



THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF PENETANGUISHENE

Corporate Complaints Handling Procedure

Definitions

Complaint

Expressions of dissatisfaction about the action or lack of action taken, operations, facilities or the service provided by the Town of Penetanguishene or by a person or body acting on behalf of the Town of Penetanguishene. All complaints filed necessitate a response. The term 'dissatisfaction' is key to the definition of a complaint. Feedback of a positive or general nature, comments on a service or facility that do not require a response, or requests for service, are not complaints. Complaints imply that the complainant is unhappy with the service received and that they require a follow up response in regards to the issue.

Complainant

The person who is dissatisfied and filing the complaint. This can be anyone who uses or is affected by Town services can make a complaint including: residents, people who work in or visit the Town, local businesses or community groups.

Hybrid Complainant

Hybrids are complaints that contain both a request for service and a complaint. In these instances, the service request should be handled as a service request and the complaint component handled directly by the appropriate Senior Manager as per the complaints procedure.

Service Request

A request for a specific Town of Penetanguishene provided service.

Compliment

An expression of appreciation for satisfactory or above-satisfactory.

Feedback

Input from client that is neither positive, nor negative, but provides input or ideas.

Complaint Owner

The Senior Manager of the department to which the complaint applies. The Senior Manager may delegate responsibility for responding to the complaint to another staff member, however, the Senior Manager is the complaint owner in all instances.

Application

The policy applies to:

- Town of Penetanguishene employees, with the following exceptions:

The policy **does not** apply to:

- The Library Board who has their own complaints handling processes.
- The Town's elected officials and their offices.

The policy applies to complaints that are received online at Penetanguishene.ca, by phone, at the service desk, by email, by mail or by fax.

The policy does not apply to:

- Requests for service
- Feedback
- Compliments
- Inquiries
- Anonymous complaints
- Request for Accommodations

Complaints are expressions of dissatisfaction about the action or lack of action taken, operations, facilities or the service provided by the Town of Penetanguishene or by a person or body acting on behalf of the Town of Penetanguishene. All complaints filed necessitate a response.

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

- Residents
- People who work in or visit the Town
- Local businesses
- Community groups

Procedure Description

The following procedures outline the process governing the reception, confirmation, acknowledgment, investigation and resolution of complaints received via the following channels:

- In person at any Town of Penetanguishene facility;
- By telephone at 705-549-7453;
- Online via the Town's website Penetanguishene.ca;
- By fax at 705-549-3743;
- By e-mail;
- By mail.

Some individuals may require assistance to make a complaint, and complaints can be made on their behalf, provided that the person affected has given their consent. A consent form for this purpose is available from each department. (Appendix A)

Service Standards

Complainants must receive an acknowledgement receipt and an assigned tracking number from the department receiving the complaint within three business days. This acknowledgement must identify the name and contact information for the individual who will be following up on the complaint.

A final response or update must be sent to the complainant within 20 business days, barring exceptional circumstances.

1.0 Receiving a Complaint

1.1 Complaint made on website

When a complainant makes a complaint on Penetanguishene.ca, they are directed to a complaints landing page. This page provides an explanation of the complaints process and contains a definition of what constitutes a complaint. It also includes a form to be completed by the complainant. Complainants must include their contact information in order to submit the complaint.

All complaint forms will be received by the Senior Manager of the appropriate department.

1.2 Complaint made by Email, Phone, Mail or Fax

Once a complaint is received, it will be forwarded to the appropriate Senior Manager. Once the Senior Manager receives the complaint they can delegate further based on their discretion.

2.0 Confirmation of a Complaint

2.1 Website Complaint

When a complaint is input at Penetanguishene.ca, the senior manager will receive an e-mail with the details of the complaint. Once the Senior Manager has received the complaint, they or their designate have 3 working days to assign a tracking number to the complaint and to acknowledge. The initial acknowledgement should include the contact information of the staff person assigned to the complaint as well as notifying the complainant that a response will be sent within 20 business days.

2.2 Complaint received by Email, Phone, Mail or Fax

If the complaint is received via e-mail, phone (direct to a staff member), mail, fax or at the service counter, it will be forwarded to the appropriate Senior Manager for appropriate delegation. Similar to a website complaint, once the complaint is received by the Senior Manager, they or their designate have 3 working days to assign a tracking number to the complaint and to acknowledge. The initial acknowledgement should include the contact information of the staff person assigned to the complaint as well as notifying the complainant that a response will be sent within 20 working days.

3.0 Acknowledgement of a Complaint once it is assigned to a Senior Manager

Once the Senior Manager receives the complaint, it is to their discretion to identify an appropriate staff member to assign the complaint to for follow-up. Once the responder is identified, a tracking number should be generated and a three day notice to the complainant should be provided. Senior Managers are responsible for ensuring that the appropriate steps are being followed.

Within three (3) working days of a complaint received by the Town, the department responsible for the response must contact the complainant to confirm that the complaint is being investigated. This acknowledgement can be in the form of an email, phone, fax or letter (depending upon the complainant's preferred contact method indicated when submitting a complaint). The acknowledgement must let the complainant know that their complaint is being reviewed and will be responded to within twenty (20) working days. The acknowledgement must also provide the name and contact information for the person handling the complaint.

4.0 Investigation of a Complaint by a Department

When the Senior Manager receives a complaint, they must review it and identify the appropriate staff to develop the response to the complaint.

If the response takes longer than twenty (20) working days, the complainant must again be contacted to assure them that the complaint is being addressed and that they will be provided with a response as soon as possible. Ongoing contact with the complainant should be recorded in a file.

5.0 Response and Close-out of a Complaint

The response to the complaint must be approved by the Senior Manager and sent to the complainant as quickly as possible. Once this is done, the resolution date and brief summary of action taken must be entered into the file in order to close the file.

6.0 Special Cases

6.1 A department receives a complaint that is meant for a different department

If a complaint is received by a department in error and needs to be handled by another Town department, the complaint must be forwarded to the Senior Manager of the appropriate department.

6.2 Hybrids – Complaints that contain both a service request and a complaint

Hybrids are communications that contain both a request for service and a complaint. The response sent to the complainant should clearly identify the distinction between the complaint and the request for service, along with a resolution to the complaint.

Monitoring/Contraventions

Senior Managers are responsible for the receipt and response of all complaints received in their department according to the service standards set out. Senior Managers hold responsibility for compliance to the Complaints Handling Procedures.

Senior Managers will be required to report quarterly at the Senior Management meetings indicating the number of complaints received, the number of complaints to date, the number of complaints meeting service standards, the number of complaints outstanding, and the number of complaints not meeting service standards.

References

Complaints Handling Procedures

Corporate Communications Policy

Bill 8, the *Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act*

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Enquiries

For more information on this policy, please contact the Corporate Services Department at 705-549-7453.

Appendices

Appendix A –Consent Form example