



## Customer Complaint Policy

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# CUSTOMER COMPLAINT POLICY

## 1.0 Statement

Customer satisfaction is a priority for Loyalist Township. The Township is committed to satisfying customer expectations in all areas of service. Receiving feedback on services helps improve processes and can identify areas for improvement. Offering customers opportunities to escalate concerns reinforces commitments to excellent service delivery.

## 2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the underlying principles and processes for the disposition of complaints related to services delivered by the Township, ensuring, and supporting transparency and accountability. This policy attempts to ensure that any response and review of complaints is fair, impartial, and respectful to all parties involved.

This policy provides a consistent and uniform process to respond to complaints received from members of the public regarding the dissatisfaction of programs, facilities, Township services, Township employees or operational procedures at the point of service delivery.

By introducing guidelines and standards, the process of managing and resolving complaints will become more efficient allowing staff to respond to complaints in a timely manner and also provide an opportunity to improve Township programs and services.

## 3.0 Principles

3.1 This policy and its procedures are based on the following complaint management principles:

Ease of comprehension & access	The process should be easy to understand and accessible to customers;
Accountability	The process should be well understood by staff and include routine monitoring of complaints by senior management to ensure matters resulting from repeated complaints are addressed.
Confidence	Customers should have confidence in the reliability of the process
Confidentiality	Customer complaints will remain confidential in accordance with applicable policies
Fairness & independence	The process should be fair and include an independent review process

Impartiality	The process should be impartial and filing complaints will not adversely affect the quality of future Township services delivered to the complainants
Effectiveness	Staff should address issues within their authority and capacity. Customers should be advised of options to resolve the complaint
Flexibility	Staff should have the discretion to adjust and adapt their response based on the nature of the complaint, and
Timeliness	Timelines should be established by staff in responding to complaints filed

## 4.0 Definitions:

**Complainant** means the person who is dissatisfied and is filing the complaint. Anyone who uses or is affected by Township services can make a complaint.

**Complaint** means an expression of dissatisfaction related to Loyalist Township programs, services, facilities, Township employee or operational procedures where it is believed that the Township has not provided a service experience to the customer's satisfaction at the point of service delivery and a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

**Compliment** means an expression of appreciation for satisfactory or above-satisfactory service.

**Cyberbullying** means the use of communication technologies to engage in deliberate, repeated or hostile behaviours intended to harm embarrass, harass or slander someone deliberately, including, but not limited to: social media outlets (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube), personal blogs, web pages, discussion groups or online media/newspaper articles;

**Enquiry** is defined as a general or specific request for information regarding a municipal program, service or facility.

**Feedback** means input that is neither positive, nor negative, but provides ideas

**Frivolous** means a Complaint that is reasonably perceived by Township staff to be

- (a) without reasonable or probable cause,
- (b) without merit or substance, or
- (c) trivial;

**Harassment or Harass** involves engaging in a course of behaviour, comment or conduct, whether it occurs inside or outside the work environment, that is or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. It includes but is not limited to any behaviour, conduct or comment that is directed at or is offensive to another person:

- (a) on the grounds of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, age, handicap, sexual orientation, marital status, or family status, as well as any other grounds under the provisions of the Human Rights Code; or
- (b) which is reasonably perceived by the recipient as an intention to bully, embarrass, intimidate or ridicule the recipient.

**Intimidation** means unwarranted conduct, including, but not limited to: cyberbullying, discrimination, harassment, violence or threats of violence, profanity, personal insults or communication that is deemed threatening;

**Ombudsman** means the Ombudsman of Ontario or the Ombudsman appointed by Council in accordance with Section 223.13 (1) of the Municipal Act, 1996, as amended where applicable.

**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.

**Service Request** means a request made to the Township for a specific service. Examples include: request to repair a street surface, report a burnt out street light, report a by-law or parking infraction, damage to a municipal facility or park.

**Township** means the Corporation of Loyalist Township;

**Vexatious** means a Complaint that is Frivolous and which is pursued in a manner that is reasonably perceived by Township staff to be

- (a) malicious,
- (b) intended to embarrass or harass the recipient, or
- (c) intended to be a nuisance.

## 5.0 Types of Complaints

5.1 This policy applies to all complaints received by staff from members of the public regarding all administrative actions and functions of Loyalist Township.

Examples of a complaint include, but are not limited to, perceptions of:

- A failure to do something agreed to do;
- A failure to observe policy or procedures;
- An error made by an employee, contractor, or volunteer of the Township;
- Unfair or discourteous actions/statements made by an employee, contractor, or volunteer of the Township;
- Access to services;
- Timeliness of service; and
- Quality of service.

5.2 This policy does not apply to complaints made by employees, contractors, or volunteers working on behalf of the Township, or complaints about Members of Council.

5.3 This policy does not address:

- Enquiries;
- Request for service/Service Request
- Complaints about non-municipal services;
- Issues addressed by legislation, or an existing Municipal by-law, policy or procedure. For example, appeals to the Assessment Review Board (ARB) or Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) (previously OMB - Ontario Municipal Board);
- A decision of Council or a decision of a Standing Committee of Council;
- Internal employee complaints; or
- Matters that are handled by tribunals, courts of law, quasi-judicial boards, etc.
- Closed meeting investigations
- Council Code of Conduct

5.4 A complaint is distinct from:

- A request for service (service request) 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 enquiry or specific request for information regarding municipal service;
- An opinion or feedback, comment and expression of interest in a program or service;
- An expression of approval or compliment for municipal staff member, program, product or process;
- A suggestion or idea submitted by a customer with the aim of improving services, program, products or processes.

## 6.0 Procedures

### 6.1 General Complaint Procedures

6.1.1 Anyone personally affected, or their representative can submit a complaint and it will be reviewed in accordance with this procedure.

5.1.2 Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.

5.1.3 A complaint may be made in a number of ways:

- Online through the Loyalist Township website Complaint Form
- Verbal complaints are made in person or by telephone directly to Township staff or through a member of Loyalist Township Council;
- Written complaints may be filed by hand delivery, mail or e-mail directly to Township staff or through a member of Loyalist Township Council.

5.1.4 A **formal** complaint shall include the following components:

- a) Contact details of the complainant;
- b) Type of complaint;

- c) Summary of complaint (details, location, Township employee involved, resolution requested, enclosures, date complaint submitted);
- d) Date of incident;

5.1.5 All complaints should be filed as soon as possible.

5.1.6 Informal Complaint - It is the responsibility of Township employees to attempt to resolve issues or concerns before they become formal complaints, and identify opportunities to improve municipal services. For cases where informal resolution is successful, complaint logging is not required.

5.1.7 A formal complaint is generated when an informal resolution could not be successfully achieved. Formal complaints shall be submitted to the Clerk's Division on the Customer Complaint Form. The complaint will be acknowledged within five (5) business days upon receipt.

## **5.2 Complaint Process**

### **5.2.1 Acknowledge**

Township staff will contact the complainant within five (5) business days. If the complainant has requested a response or resolution to a matter, then the acknowledgement of receipt should indicate an estimated timeline for further follow-up and an indication of what next steps may be expected.

### **5.2.2 Assess (if Applicable)**

Contact the complainant to clarify the complaint, if needed. The complaint may be terminated at this point if a resolution is possible, if it is a duplicate or if it does not fit the definition of a complaint.

### **5.2.3 Assign**

The complaint is then forwarded to the staff member responsible in the appropriate department.

### **5.2.4 Investigate**

The responsible staff member will:

1. Document all notes;
2. Contact the complainant where a quick resolve is possible;
3. Notify the complainant in writing of an approximate length of time if it is determined that the issue may result in a lengthy investigation process;
4. Review the issues identified by the complainant and in doing so may:
  - Review relevant municipal and provincial legislation;
  - Review the municipality's relevant policies and procedures;
  - Interview employees;
  - Identify actions that may be taken to address the complaint or improve municipal operations.

### **5.2.5 Resolve**

A resolution will be provided to the complainant in writing by the responsible staff member within 30 days upon receipt of the complaint. If a resolution cannot be provided within 30 days, staff shall contact the complainant about the delay and provide an estimation of time.

The decision will consist of information such as:

1. Overview of complaint;
2. Details of how the investigation was conducted;
3. Summary of the facts;
4. Outline of the findings;
5. Identification of next steps;
6. Suggestions of appropriate resolution along with the rationale supporting the proposed resolution.

Should the Complainant believe that the review of the Complaint undertaken by the responsible staff contact was inadequate, they may refer the Complaint for further review.

### **5.2.6 Review Committee**

With input from and records retained by the responsible staff contact, an internal staff committee referred to as the Complaint Review Committee comprised of the Chief Administrative Officer (or designate) and the Township Clerk will assess the review undertaken in Step 2 for the following purposes:

- a. Accuracy and completeness;
- b. Clarity of response and information provided;
- c. Fairness, including opportunity for internal or external appeal;
- d. Opportunities for further refinement of customer complaints management; and
- e. Opportunities for improvements in service delivery including a review of existing practices and processes.

A written response will be provided to the Complainant outlining the committee's assessment of the review undertaken and indicate that should the Complainant believe that the assessment of the review undertaken by the committee was inadequate, they may refer the Complaint to the Ombudsman.

Should the Ombudsman, on review determine any further actions or recommendations, the Township will take these recommendations into consideration and may re-consider its previous response.

## **5.3 Threats, Intimidation**

- 5.3.1 Staff should report to their designated or senior department contact and the Human Resources division immediately:

- (a) Any implied or explicit threats made against the safety of the staff member or the safety of others in the course of handling the Complaint;
- (b) Any Intimidation behaviour in the course of handling the Complaint, which may be established by a variety of circumstances that may include:
  - (i) the content, tone and language of a person's correspondence, especially if the language used is insulting, offensive or abusive; or,
  - (ii) unsubstantiated, derogatory or inflammatory allegations against Township staff.

5.3.2 Harassment, discrimination, threats or matters of a similar nature will be dealt with through the Workplace Harassment Policy.

#### **5.4 Potentially Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints**

5.4.1 Where the Complaint may be considered Frivolous or Vexatious or there appears to be a pattern of Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints, a department may seek advice from the Complaint Review Committee to ensure valid Complaints are heard and addressed in a professional and mutually respectful manner, while ensuring efficient use of Township resources.

5.4.2 The Review Committee may recommend that a department refer a Frivolous or Vexatious Complaint to the Ombudsman and that it deem the Complaint file closed (subject to any further steps as determined by the Ombudsman above).

#### **5.5 TRACKING AND REPORTING**

5.5.1 The complaint must be tracked from its initial receipt to its resolution.

5.5.2 Complaint records will be needed for regular review and analysis to identify recurring issues and to improve customer service and satisfaction.

5.5.3 Annually, the number of complaints, type of complaints, and number of resolved complaints shall undergo review by the Chief Administrative Officer's Office and Clerk's Division, with an annual presentation to the Senior Management Team.

5.5.4 The Senior Management Team will routinely review corporate complaint trends for the purpose of continuous service and process improvements.

5.5.5 Personal information collected by the Township as a result of a written complaint and any information collected during an investigation is protected under the authority of the [Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M-26.](#)

5.5.6 The Township will fully cooperate with the Ombudsman in executing his or her statutory duties.



## Customer Complaint Policy Flow Chart

### Enquiry/Service Request

- general or specific request for information regarding a municipal program, service or facility
- a request made to the Township for a specific service. Examples include: request to repair a street surface, report a burnt out street light, report a by-law or parking infraction, damage to a municipal facility or park.

or

### Complaint

- means an expression of dissatisfaction related to Loyalist Township programs, services, facilities, Township employee or operational procedures where it is believed that the Township has not provided a service experience to the customer's satisfaction at the point of service delivery and a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

- If first contact resolution is successful on enquiries, request logging may not be required.
- Service Requests for specific services will be logged and a tracking number assigned and provided to the requester

Informal  
Complaint

or

Formal  
Complaint

### **Informal Complaint**

Township employees are responsible to attempt to resolve issues or concerns before they become formal complaints and identify opportunities to improve municipal services.

If informal resolution is not successfully achieved, provide information on how to submit a formal complaint.

If informal resolution is successful, complaint logging is not required.

## Formal Complaint Process

Clerks Division receives formal complaints (submitted on the Customer Complaint Form)

Re: Programs, Facilities, Township Services, Township Employees or Operational Procedures

- Acknowledge receipt of complaint within five (5) business days
- Assess complaint and provide a tracking number
- Assign complaint to appropriate staff member responsible to investigate

## The responsible staff member will

- Investigate the complaint
- Notify Complainant in writing if determined issue may result in lengthy investigation
- Review the issue(s) identified
- Notify Complainant of decision within thirty (30) days upon receipt of complaint; or
- Staff shall contact Complainant about delay and provide an estimation of time

If the review undertaken by staff was deemed to be inadequate by the complainant, refer to Review Committee

If the review undertaken by staff was deemed to be successful, forward all records related to the investigation to Clerk's Division and file closed

## Complaint Review Committee

Comprised of the Chief Administrative Officer (or designate) and the Township Clerk and/or Human Resources Manager

1. Assess the review undertaken in Step 2
2. Provide written response to the Complainant

If the assessment by the Review Committee is deemed to be inadequate by the complainant, refer complaint to Ombudsman and provide contact information

If the assessment by the Review Committee is deemed to be successful, forward all records related to the complaint to the Clerks Division and file closed

## Ombudsman

If it is determined on review any further action or recommendations, the Township will take these recommendations into consideration and may re-consider its previous response.