

# Complaints Handling Policy

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1. This policy may be referred to as the "Complaint Handling Policy"

**PREAMBLE:** The purpose of this policy is to enable the Municipality of the Inverness County to promptly and effectively address program and service delivery concerns raised by members of the public. The policy will assist the Municipality in providing excellent service to the public, and contribute to continuous improvement of operations. The Municipality strives to reduce customer dissatisfaction by:

- providing a timely and accurate response to complaints; and
- using complaints as an opportunity to improve program and service delivery issues.

This policy is not meant to address:

1. Complaints about non-municipal services;
2. Issues already addressed by legislation, or an existing Municipal bylaw, policy or procedure;
3. A decision of Council or a decision of a committee of Council.
4. Internal employee complaints.

**TERMS:** In this policy:

- 1) "Complainant" means the individual filing the complaint with the Municipality;
- 2) "Complaint" means an issue or concern raised with a municipal program, service, or operation which is not resolved at the time of the incident and for which the complainant submits their concerns to the Municipality in accordance with this policy;

- 3) "CAO" means Chief Administrative Officer of the Municipality of the County of Inverness;
- 4) "Council" means council of the Municipality of the County of Inverness;
- 5) "Designated Officer" means the CAO;
- 6) "Employee" means an employee of the Municipality of the County of Inverness;
- 7) "Warden" means the Warden of the Municipality of the County of Inverness;
- 8) "Ombudsman" means the Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman.

### **Designated Officer**

1. A Designated Officer may delegate the authority to investigate a complaint to another employee, where s/he deems appropriate.
2. A Designated Officer may not delegate the authority to investigate a complaint to an employee who is or may be named in the complaint.
3. If a complaint is made against the Designated Officer, the Warden shall review the matter and may:
  - (1) Consult with Council;
  - (2) Consult with legal counsel; or
  - (3) Refer the matter to the Ombudsman.

### **Frontline Resolution**

1. It is the responsibility of the complainant to attempt to resolve concerns by dealing with the employee(s) directly involved with the issue where appropriate.
2. It is the responsibility of all employees to attempt to resolve issues or concerns before they become complaints, and identify opportunities to improve municipal services.

### **Filing a Complaint**

1. Where frontline resolution cannot be achieved, complaints should be submitted to the Designated Officer and include:
  - (1) The name, phone number, e-mail address, and mailing address of the individual submitting the complaint.
  - (2) The nature of the complaint including the:
    - a. background leading to the issue(s);
    - b. date(s), time(s) and location(s) of the incident(s); and
    - c. name(s) of any employee(s) previously contacted regarding the issues(s); and
  - (3) Any action(s) being requested of the Municipality.
2. Complaints may be submitted on the form provided in Schedule A.

### **Receipt and Acknowledgement**

1. The Designated Officer shall acknowledge in writing that the complaint has been received within 5 business days of receipt of the complaint.

### **Investigation**

1. The Designated Officer shall review the issues identified by the complainant and in doing so may
  - (1) Review relevant municipal and provincial legislation;
  - (2) Review the Municipality's relevant policies and procedures;
  - (3) Review any existing file documents;
  - (4) Interview employees or members of the public involved in the issue;
  - (5) Identify actions that may be taken to address the complaint or improve municipal operations; or

- (6) Take other actions the Designated Officer deems expedient to resolving the matter.
2. The Designated Officer shall maintain a file of the complaint in compliance with the Municipality's records management policy.

### **Decision**

1. Within 30 calendar days of receipt of a complaint the Designated Officer shall provide a response in writing to the complainant. The response shall include:
  - (1) Whether the complaint was substantiated,
  - (2) If the complaint is not substantiated, the Designated Officer shall provide reason(s) for their decision.
  - (3) Any actions the Municipality has or will take as a result of the complaint.
2. If the Designated Officer is unable to provide a response within 30 calendar days he shall notify the complainant of the delay and provide an estimate of when a response will be provided.

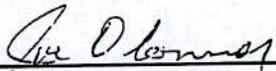




**Approval:**

**Policy Committee Review: Jan 7, 2013**  
**Council – 7 Day Notice: Feb 11, 2013**  
**Council Approval: April 8, 2013**

**This is to certify that the above policy was approved by Municipal Council of the Municipality of the County of Inverness on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of April A. D., 2013**

  
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**Joe O'Connor, CAO**