

THE CORPORATION OF THE
MUNICIPALITY OF GREENSTONE

POLICY MANUAL

SECTION: Corporate Services **SUBJECT:** Complaints Policy

EFFECTIVE DATE: **November 27, 2017**

AUTHORIZATION: 17-44

Purpose

This policy is intended to enable the Municipality of Greenstone (hereinafter referred to as the "Municipality") to promptly and effectively address program and service delivery concerns raised by members of the public. This policy will assist the Municipality in providing excellent service to the public, and it will contribute to continuous improvement of Municipal operations and service standards.

The Municipality strives to improve customer satisfaction by:

- providing a timely and accurate response to complaints; and
- using complaints as an opportunity for continuous improvement of program and service delivery

Definition

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction related to a Municipal program, service, facility, or staff member, where a member of the public believes that the Municipality has not provided a service experience to the customer's satisfaction at the point of service delivery, and where a response or resolution is expected.

The Municipality's definition of a complaint does not include those complaints that are anonymous in nature. In order to resolve an issue, the Municipality requires the complainant's contact information. Personal information shall be maintained as required under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

All complainants will be treated with respect and will not receive adverse treatment or any form of reprisal. The identity (or any identifying information) of the

complainant will be made known only to those who need to know in order to consider the complaint.

A complaint is distinct from:

- A request for service made on behalf of a citizen for a specific service, or to notify the Municipality that a scheduled service was not provided on time;
- A general inquiry or specific request for information regarding a municipal service;
- A suggestion or idea submitted by a member of the public with the aim of improving services, programs, products, or processes; or
- An expression of approval or compliment for a municipal staff, program, product or process.

A request for service is a request made to the Municipality for a specific service or to notify the Municipality that a service was not provided on time. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Requesting that the Municipality repair a street surface
- Reporting a malfunctioning street light
- Notifying the Municipality of a missed garbage collection
- Reporting a by-law infraction

It should be noted that while a request for service is not a complaint, the issue may become a complaint if not responded to in a reasonable timeframe.

This policy is not for complaints regarding:

- Complaints about Members of Council
- Complaints from Municipal staff about other Municipal staff or working conditions
- Compliments

- Decisions made by Municipal Council or one of its Committees
- Inquiries
- Issues that have statutory review and appeal processes including but not limited to Freedom of Information Requests, land use planning, by-law notices, orders and appeals.
- Outside boards and agencies including, for example, the Greenstone Public Library and the OPP
- Requests for Service
- Requests to change a by-law
- Suggestions
- Civil matters

FRONTLINE RESOLUTION

The first step is for the complainant to attempt to resolve concerns by dealing with the Municipality and/or the Municipal employee(s) directly involved with the issue where appropriate. If not satisfied, the complainant should attempt to resolve the issue with the Manager and then the Director (if required) responsible for the Department in question. These communications may be written or verbal in nature.

It is the responsibility of all Municipal employees to attempt to resolve issues or concerns before they become complaints and to identify opportunities to improve Municipal services where deficiencies are noted.

PROCESS FOR FILING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

1. Filing the Complaint - Where a frontline resolution cannot be achieved in a reasonable timeframe, complaints should be submitted to the Clerk on the form attached hereto as Schedule 'B'. All information on the form must be completed.

The Municipality shall make all reasonable efforts to assist the complainant in completing the form wherever necessary and requested. However, the complainant must attest to the accuracy of the information on the form as written.

Complaints can be submitted in a sealed envelope marked confidential:

By Mail: Municipality of Greenstone
P.O. Box 70
Geraldton, ON P0T 1M0
Attention: Municipal Clerk

Fax: 807-854-2360

In person: 1800 Main St, Geraldton, ON

Email: gabrielle.lecuyer@greenstone.ca

2. Receipt and Acknowledgement - The complaint shall be logged and, within five (5) business days of receipt of the complaint, the CAO shall acknowledge to the complainant that the complaint was received.

If the CAO has determined that a reasonable timeframe/effort has not occurred for a frontline resolution, the CAO shall notify the complainant of this in the acknowledgment letter and forward a copy to the responsible Manager and/or Director for a resolution. The letter will indicate a date deemed reasonable given the nature of the issue and circumstances involved, understanding that the goal is to resolve issues as quickly as possible.

3. Investigation – The CAO shall conduct an investigation into the nature of the complaint.

The CAO shall review the issues identified by the complainant, and in so doing they may:

- Review relevant Municipal and provincial legislation;
- Review relevant Municipal policies and procedures and any existing file documents;
- Interview employees or members of the public involved in the issue;
- Identify actions that may be taken to address the complaint or to improve municipal operations; and
- Provide a resolution report.

4. Decision Within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of a complaint - the CAO shall provide a response in writing to the complainant, which shall include:

- Whether or not the complaint was substantiated;
- If the complaint is not substantiated, the reason for the decision; and

- Any actions that the Municipality has or will take as a result of the complaint.

If the CAO is unable to provide a full response within 30 days due to extenuating circumstances, they shall notify the complainant of the delay and provide an estimate of when a response shall be provided.

5. Record - The CAO shall file a copy of the complaint and response. Such record will be maintained in accordance with the Municipal Record Retention By-law.

6. Reporting Semi-annually - the CAO shall provide a report to Council outlining, in broad terms, the complaints received and the resolutions reached. The purposes of this report are;

- To ensure adherence to the policy in terms of timelines,
- To identify potential policy issues/service that need to be identified (i.e. do investments need to be made in increasing snow removal service, etc.)

No personal identifying information will be included in this report.

In extenuating circumstances, the CAO may designate an impartial third party (e.g. Deputy CAO) to receive, investigate and respond to formal complaints in accordance with this process and Policy.

If a complaint is made against the CAO, then the Mayor shall investigate and fulfill all other duties identified as the CAO's under this Policy.

A disagreement with the CAO's finding under this Policy does not constitute a complaint (see below for next step.)

APPEAL PROCESS There is no appeal process at the Municipal level. Following receipt of the resolution from the CAO, the complainant may contact the Ontario Ombudsman. www.ombudsman.on.ca