

The Corporation of the Township of North Huron

By-law No. 72-2021

A by-law to adopt a Customer Service Standards Policy for the Corporation of the Township of North Huron.

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Printing Date: May 11, 2023

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The Corporation of the Township of North Huron

By-law No. 72-2021

**Being a By-law to adopt a Customer Service Standards Policy for the Corporation
of the Township of North Huron**

WHEREAS Section 5 (3) of the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25, as amended provides that municipal power shall be exercised by by-law;

AND WHEREAS Section 224 of the Municipal Act, 2001 as amended, states “It is the role of Council to (b) develop and evaluate the policies and programs of the municipality”;

AND WHEREAS the Council of the Corporation of the Township of North Huron deems it desirable to adopt a Customer Service Standards Policy;

NOW THEREFORE the Council of the Corporation of the Township of North Huron ENACTS as follows:

1. That the “Customer Service Standards Policy” attached hereto as “Schedule A” is hereby adopted and shall form part of this by-law.
2. That this by-law shall come into force and takes effect on the day of the final passing thereof.

Read a first and second time this 20th day of September, 2021.

Read a third time and passed this 20th day of September, 2021.

Bernie Bailey, Reeve

CORPORATE SEAL

Carson Lamb, Clerk

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1. Principles of Customer Service Standards

The Township of North Huron recognizes its responsibility and the importance of providing adequate customer service to the residents of the municipality. The purpose of this policy is to recognize all the methods, protocols and training pertaining to the delivery of top-quality customer service in all aspects of the workplace. The following policy will establish standards for the handling of customer service at all levels and municipal locations within the Township of North Huron. With the input of consistent and uniform processes, the municipality will serve the people of North Huron consistently with the same procedures and respect.

The standards outlined in this document are a reflection of “Municipal Service Excellence” best practices and the Township’s commitment to:

- Provide exceptional customer service
- Enhance communications with customers and staff
- Provide service excellence at all levels within the Township
- Focus on the key drivers of customer satisfaction to:
 - o Respond and acknowledge receipt of customer contact within a reasonable time frame
 - o Provide accurate information and/or the avenue for the customer to receive it
 - o Provide fair and consistent treatment
 - o Be polite and respectful
 - o Provide a response and ensure completeness of service or request
- Align with the Township of North Huron Corporate values:
 - o Service Excellence
 - o Teamwork
 - o Accountability and Transparency
 - o Respect
 - o Integrity

These processes set minimum standards to communicate with customers efficiently and respectfully.

2. Review

The Customer Service Standards Policy will be reviewed annually.

3. Definitions

“**Accessibility**” refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people who experience disabilities;

“**Cold Transfer**” is when a caller is transferred directly, without informing the third party of the call;

“**Correspondence**” refers to communication expressed by letters or email;

“Council” means the Council of the Township of North Huron;

“Customer” refers to any resident or visitor that communicates with the Township of North Huron, whether that is by coming into the public municipally owned locations or communicates with employees;

“Employee” means an employee of the Township of North Huron;

“Policy” means the Township of North Huron Customer Service Standards Policy;

“Resident” refers to a person who resides within the Township of North Huron;

“Township” or “Municipality” means the Township of North Huron.

“Transfer” is a method used to reconnect a call to another user on the same phone line, this can be transferred as a warm or cold transfer;

“Warm Transfer” is when an employee and the caller both stay on the line until a connection is made. The callee relays the caller’s information to the third party prior to transferring the call.

4. Channels of Communication

The Customer Service Standards Policy provides a standard for quality delivery of services through the following customer communication channels:

- In Person
- Telephone/Voicemail
- Email/Correspondence
- Social Media

4.1 In Person

North Huron staff strive to provide exceptional customer service to all customers and residents. To do so, staff will undertake the following:

- Staff will greet customers in a warm and professional manner.
- Service will be prompt and customers will be served in the order of which they arrive.
- Every customer will be treated with courtesy and respect.
- When tending to a customer, staff will provide a sufficient amount of correct information where possible. If the staff member is unable to provide sufficient and correct information, staff will direct the customer to an appropriate staff member that can assist.
- Some business entrances at municipally-owned buildings have staff at the front counter who are within plain sight and are readily accessible to assist customers. At times, staff may be required to step away momentarily, at which point the public service area will be monitored by another Township staff member as designated by the Department.

- Should staff be required to tend to telephone and counter enquiries simultaneously, counter enquiries will take priority with telephone enquiries tended to as soon as possible afterward. Callers have the option to leave voice messages, which will be returned promptly after the customer at the counter has departed.

4.2 Telephone/Voicemail

Telephone greetings and voicemails often represent the first impression that callers will have of the organization. Knowing this, the following sections provide standards for telephone and voicemail customer service.

4.2.1 Telephone Response Time

- Customer calls will be returned as soon as possible when they are received. As a general rule, telephone calls should be returned within two (2) business days.
- Depending on the nature of the call, staff's response within two (2) business days may not always provide a complete resolution, but will be an acknowledgement that the message has been received.
- Staff will also provide an indication of any further action that will be taken to resolve the issue/enquiry.

4.2.2 Receiving Calls

- When receiving telephone calls, employees will pick up within three (3) rings during regular business hours unless tending to a member of the public in person or unless they are away from their desk for a meeting or a related matter.

4.2.3 Placing a Customer on Hold

- When placing a customer on hold, it should be for no longer than two (2) minutes.
- Should an employee need to place a caller on hold for longer than two (2) minutes, it is suggested that the employee call the customer back when appropriate.

4.2.4 Transferring a Call

- There are two types of transfers: warm transfers and cold transfers. Staff will strive to undertake warm transfers, where possible.

Warm Transfer

- A warm transfer is when the caller and staff both stay on the line until a connection is made. The caller is put on hold while staff relays information to the third party.
- Warm transfers reduce the chances of the customer being "bounced around" by ensuring that the proper transfer is made the first time.
- If the transfer isn't the correct one, staff will redirect the call to the appropriate party.

- Example: “Hi Jim. I have Jane Smith on the phone and she requires information about her taxes. She has not received a tax bill this year. Could you assist Jane with her concern?”

Cold Transfer

- A cold transfer is used by staff when a caller is to be transferred directly.
- This process may be used with external or internal callers who specifically request a person by name, extension or department but provide no other information.

4.2.5 Corporate Cell Phones

- Corporate cell phone users will follow the same general telephone standards for internal corporate telephones as established in the previous sections of this policy.

4.2.6 Extended Absences

- When staff members are going to be absent for longer than two (2) consecutive business days, their voice message should reflect their time away.
- This standard shall not apply to unexpected absences such as the staff member being absent due to an unexcepted illness.

4.2.7 Calls Outside the Standard Administration Hours

- If a call is received outside the standard administration (business) hours, customers will be notified of the regular hours of operation. Customers will be prompted to leave a voicemail if they wish and the message will be tended to by staff during standard business hours.

4.3 Email/Correspondence

Written communication can include but is not limited to emails, letters, memos, faxes, etc.

4.3.1 General Correspondence Guidelines

Township employees are to:

- Utilize the spell check tool whenever necessary on all corporate documents, emails, letters, etc.
- Correspondence should be free of errors.
- Language should be clear, concise, specific and respectful.
- All correspondence should include staff contact information for the customer to contact the staff member directly with any follow up questions.
- All correspondence should be constructive, informative and effective.
- Avoid abbreviations.
- Reread, revise and review correspondence.

4.3.2 Proper Correspondence Etiquette

Letters

Letters issued by the Township of North Huron should include the following:

- North Huron Letterhead
- Heading (Recipient name, address, date)
- Salutation
- Introduction and body
- Signature line

Email

Emails sent by Township of North Huron employees should include the following:

- An opening with a proper salutation
- A clear, brief and specific subject line
- A closing with a signature
- Appropriate formatting (ie. Paragraphs)

4.3.3 Correspondence Response Time

Letters

- Customers will receive a response to a general inquiry within five (5) business days, unless Council action is required.

Email

- Customers will receive an initial response to an email inquiry within two (2) business days. This refers to both internal and external communication. If a staff member is absent for two (2) consecutive days, the customer will be provided with contact information for an alternate staff member who can assist.

4.3.4 Extended Absences

- When staff members are going to be absent for longer than two (2) consecutive business days, the automatic reply (out of office) email function should be used to reflect their time away.
- Automatic replies shall provide the name and contact information for another employee that can assist the customer during the absence.
- This standard shall not apply to unexpected absences such as the staff member being absent due to an unexcepted illness.

4.4 Social Media

- Staff who have the authority to access the Township of North Huron social media accounts are responsible for adhering to appropriate technology use as set out in the North Huron Human Resources Policy, as amended from time to time.
- Content posted on North Huron social media pages should be professional, straightforward, appropriate and relate to North Huron.

- North Huron social media accounts are made to promote the communities and inform residents of municipal services, events and activities. Posts not directly related to North Huron should be approved by the relevant Department Head prior to being posted.

All employees posting on North Huron social media should follow the guidelines as listed below:

- Protect Township Information
- Be Responsible
- When in doubt, do not post
- Use professional, straightforward and appropriate communication

5. Customer Service Feedback

5.1 Complaints & Service Requests

Please refer to the Township of North Huron's Complaint Handling Policy, as amended from time to time, for more information on the customer complaint procedures and protocols for the Township.