When the event happened.
- Who was involved?
- What was said or done?
- What kind of resolution is being sought?
- Contact details of the Complainant

6.2. The response to the complaint shall include:

- Setting out the complaint
- Detailing how the investigation was completed
- Summarizing the facts
- Outlining the findings
- Suggesting an appropriate resolution along with the rationale supporting the proposed resolution.

6.3. Possible resolutions may include:

- An explanation
- Apology
- Reconsideration
- Reimbursement
- Restitution
- Change in policy

6.4. All of the above are possible remedies. Note that the *Apology Act* provides that apologies are not admissible as evidence of fault or liability.

6.5. Communication of the decision may include:

- Providing the Complainant the response

- Identifying next steps/appeal (appeal to the CAO)
- If the complainant is satisfied, the complaint is closed.

7. SERVICE STANDARDS

7.1. The following Service Standards will be adhered to in the handling of all complaints received.

- Complainants must receive acknowledgement of receipt of their complaint within five (5) business days. The acknowledgement must identify who will be following up on the complaint as well as their contact information.
- If a complaint was received by a Department in error and it should be handled by another Department, the complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate Department and the complainant will be advised that their complaint has been forwarded, and be provided with the name of the forwarded Department.
- A final response or update must be sent to the complainant within 30 business days, barring exceptional circumstances.
- Complaints may be prioritized, depending on the circumstances. The complainant is to be notified of timelines.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1. **Employees** - All employees are to have knowledge and awareness of the Township's requirement to receive complaints, the process through which a complaint can be made and the service standards that apply to complaints.

8.2. **Supervisors** – Supervisors are responsible for facilitating a prompt response to all complaints by their staff to ensure that service standards are achieved.

8.3. **General Managers** – General Managers are responsible to ensure that all information noted in Section 6.1 is received in accordance with the Service Standards. General Managers hold responsibility for compliance to the complaints policy.

8.4. **Members of Council** – Members of Council are responsible for directing complaints to appropriate staff for follow up as per the guidelines set out in the complaints policy. Members of Council may submit a complaint on someone's behalf as per Section 5.2 of this policy.

9. MONITORING AND TRACKING COMPLAINTS

9.1. Complaints will be tracked from initial receipt to the resolution.

- All complaints records will be kept securely and in accordance with corporate policy requirements and legislative responsibilities. The complaints records will be needed for regular future review and analysis so as to capture recurring issues and improve customer service and satisfaction.
- If action is taken on a complaint by telephone/voicemail, ensure that a record of this action is saved for your records in case of escalation to the CAO or to the provincial Ombudsman.

10. MUNICIPAL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PRIVACY ACT (MFIPPA)

- 10.1. All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with MFIPPA and other applicable legislation. The identity of the complainant will be made known only to those who need to know in order to consider the complaint. All participants in the complaints process shall keep the details of the complaint confidential, except as may be required by law.
- 10.2. Complaints received by one Department are to be limited to that specific Department unless the complaint involves more than one Department. Generally, Department A will not be able to view complaints received by Department B unless operationally required to address the complaint.
- 10.3. Nothing contained in this Policy is intended to either conflict with nor derogate from the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

11. DELEGATION AND DISPUTE

- 11.1. The Chief Administrative Officer of the Corporation is delegated the responsibilities related to the processing of complaints having regard for the nature of the complaint.
- 11.2. Any dispute from the public regarding any provision of this policy shall be referred to the Chief Administrative Officer, who shall make a determination regarding the issue.

12. POLICY ADMINISTRATION AND REVIEW

- 12.1. This policy shall be administered by the Chief Administrative Officer.
- 12.2. This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years or as required based on revisions to corporate practices or Provincial legislation.