



## Municipal Complaint Policy

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| <b>SECTION:</b> Clerk’s Department         | <b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> April 27, 2016  |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b> Municipal Complaint Policy | <b>POLICY NUMBER:</b> Communication-06 |
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**TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

|            |  |      |
|------------|--|------|
| <b>1.</b>  | <b>PURPOSE</b> .....   | 2    |
| <b>2.</b>  | <b>DEFINITIONS</b> .....   | 2    |
| <b>3.</b>  | <b>TYPES OF COMPLAINTS</b> .....                                   | 2-3  |
| <b>4.</b>  | <b>PROCEDURE:</b>  |      |
| 4.1        | General .....  | 3    |
| 4.2        | Informal Complaint.....  | 3    |
| 4.3        | Formal Complaint .....   | 3    |
| 4.3.1      | Acknowledgement .....  | 3    |
| 4.3.2      | Assessment .....   | 4    |
| 4.3.3      | Transfer of Complaint .....  | 4    |
| 4.3.4      | Investigation .....  | 4    |
| 4.3.5      | Decision: .....  | 4    |
| <b>5.</b>  | <b>APPEAL</b> .....  | 5    |
| <b>6.</b>  | <b>MONITORING:</b>   |      |
| 6.1        | Administration .....   | 5    |
| 6.2        | Existing Complaint .....   | 5    |
| <b>7.</b>  | <b>PRIVACY</b> .....   | 5    |
| <b>8.</b>  | <b>RECORDS MANAGEMENT</b> .....                                    | 5    |
| <b>9.</b>  | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> .....  | 5-6  |
| <b>10.</b> | <b>APPENDICES</b>  |      |
|            | Appendix A – Municipal Complaint Form (Public Use) .....           | 7-8  |
|            | Appendix B – Municipal Complaint Tracking Form (Internal Use)..... | 9-10 |
|            | Appendix C – Municipal Complaint Policy Flow Chart .....           | 11   |

**1. PURPOSE:**

The Town of Huntsville is committed to a consistent and uniform process to respond to complaints received regarding the dissatisfaction of programs, facilities, Town services, Town 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 Town services can make a complaint.

**Complaint:** Expression of dissatisfaction related to Town of Huntsville programs, facilities, services, Town employee or operational procedures, where it is believed that the Town 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 Town of Huntsville for a specific service. Examples include: Requesting that the Town 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 Town of Huntsville.

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 Town 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, Town 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 Town 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 Town employee, the supervisor of the Department and the Executive Director of Human Resources & Corporate Information;
- In the case of a supervisor, the director of the Department and the Executive Director of Human Resources and Corporate Information;
- In the case of a director, the Chief Administrative Officer and the Executive Director of Human Resources and Corporate Information;
- In the case of the Chief Administrative Officer, the Mayor.

#### 4.3.4 Investigation

The Investigating Town 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 Town 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.

**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 Town Employee.

The Investigating Town 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 Town Employee and the Complainant must be documented.

**7. PRIVACY**

Town of Huntsville 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 Town'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



# Town of Huntsville Municipal Complaint Form (Public Use)

## HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

The Town of Huntsville Clerk’s Department has procedures for receiving and handling complaints from citizens who are dissatisfied with service, actions or lack of action by a Town department or staff member. We recommend you first speak directly with the service area where you have an issue, in person or by telephone. Most complaints are received verbally and can be resolved promptly by the department in charge of the service.

If you are not satisfied with how your verbal complaint is handled you can submit a written complaint by completing this form which is available on any of our websites associated with [www.huntsville.ca](http://www.huntsville.ca).

## COMPLAINANT CONTACT DETAILS

|  |  |
|--|--|
| First name *   | Last name *  |
| Email Address <i>(considered the most prompt way we can communicate with you)</i>          |  |
| Mailing Address *  | Phone Number *   |
| <i>Note: If only a mailing address is provided our response timelines may be extended.</i> | <i>Note: We only call if we require clarification.</i> |

## COMPLAINT TYPE

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access of Services            | <input type="checkbox"/> Programs               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facilities                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Conduct          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outcome of Existing Complaint | <input type="checkbox"/> Timeliness of Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Processes or Procedures       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                  |

## SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT

Please record information on what happened, who was involved, dates, and times. Be as detailed as possible. If there is not enough space to describe the complaint, attach extra paper.

|         |
|---------|
| Details |
|---------|

|  |
|--|
|  |
| Service area/location of problem   |
| Staff persons involved (if known and applicable)                                     |
| List of enclosures (include copies of any documentation in support of the complaint) |

**RESOLVE**

|   |
|---|
| How do you suggest the complaint be resolved? |
|---|

**SIGN OFF**

|                                       |
|---------------------------------------|
| Complainant's signature               |
| Date complaint submitted (mm/dd/yyyy) |

**TIMELINE**

Clerk’s Department staff will contact you to acknowledge this complaint in the next 1 to 5 business days after receiving this completed form. The Clerk’s Department will forward the complaint on to the Investigating Staff Employee who will respond within 30 days of receipt of this complaint. If this is not possible, you will be contacted and given a reason why this timeline is being adjusted.

**NOTICE OF COLLECTION**

The personal information you choose to provide on this form is collected under the authority of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*. The information you provide will be used to investigate the complaint and may be used for contact purposes but is otherwise considered confidential. Questions about this collection can be directed to the Clerk’s Department, Town Hall, 37 Main Street East, Huntsville, ON, P1H 1A1, 705-789-1751 ext. 2255, [tanya.calleja@huntsville.ca](mailto:tanya.calleja@huntsville.ca).

**FOR CLERKS DEPARTMENT ONLY**

|                                       |                    |                  |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Date Complaint Received: (mm/dd/yyyy) | Receiver Initials: | Tracking Number: |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|





# Town of Huntsville Municipal Complaint Tracking Form (Internal Use)

**TRACKING NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Complainant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **COMPLAINT STAGE 1 – ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Notification of Receipt of Complaint by Clerk's Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Complaint Transferred to: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Transferred: \_\_\_\_\_

## **COMPLAINT STAGE 2 – ASSESSMENT**

*The complaint may be terminated at this point if a resolution is mutually determined, if it is a duplicate or if it is not a complaint.*

- Is the complaint misclassified? (Is it actually feedback/compliment or a service request, etc.?)
- Is the complaint a duplicate?
- Is more detailed information required from the complainant? If yes, check the box and notify complainant.
  - Date of notification for additional information: (dd/mm/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

- Additional information received:  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Can the complaint be resolved informally?
  - Date of informal resolve: (dd/mm/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_
  - How it was informally resolved:  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **COMPLAINT STAGE 3 - INVESTIGATION**

|  |
|--|
| Investigation Notes:<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> |
|--|

**COMPLAINT STAGE 4 – RESOLUTION**

*A resolution has been pursued and communication of the decision is provided to the Complainant in writing.*

**DECISION TO INCLUDE:**

- Overview of Complaint
- Summary of the Facts
- Identification of Next Steps
- Details of How Investigation was Conducted
- Outline of the Findings
- Suggestions of Appropriate Resolution and Rational Supporting the Proposed Resolution

Date of Decision to Complainant (dd/mm/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

**COMPLAINT STAGE 5 – RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

- Have all physical and electronic records been transferred to the Clerk’s Department?

**APPENDIX "C"**

**MUNICIPAL COMPLAINT POLICY FLOW CHART**

