



Hastings Highlands

Beautiful By Nature

Schedule 'A' to Bylaw 2020-084

Municipality of Hastings Highlands- Corporate Policies and Procedures			
DEPARTMENT: Administration			POLICY #:
PROCEDURE: Corporate Complaints Handling Policy			
DATE: NOV 18/20	REV. DATE:	COVERAGE: Municipal Employees, Municipal Elected Officials, Council-appointed Boards, Committees, Advisory Committees	PAGE #: 1-9

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to satisfy the provisions of Bill 8, *Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act*, 2014 as it relates to response to complaints from the public.

Policy Statement

The Municipality of Hastings Highlands is committed to a consistent and uniform process to respond to complaints received from members of the public regarding programs, facilities, municipal services, municipal staff and procedures. This policy outlines the process to be followed and service standards for the handling of public complaints.

The Municipality of Hastings Highlands recognizes the importance of public feedback and welcomes constructive 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 municipality and the customer service experience of residents.

Scope:

This policy applies to:

1. Municipal Employees
2. Municipal Elected Officials
3. Council-appointed Boards/Committees

Who can make a complaint? Anyone who uses or is affected by municipal services can make a complaint. This includes:

1. Residents or property owners
2. People who work in or visit the Municipality
3. Local businesses
4. Community groups

This policy **does not** apply to:

- a) A customer service request made on behalf of a citizen or public at large for a specific service
- b) Outside Boards and Agencies
- c) Feedback/Compliments/Inquiries
- d) Anonymous Complaints
- e) Request for Accommodations
- f) Issues addressed by legislation, or an existing municipal bylaw, policy or procedure
- g) Matters that are handled by tribunals, courts of law, quasi judicial boards
- h) A decision of Council or a decision of a committee or Committee of Council

Policy:

Definitions

Complaint – A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction related to a municipal program, service, facility, and staff or council member, where a citizen believes that the municipality has not provided a service experience to the customer's satisfaction and applies only when the 'Customer Service Request' process has been exhausted (where applicable).

Complainant – the person who is dissatisfied and filing the complaint. Anyone who uses or is affected by municipal services can make a complaint including: residents or property owners, people who work in or visit the municipality, local business or community groups.

Customer Service Request – A Customer Service Request is a request for a specific service provided by the municipality.

Handling of Complaints:

The Municipality will deal with all complaints promptly, courteously, impartially and professionally. All complaints will be treated with respect and will not receive adverse treatment or any form of reprisal.

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 in order 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. It may be necessary to release the complainant's name and contact information during the resolution process.

Complaints received by one department are to be limited to that specific department unless the complaint involves more than one department. Generally, Department A will not be able to view complaints received by Department B unless operationally required to address the complaint.

Complaints must be submitted in writing (Schedule 'B') and can be submitted:

- a) in-person
- b) by email
- c) by mail
- d) by fax

Complaints will not be accepted via Social Media (Facebook, Instagram etc.).

Complaints Regarding Municipal Employees

Complaints regarding the conduct of municipal employees are to be submitted in writing and will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the [Municipality's Code of Conduct and Ethics Policy](#).

Complaints Regarding Members of Council/Committees and Local Boards

Complaints regarding the conduct of a member of Council, members of Local Boards or Committees of Council are to be submitted in writing and will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the [Municipality's Code of Conduct for Members of](#)

[Council and Local Boards](#) and will be referred, **along with the prescribed fee**, to the Municipally appointed Integrity Commissioner.

Complaints Regarding Closed Meetings of Council

Complaints regarding Closed Meetings of Council are to be submitted in writing to the Municipal Clerk in accordance with the provisions of the [Closed Meeting Investigator Policy Statement and Procedures](#), for forwarding to the Municipally appointed Closed Meeting Investigator.

Complaints Regarding Bylaw Violations

Complaints regarding bylaw violation are to be submitted to the Municipality (phone, email, in-person or website) and will be processed in accordance with the Municipality's Bylaw Enforcement Complaints Policy.

Complaints Regarding Municipal Services, Facilities or Programs

Complaints regarding municipal services, facilities or programs are to be submitted in writing to the Municipal Clerk and will be forwarded to the appropriate Department Head.

I. Procedure

Complaints shall be submitted to the Clerk's Department or designate. All information must be completed in writing (Schedule 'B') and include information such as:

- Details of what happened
- Where the event happened. Is it within the Municipality's area of responsibility?
- When the event happened
- Who was involved?
- What was said or done?
- What kind of resolution is being sought?
- Contact details of the complainant?

Complaints may be submitted by:

Mail – Municipality of Hastings Highlands
Attention: Municipal Clerk
33011 Highway 62, P.O Box 130
Maynooth, ON K0L 2S0

Email – shuschilt@hastingshighlands.ca
Subject Line: Complaint

Fax – (613) 338-3292
Attention: Municipal Clerk

In-Person – By an appointment with the Municipal Clerk.
Ph (613) 338-2811 ext. 211

II. Receipt and Acknowledgement

- a. The Municipal Clerk shall log the complaint, date-stamp and forward a copy to both the Department Head (or designate) and the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for review.
- b. Within seven (7) business days of receipt of the complaint, the Department Head shall acknowledge the complaint by providing the complainant with an 'Acknowledgement of Complaint' letter (Schedule 'C') indicating that a response to the complaint shall be forwarded within thirty (30) calendar days.
 - i. A copy of the 'Acknowledgement of Complaint' letter shall be forwarded to the Municipal Clerk.

III. Investigation

The Department Head shall 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
- Review any existing file documents
- Interview employees or member(s) of the public involved in the issue
- Identify actions that may be taken to address the complaint or improve municipal operations
- The Department Head may, at their discretion, notify Council of an open complaint investigation for information purposes

IV. Decision

Within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of a complaint, the Department Head shall provide a response in writing to the complainant and provide a copy to the Municipal Clerk.

The response shall include:

- Whether the complaint was substantiated
- If the complaint is not substantiated, provide reason(s) for their decision; and
- Any actions the Municipality has or will take as a result of the complaint.
- If the Department Head is unable to provide a response within thirty (30) calendar days, they shall notify the complainant of the delay and provide an estimate of when a response will be provided

V. Record

The Department Head shall file a copy of the complaint, supporting documentation and decision with the Clerk. The Clerk shall maintain a file of the complaint in accordance with the municipality's records retention bylaw. If a municipal employee was the subject of the complaint, a copy of the record shall be retained in their personnel file.

Unresolved Complaints

Complaints that cannot be resolved through the Municipality's complaints process may be submitted to the Provincial Ombudsman's office in accordance with the provisions of Bill 8.

<i>How do you suggest the situation be improved or complaint resolved?</i>			
OFFICE USE ONLY			
COMPLAINT #		Customer Service Request #	
RECEIVED BY		DATE	
FORWARDED TO		DATE	
<input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgement Letter Date sent: _____ Staff name: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Additional correspondence Date sent: _____ Staff name: _____	
ACTION TAKEN			
<input type="checkbox"/> Final Decision Letter Date sent: _____ Staff name: _____		Copies filed with Clerk <input type="checkbox"/> Initial complaint <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgement letter <input type="checkbox"/> Additional correspondence <input type="checkbox"/> Final Decision letter	

***Thank you for taking the time to express your concern(s).
 We will provide a response within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving your
 complaint. If you have any questions about this process, please contact the
 Municipal Clerk 613-338-2811 ex 277 or clerk@hastingshighlands.ca***

Schedule 'C' to Bylaw 2020-084



Tel: 613-338-2811
Toll Free: 1-877-338-2818
Fax: 613-338-3292
www.hastingshighlands.ca

#33011 Hwy 62, P.O Box 130 Maynooth,
Ontario K0L 2S0

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF
COMPLAINT**

INSERT DATE

NAME

ADDRESS

Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs. _____

Thank you for taking the time to express your concerns regarding COMPLAINT
EXPLANATION. Your written complaint was received by the municipality on INSERT DATE
COMPLAINT RECEIVED

We will provide a response within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving your complaint.

If you have any questions regarding the process, please do not hesitate to contact myself at

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

or Municipal Clerk at 613-338-2811 ext 277 or clerk@hastingshighlands.ca

Yours truly,

NAME

TITLE