

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF THE NORTH SHORE

POLICY MANUAL

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POLICY TITLE:		SUBJECT:	
Complaints - Municipal		Complaints regarding Municipal services, operations and facilities	
POLICY SECTION:		POLICY NO:	
C		10	
EFFECTIVE DATE:	July 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	ENACTED BY:	
AMENDED:	October 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2023	Resolution, By-Law 23-70	

**1 – PURPOSE**

The Township of The North Shore recognizes the importance of public feedback 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 the services provided by the Township of The North Shore and the client experience of residents.

The Township of the North Shore is committed to a consistent and uniform process to respond to complaints received from members of the public regarding the dissatisfaction of programs, facilities, Township of The North Shore services, staff or operational procedures at the point of service delivery. The following policy establishes guidelines and standards for the efficient handling and resolution of complaints made toward the municipality in order to address concerns raised and improve services.

**2 - CORE VALUES**

(1) The following core values inform this policy:

- (a) Customer focus: We are committed to continuous improvement in service delivery.
- (b) Accountability: Complaints are handled in a fair, respectful and transparent manner, as quickly as possible.
- (c) Responsiveness: Complaints are tracked, and the complainant is informed of each step.
- (d) Accessibility: Information on how to submit a complaint is easily found on the Township's website and Social Media platforms.
- (e) Simplicity: The process must be simple to understand and easy to use. Complainants are guided on what to include in the complaint.
- (f) 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 – DEFINITIONS**

- (1) **“Complaint”** means any expression of dissatisfaction related to the Township of The North Shore programs, facilities, services, Township of The North Shore employee or operational procedures, where it is believed that the Township of The North Shore has not provided a service experience to the customer’s satisfaction at the point of service delivery.
- (2) **“Complainant”** means the person who is dissatisfied and filing the complaint. Anyone who uses or is affected by Township of The North Shore services can make a complaint including residents, people who work in or visit the city, local businesses or community groups.
- (3) **“Compliment”** means an expression of appreciation for satisfactory or above-satisfactory service.
- (4) **“Enquiry”** means a general or specific request for information regarding a municipal program, service or facility.
- (5) **“Feedback”** means input that is neither positive, nor negative but provides ideas.
- (6) **“Service request”** means a request for a specific service provided by the Township of The North Shore. Example” Requesting that the Township of The North Shore repair a Municipally maintained road surface, reporting a burnt-out light on a Municipally owned streetlight, reporting a By-law or Property Standards infraction, reporting damage to a Municipal facility or park.
- (7) **“Resolution of Complaint”** means the final stage of the complaint process which may include an apology, explanation, reconsideration, reimbursement, compensation and/or change in policy. The complaint is considered “closed” and resolved.

### **4 - GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

- (1) The Township of The North Shore will deal with all complaints promptly, courteously, impartially and professionally. All complainants will be treated with respect and will not receive adverse treatment or any form of reprisal.
- (2) All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and other applicable legislation. The identity of the complainant will be made known only to those who need to know 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. If the matter goes to arbitration, it may be necessary to release the complainant’s name and contact information during the resolution process.
- (3) The policy applies to formal complaints that are received at the Municipal Office in writing, by e-mail, by mail or by fax.

### **5 - COMPLAINT PROCESS**

#### **5.1 What Is a Complaint?**

- (1) A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about the action or lack of action taken regarding operations, facilities or services provided by the Township of the North Shore, or a staff member of the Township of The North Shore.
- (2) All complaints filed necessitate a response.

## **5.2 Who Can Make a Complaint?**

(1) Anyone who uses or is affected by Township of The North Shore services can make a complaint. This includes:

- (a) residents;
- (b) people who work in or visit the Township of The North Shore;
- (c) local businesses;
- (d) community groups.

## **5.3 How to Submit a Complaint**

- (a) by e-mail;
- (c) by mail;
- (d) by fax;
- (e) via the Township's website: <http://www.townshipofthenorthshore.ca>;
- (e) In person at the Municipal Office.

## **5.4 Types of Complaints**

This policy applies to formal complaints that are received from members of the public regarding the dissatisfaction of programs, facilities, Township of The North Shore services, staff or operational procedures at the point of service delivery and that are received at the Municipal Office in writing, by e-mail, by mail or by fax.

### **This policy does not apply to:**

- Outside boards and agencies, including the Police Service, Public Library and Public Health Department, which have their own complaints handling processes.
- Closed meeting investigations.
- The Township's elected officials and their offices.

### **This policy does not address:**

- Enquiries;
- Requests for service;
- Feedback;
- Compliments;
- Request for accommodations;
- Criticisms or anonymous complaints;
- Complaints regarding Township of The North Shore employees that are employed by a service provider contracted by the municipality;
- Issues addressed by legislation, or an existing municipal by-law, policy or procedure;
- A decision of Council or of a Committee of Council;
- Internal employee complaints; or
- Matters that are handled by tribunals, courts of law, quasi-judicial boards, etc.

### **5.5 What to include in a Complaint**

Complaints shall be in writing and should include information such as:

- (a) details of what happened;
- (b) where it happened; whether it is within the Township's areas of responsibility;
- (c) when it happened;
- (d) who was involved;
- (e) what was said or done;
- (f) what kind of resolution is being sought;
- (g) contact details of the complainant.

Those submitting complaints in person, by mail, via email, or via fax shall be required to complete the Complaint Form (Appendix A). If the person making the in-person complaint cannot complete the form themselves, the person receiving the complaint shall do so on their behalf and review the completed form with them for their signature (note: the complainant must sign and date the Complaint Form for the complaint to proceed).

### **5.6 Service Standards**

The following service standards will be adhered to in the handling of all complaints received:

- (a) All complaints received will be forwarded to the Clerk and the appropriate department head or designate. The complainant will receive an acknowledgement of receipt of their complaint and an assigned tracking number within 5 business days. This acknowledgement must identify who will be following up on the complaint as well as their contact information.
- (b) A final response or update must be sent to the complainant within 20 business days, barring exceptional circumstances.

### **5.7 Compliance**

The Clerk is responsible for implementation and ongoing compliance with this policy.

### **5.8 Complaint Assessment**

The complainant may be contacted to clarify the complaint. The complaint may be terminated at this point if a resolution is mutually determined, if it is a duplicate, not a complaint, or is frivolous or vexatious. The complainant will be notified and redirected if possible.

### **5.9 Complaint Investigation**

Coordinated by the Clerk, staff will be consulted, findings summarized, and action identified to resolve the complaint. The complainant shall be notified of the approximate length of time the investigation should take.

### **5.10 Complaint Response**

The response to a complaint shall do the following:

- (a) set out the complaint;
- (b) detail how the investigation was conducted;
- (c) summarize the facts;
- (d) outline the findings;
- (e) suggest appropriate resolution along with the rationale supporting the proposed resolution.

### **5.11 Complaint Resolution**

Resolutions may include an explanation, apology, reconsideration, restitution and/or change in policy --- all are possible remedies.

### **5.12 Decision Communication**

Communication of the decision shall include:

- (a) providing the complainant the response;
- (b) identifying next steps/appeal; paper review by the Clerk.

### **5.13 Complaint Closure**

If the complainant is satisfied and put it in writing, the complaint is closed.

### **5.14 Appeal**

There is no appeal process at the Municipal level.

## **6 – RESPONSIBILITIES**

(1) **Employees:** All employees are to have knowledge and awareness of the Township of The North Shore's requirement to receive complaints, the process through which a complaint can be made and the service standards that apply to complaints.

(2) **Supervisors:** Supervisors are responsible for facilitating prompt response to all complaints by their staff to ensure that service standards are achieved.

(3) **Clerk:** The Clerk holds responsibility for compliance to the complaints policy.

## **7 – MONITORING/CONTRAVENTIONS**

- (1) The complaint needs to be tracked from its initial receipt to its resolution.
- (2) All complaint records will be kept securely and in accordance with the Township of The North Shore's record retention by-law and legislative responsibilities.
- (3) Complaint records shall be periodically reviewed and analysed to capture recurring issues and improve client service and satisfaction.

## **8 - LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES**

- (a) *Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act*
- (b) *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*

## **9 – ENQUIRIES**

For more information on this policy please contact: Clerk, 705-849-2213, ext. 204,  
[municipalclerk@townshipofthenorthshore.ca](mailto:municipalclerk@townshipofthenorthshore.ca)