



# The Corporation of the Township of North Huron

## Complaint Handling Policy

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# 1. Principles of Complaint Handling

The Township of North Huron is committed to providing a uniform and consistent process to respond to concerns that arise from members of the public regarding programs, facilities, Township services, Township staff and procedures. The Complaint Handling Policy will establish standards for the efficient resolutions of complaints made towards the Township and will assist North Huron in continuing to provide excellent customer service to the members of the public while continuing to contribute to the improvement of operations and services.

The Township of North Huron 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 these complaints helps improve the quality of the services provided by the Township and the client experience of residents.

This policy sets out the general response and appeal process for complaints received by the Township. Should another policy adopted or piece of legislation by Council dealing with a specific issue contain an appeal process, that appeal process shall supersede this policy and take precedent.

## 1.1 Exclusions

This policy does not address the following:

- Service Requests
- Compliments and Feedback
- Internal employee complaints
- Complaints about non-municipal services
- Inquiries
- Anonymous complaints
- Requests for Accommodations pertaining to Accessibility

This policy only deals with complaints of an operational nature. Any complaints regarding policy or requesting a change in policy are to be dealt with through the formal submission of a letter to Council that is provided to the Clerk.

# 2. Municipal Responsibility/Legislative and Administrative Authorities

All municipal elected officials and municipal employees are to be familiar and be knowledgeable of the Township's Complaint Handling Policy and all that it entails.

Directors, Managers and Supervisors are responsible for the receipt and response of departmental complaints according to the service standards established throughout this policy. Directors, Managers and Supervisors hold responsibility for departmental compliance to the Complaints Handling Policy.

The Clerk's Department will monitor corporate compliance with this policy and will provide follow up with appropriate departments and/or Council as required.

All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56 and other applicable legislation. The identity of the complainant will be made known only to the appropriate participants in the compliant process and such participants shall keep the details and information of the complaint confidential except as required by by-law/procedure.

Complaint records shall be retained in accordance with the Township of North Huron records retention schedule adopted by by-law and as amended from time to time.

### 3. Compliance

The Senior Management Team is responsible for implementation and ongoing compliance with the Complaints Handling Policy.

The Clerk's Department is responsible for reviewing corporate activity relating to this policy and reporting to Council.

### 4. Review

The Complaint Handling Policy will be reviewed annually.

### 5. Definitions

**"Anonymous Complaint"** refers to a phone call, letter, or complaint form that is received expressing "dissatisfaction" about a facility, service, staff, operational issue or program that has no return address or contact information provided for follow up;

**"By-law Enforcement Officer"** means a Municipal By-law Enforcement Officer duly appointed by the Council of the Township of North Huron;

**"CAO"** refers to the Chief Administrative Officer or designate of the Township of North Huron, duly appointed by By-law;

**"Clerk"** refers to the Clerk or designate of the Township of North Huron, duly appointed by By-law;

**"Complainant"** refers to the individual filing the complaint with the Township;

**"Complaint"** means the issue or concern raised regarding the Township service, operation or program;

**"Council"** refers to the Council of the Township of North Huron;

**"Department Head"** refers to a member of the Senior Management Team and the administrative head of a department;

**"Employee" or "Staff"** refers to an employee of the Township of North Huron;

**“Manager” or “Supervisor”** refers to a person who is responsible for leading or administering within departments;

**“Policy”** refers to the Township of North Huron Complaints Handling Policy;

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

**“Service Request”** refers to a request for a specific service provided by the Township of North Huron or an agent working on behalf of the Township; and

**“Township” or “Municipality”** refers to the Township of North Huron.

## 6. Types of Complaints

### 6.1 Conduct of Municipal Employees

- This includes any complaint received regarding an employee of the Township of North Huron. Such complaints may be submitted in writing through the complaint form hereto attached as Appendix A or electronically through the Township of North Huron website ([www.northhuron.ca](http://www.northhuron.ca)) and are processed in accordance with the Complaint Handling Procedure (Section 7.0).
- The Department Head may not delegate the authority to investigate a complaint to an employee who, is or may be named in the complaint. If the complaint is made against the Department Head, the CAO or designate will conduct the investigation.
- The Department Head or Chief Administrative Officer may follow-up with the complainant to obtain any additional information. If the issue is resolved through discussion, written confirmation will be provided by the Township and appropriate records are retained.
- If the complaint is not resolved, complainants will receive an acknowledgement of receipt of their complaint within three (3) business days. This acknowledgement must identify who will be following up on the complaint as well as their contact information.
- A final response or update must be sent to the complainant within thirty (30) business days, barring exceptional circumstances. If the complainant is satisfied, the complaint is closed. If the complainant is not satisfied with a decision made by a Department Head, it may be appealed to the CAO.

### 6.2 By-law Violations

- This includes any complaint received regarding by-law infractions/violations that has occurred in the Township of North Huron. Such complaints may be submitted in writing through the complaint form hereto attached as Appendix A or electronically through the Township of North Huron website ([www.northhuron.ca](http://www.northhuron.ca)) and are processed in accordance with the Complaint Handling Procedure (Section 7.0) by the By-law Enforcement Officer.

### 6.3 Municipal Services and/or Facilities

- This includes all operational-based complaints received regarding municipal services or facilities. All policy-based service complaints will be dealt with through the formal submission of a letter to Council that is provided to the Clerk.
- Such complaints may be submitted in writing through the complaint form hereto attached as Appendix A or electronically through the Township of North Huron website ([www.northhuron.ca](http://www.northhuron.ca)) and are processed in accordance with the Complaint Handling Procedure (Section 7.0).
- Operational-based complaints are dealt with on a staff level. Complaints that are operational are to be resolved by employees or supervisors of the appropriate department. Should a complaint escalate, the Department Head or CAO should be notified and informed of the matter to take action and provide an efficient resolution for the resident.

### 6.4 Anonymous

- Such complaints that are anonymous or lack sufficient information will not be investigated by municipal staff. All complaints must be submitted through the appropriate complaint form attached as Appendix A or electronically through the Township of North Huron website ([www.northhuron.ca](http://www.northhuron.ca)).

## 7. Complaint Handling Procedure

### 7.1 Filing a Complaint

A complaint is deemed complete when including the following information:

- Contact information of the complainant
  - Name
  - Address
  - Phone Number
  - Email address
- Address/location of the complaint
- Contact names of those involved
- Nature of the complaint
- Date filed
- Signature

Complete complaints can be submitted to the municipal office through one of the following methods:

- In person at the Municipal Office: 274 Josephine Street, Wingham, Ontario
- By email to: [complaints@northhuron.ca](mailto:complaints@northhuron.ca)
- By regular mail to: PO Box 90, 274 Josephine Street, Wingham, ON N0G 2W0
- Electronically on the Township of North Huron website: [www.northhuron.ca](http://www.northhuron.ca)

## 7.2 Receipt and Acknowledgement

- Complaints are received both in person and electronically as set out in section 7.1. of this policy. All complaints are received through the Clerk's Department.
- Upon receipt, all complaints are recorded, scanned and electronically filed into the Township's electronic records management and retention system. The complaint is then directed to the appropriate Department Head to be investigated.
- The Department Head is responsible for following up with the complainant and informing the Clerk's Department staff of any correspondence that they deem appropriate for she/he to be aware of.

## 7.3 Investigation

- The Department Head that the complaint is directed to is responsible for investigating the manner.
- The Department Head may not delegate the authority to investigate a complaint to an employee who, is or may be named in the complaint. If the complaint is made against the Department Head, the CAO or designate shall conduct the investigation.
- In order for successful investigation the department must take these steps:
  - a. Review relevant municipal and provincial legislation;
  - b. Review the municipality's relevant by-laws, policies and procedures;
  - c. Review any related existing documents;
  - d. Interview employees or members of the public involved in the issue;
  - e. Identify actions that may be taken to address the complaint or improve municipal operations.

## 7.4 Decision

- Once the investigation is complete and the decision has been made on how to appropriately handle the matter, the Department Head will craft an appropriate response to the matter.
- Within thirty (30) days of submission of a complaint, a response will be issued to the complainant. When responding to a complaint verbally, staff must document the conversation for correspondence to be included in record keeping.
- If a decision cannot be determined within thirty (30) days of submission of the complaint, the complainant will be notified of the delay and provided with an estimate of when a response will be provided.
- All responses provided by the Department Head shall be forwarded to the Clerk's Department for record keeping purposes.

## 7.5 Record Keeping

- Complaints received by Township staff are to be filed accordingly in respect to North Huron's current record's management procedures adopted by by-law and as amended from time to time.

- Staff are required to file all correspondence and appropriate information with the complaint and retain for records.
- Where appropriate, copies of correspondence may be placed in the employee's file that is subject of the complaint.
- Communications with a complainant shall not include any details of disciplinary actions that are imposed on any employee.
- All record keeping efforts are completed by the Clerk's Department.

#### 7.6 Completion of Complaint Process

- Once the complaint has gone through the entire process (as established in the previous sections of this policy) and has been resolved appropriately, the Clerk's Department is responsible for ensuring that all correspondence materials and related records are filed with the original complaint form submitted.

#### 7.7 Appeal Process

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of a complaint, they may appeal it, in writing, to the Chief Administrative Officer who will investigate and communicate a decision. If the complainant remains unsatisfied of a decision, they may appeal the Chief Administrative Officer's decision to Council.



# TOWNSHIP OF NORTH HURON COMPLAINT FORM



## COMPLAINANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Please note that your personal information will remain confidential unless required for court.			
<b>First Name</b>			
<b>Last Name</b>			
<b>Primary Phone Number</b>		<b>Secondary Phone Number</b>	
<b>Address</b>			
<b>Town</b>		<b>Postal Code</b>	
<b>Email Address</b>			

## ADDRESS/LOCATION OF COMPLAINT

To assist in the processing of your complaint efficiently, the minimum information we require completed in this section is the address or intersecting street and town of the property for inspection. Any additional information you can provide such as a first and/or last name of the property owner is helpful but not essential.	
<b>Address or Intersection Streets</b>	
<b>Town</b>	
Please provide us with first and last name of the owner (if known)	
<b>First Name</b>	
<b>Last Name</b>	

## NATURE OF COMPLAINT

<input type="checkbox"/>	Administration
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recreation / Facilities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Barking Dogs (Nuisance)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dogs running at large
<input type="checkbox"/>	Exterior Property Maintenance (roof, windows, doors etc. that are broken or in need of major repair)

	Garbage and Debris (residential properties)
	Garbage dumping (garbage dumped on public properties or back alleys, ditches etc.)
	Illegal use of property (zoning)
	Lawn maintenance
	Noise
	Snow and Ice (snow or ice that hasn't been cleared within 24 hours of a snow fall)
	Unlicensed vehicles
	Other (Please specify)

**COMMENTS/ADDITIONAL DETAILS**

This space is for your comments, further description of the violation and any other additional information which may be of help to our Officers upon their inspection of the property. Provide as much detail as possible such as backyard, type of garbage or debris, etc. Feel free to add any additional information that you feel would be helpful in the investigation

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All complaints will be dealt with in a confidential manner per the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Information will be collected, used, and disclosed in accordance with the Act.

<b>Date Filed</b>		<b>Signature of the Complainant</b>	
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