



## 1. PURPOSE:

The Township of North Stormont is committed to a consistent and uniform process to respond to complaints received regarding the dissatisfaction of programs, facilities, Township services, Township employees 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. DEFINITIONS:

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

**Complaint:** Expression of dissatisfaction related to Township of North Stormont programs, facilities, services, 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.

**Compliment:** An expression of appreciation for satisfactory or above-satisfactory service.

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

**Feedback:** Input that is neither positive, nor negative but provides ideas.

**Resolution of Complaint:** 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:** A request made to the Township of North Stormont for a specific service. Examples include: Requesting that the Township repair a street surface, reporting a burnt out street light, report a bylaw or parking infraction, damage to a municipal facility or park.

## 3. TYPES OF COMPLAINTS

This policy applies to complaints that are received from members of the public regarding all administrative actions and functions of the Township of North Stormont.

This policy does not apply to:

- Outside boards and agencies including the Huntsville Public Library Board.
- Closed meeting investigations.

This policy does not address:

- Enquiries;
- Requests for service;
- Feedback;
- Compliments;
- Request for accommodations;



- Criticisms or anonymous complaints;
- Complaints regarding Township 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.

#### **4. PROCEDURE**

##### **4.1 General**

A complaint may be made in a number of ways:

- Verbal complaints are made in person or by telephone;
- Written complaints may be filed by hand delivery, mail, fax or email.

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) Signature and date.

All complaints should be filed as soon as possible.

##### **4.2 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.

##### **4.3 Formal Complaint**

A formal complaint is generated when an informal resolution could not be successfully achieved. Formal complaints shall be submitted to the Clerk's Department on the Municipal Complaint Form attached as Appendix "A". All complaints must be dated and signed by an identifiable individual.

The complaint is given a tracking number and is acknowledged in writing between 1 to 5 business days upon receipt.

The Clerk's Department will:

###### **4.3.1 Acknowledgement**

Contact the Complainant in writing within the respected number of days. Complaint will be logged and a tracking number will be assigned and referenced within the notice, as well as detailed service standard timelines which will be met during the complaint process.



#### 4.3.2 Assessment (If Applicable)

Contact the Complainant in writing 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 is not a complaint.

#### 4.3.3 Transfer of Complaint

Notify and transfer the complaint as follows:

- In the case of Township employee, the supervisor of the Department and Human Resources Department;
- In the case of a supervisor, the director of the Department and Human Resources Department;
- In the case of a director, the Chief Administrative Officer and Human Resources Department;
- In the case of the Chief Administrative Officer, member of Council.

#### 4.3.4 Investigation

The Investigating Township Employee will:

- Document all notes within the Municipal Complaint Tracking Form.
- Contact the Complainant where a quick resolve is possible.
- Notify the Complainant in writing of an approximate length of time if the Investigating Township Employee determines the issue may result in a lengthy investigation process.
- 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.


At the discretion of the Chief Administrative Officer, Council may be notified of an open complaint for information purposes.

#### 4.3.5 Decision

A decision will be provided to the Complainant in writing by the Investigator within 30 days upon receipt of the complaint. If a decision cannot be provided within 30 days, the Investigator shall contact the Complainant of the delay and provide an estimation of time.

The decision will consist of information such as:

- Overview of complaint;
- Details of how the investigation was conducted;
- Summary of the facts;
- Outline of the findings;
- Identification of next steps;
- Suggestions of appropriate resolution along with the rationale supporting the proposed resolution.

 Municipal Complaint Policy	By-Law: No. 64-2017
	Effective Date: October 24, 2017

**5. APPEAL**

There is no appeal process at the municipal level.

**6. MONITORING**

6.1 *Administration*

The complaint must be tracked from its initial receipt to its resolution. This process is managed by the Investigating Township Employee.

The Investigating Township Employee must keep a centralized, up-to-date Municipal Complaint Tracking Form which will clearly track each instance by complaint number and define what stage the complaint is at.

6.2 Existing Complaint

When action is taken on an already existing formal complaint by telephone or voicemail, ensure that a record of this action is saved on the Municipal Complaint Tracking Form. All correspondence between the Investigating Township Employee and the Complainant must be documented.

**7. PRIVACY**

Township of North Stormont employees will adhere to all applicable legislation regarding privacy in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA).

All complaint records will be kept securely and in accordance with corporate policy requirements and legislative responsibilities.

Personal information on the complaint is treated as confidential to protect the privacy of the Complainant; however, the Complainant should be aware that certain circumstances may indirectly identify them during an investigation.

**8. RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

Upon delivery of decision, the complaint shall be deemed resolved/closed and the Investigator will transfer all physical and electronic documents pertaining to the complaint to the Clerk's Department who will maintain the records according to the Township's Records Retention Schedule. No records or copies thereof shall be kept by any Investigator.

**9. RESPONSIBILITY**



All employees should have a clear understanding of how complaints are handled by the municipality.

All supervisors must comply with and explain this policy to their employees and conduct any training which may be necessary.

The Clerk's Department may automatically update the Municipal Complaint Policy and Form for minor amendments, should they be required.

**10. APPENDICES**

Appendix A – Municipal Complaint Form (Public Use)

Appendix B – Municipal Complaint Tracking Form (Internal Use) Appendix C – Municipal Complaint Policy Flow Chart

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dennis Fife**, Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Marc Chénier**, CAO/Clerk