



# MUNICIPALITY OF SOUTH BRUCE

## Complaint Handling Policy/Procedure

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<b>Department:</b>	All Departments
<b>Division:</b>	Administration
<b>Prepared by:</b>	L. Martin
<b>Management Review:</b>	March 2016
<b>Council Approval:</b>	April 12, 2016
<b>Revised:</b>	

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### Title

1. This Policy may be cited as the “Municipal Complaint Handling Policy” of the Municipality of South Bruce.

### Purpose

2. This policy is intended to enable the Municipality 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.

### Interpretation

3. In this policy:
  - a. “Complainant” means the individual filing the complaint with the Municipality;
  - b. “Complaint” means an issue or concern raised with a municipal program, service, or operation that 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;
  - c. “Council” means the Council of the Municipality of the South Bruce;
  - d. “Department Head” means all Department Heads of the Municipality of South Bruce;
  - e. “Employee” means an employee of the Municipality of South Bruce;
  - f. “Municipality” means the Municipality of the South Bruce;
  - g. “Ombudsman” means the Ontario Office of the Ombudsman;
  - h. “Mayor” means the Mayor of the Municipality of South Bruce.

### Scope

4. This policy is not meant to address:
  - a. Complaints about non-municipal services;

- b. Issues already addressed by legislation, or an existing Municipal by-law, policy or procedure;
- c. Internal employee complaints

### **Department Head**

- 5. A Department Head may delegate the authority to investigate a complaint to another employee, where they deem appropriate.
- 6. A Department Head may not delegate the authority to investigate a complaint to an employee who is or may be named in the complaint.

### **Frontline Resolution**

- 7. It is the responsibility of the complainant to attempt to resolve concerns by dealing with employee(s) directly involved with the issue where appropriate.
- 8. 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**

- 9. Where frontline resolution cannot be achieved, complaints should be submitted to the appropriate Department Head and include:
  - a. The name, phone number, e-mail address, and mailing address of the individual submitting the complaint.
  - b. The nature of the complaint including the:
    - i. Background leading to the issue(s);
    - ii. Date(s), time(s), and location(s) of any incident(s); and,
    - iii. Name(s) of any employee(s) previously contacted regarding the issue(s); and,
  - c. Any action(s) being requested of the Municipality.
- 10. Complaints shall be submitted on the form provided in Schedule A. In the case of a phone complaint staff may complete the form on behalf of the complainant and submit to the appropriate Department Head and/or their designate along with a copy to the Administrator-Treasurer.

### **Receipt and Acknowledgement**

- 11. The Department Head and/or their designate shall acknowledge within five (5) business days of receipt of the complaint being received at the Municipality. This acknowledgement can be in the form of a verbal conversation, email, phone, fax or letter (depending upon the complainant's preferred contact method indicated when submitting a complaint).

### **Investigation**

- 12. The Department Head shall review the issues identified by the complainant and in doing so may:
  - a. Review relevant municipal and provincial legislation;
  - b. Review the Municipality's relevant policies and procedures;
  - c. Review any existing file documents;
  - d. Interview employees or member of the public involved in the issue;
  - e. Identify actions that may be taken to address the complaint or improve municipal operations; or,
  - f. Take other actions the Department Head deems expedient to resolving the matter.
- 13. The Department Head shall maintain a file of the complaint in compliance with the Municipality's records management policy. The Department Head will also maintain a log sheet related to each complaint.

14. The Department Head may, at their discretion, notify Council of an open complaint investigation for information purposes.

### **Decision**

15. Within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of a complaint, the Department Head and or designate shall provide a response in writing to the complainant. The response shall include:

- a. Whether the complaint was substantiated,
- b. If the complaint is not substantiated, the Department Head shall provide reason(s) for their decision; and,
- c. Any actions the Municipality has or will take as a result of the complaint.

16. If the Department Head or designate 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.

17. Decisions made by the Department Head once reviewed by the Administrator-Treasurer may be appealed to Municipal Council.

### **Complaints Regarding Staff/Services Contracted by Municipality**

18. Complaints regarding staff members that are employed by a service provider contracted by the Municipality shall be subject to the policies of that service provider and not that of the Municipality.

19. Complaints regarding services provided by a service provider contracted by the Municipality shall be handled in accordance with this policy, and may also be subject to any complaints policies and procedures employed by that service provider.

### **General**

20. Forms of correspondence and notices here above may be amended and adapted as appropriate.

21. Copies of all correspondence and notices shall be retained in the complaint file and the log sheet.

22. Where appropriate, copies of correspondence shall be placed in the personnel file of the subject of the complaint.

23. Communications with a complainant **shall not** provide details of disciplinary measures imposed on any employee.

24. All notes and correspondence shall be dated and identified by author.

25. The Department Head or their delegate shall make dated records of any communications and attempted contacts with complainants.

### **Monitoring, Tracking and Reporting**

All complaints will be recorded and tracked upon receipt. All action, in writing or by telephone/voicemail, discussion and resolution of any matter will be included as part of this record.

Complaint and feedback records will be needed for regular review and analysis to identify recurring issues and to improve customer service and satisfaction. Quarterly reports will be provided to the Administrator-Treasurer indicating the number of complaints received during a specified timeframe, the number of complaints to date, the number of complaints outstanding, and the number of complaints not meeting service standards.

All personal information collected in carrying out this policy will be dealt with in a confidential manner in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.



# MUNICIPALITY OF SOUTH BRUCE

## Complaint Form

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### Schedule A – By-law 2016-36

All complaints will be received courteously, investigated and acted upon fairly. You should be aware that while the Municipality of South Bruce makes every effort to assure privacy of the complainant, you may be required to present evidence in support of this complaint at any hearings of Appeals Committee or Court of Law of Ontario.

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Phone Numbers

Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your preferred method of communication: \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your concern?** Please include relevant date(s), time(s), location, and background information, including municipal employees you have contacted regarding this matter. Additional space is available on the back of this form. Additional information, such as relevant photographs, can be attached to this form.

**How could the situation be improved?**

**Additional information:**

#### Office Use Only:

Received by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Forwarded to: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Acknowledgement Letter Sent Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Staff Name \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Correspondence Sent date: \_\_\_\_\_ Staff Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

**Action Taken:**

**Final Response Letter Sent Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Complainant:**

I hereby make this statement of complaint believing it to be true and for no improper or vexatious purpose. I hereby further declare that if required, I will provide or present evidence in support of this complaint at any hearings of Appeals Committee or Court of Law of Ontario.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Complainant*

*Thank-you for taking the time to explain your concern. We will provide a response to your concern as soon as possible. If you have any questions about the process, please contact the Municipal Administrator-Treasurer at 519-392-6623.*

*The personal information collected on this form is collected under the authority of the Municipal Act and will be used to receive and investigate public complaints. Questions about this collection should be addressed to the Municipal Clerk at 21 Gordon Street, Teeswater, On N0G 2S0 Tel: 519-392-6623 ext. 224.*