



2 King St. E., P. O. Box 70, St.-Charles, ON P0M 2W0

COMPLAINT POLICY

Policy Record

Policy No.: PR-001	Effective Date: April 20, 2022
Replaces: P-048	Last Review Date: April 20, 2022
Approval: Res. 2022-92	Next Review Date: April 2026
Reference:	

Intent

The Municipality of St.-Charles is committed to a consistent, fair, and uniform complaint process and to provide opportunities for valuable feedback about the programs, services, facilities and employees of the Municipality to help improve the quality of the services provided and contribute to continuous improvement of operations.

The Municipality recognizes that concerns from the public are at times brought forward and dealt with informally, however not all concerns can be dealt with informally. This policy ensures a consistent and uniform approach to formal complaints with a fair and accountable level of service delivery.

Scope

This Policy applies to an expression of dissatisfaction relating to municipal programs, services, facilities and employees and / or By-Law complaints.

Anyone who uses or is affected by Municipal services can make a complaint, including residents, people who work in or visit the municipality, local business or community groups.

This Policy does not apply to compliments, inquiries, feedback, suggestions and requests for service that are attempted to be resolved at the point of service delivery, they may however be tracked to identify issues, trends, areas of concern, opportunities for improvement and to avoid potential complaints. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted or processed.

A customer complaint is distinct from:

- Inquiry / Request for Service: A general or specific request for service or request for information regarding a municipal product or service made by a customer that is resolved at the point of service delivery;
- Feedback: An opinion, comment and expression of interest in a municipal program of service by a customer;
- Compliment: An expression of approval for a municipal service, staff member, program, product or process;
- Suggestion: An idea submitted to the Municipality of St.-Charles by a customer with the aim of improving services, programs, products or processes.

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Clerk and / or Council shall be consulted only as deemed appropriate by the Department Head or depending on the nature of the complaint.

This Policy does not include complaints by employees.

Definitions

“Anonymous complaint” means an expression of dissatisfaction relating to the Municipality’s programs, services, facilities and employees and / or By-Law complaints that does not contain the complainants name and contact information.

“Complaint” means an expression of dissatisfaction relating to the Municipality’s programs, services, facilities and employees and / or By-Law complaints. A complaint is different from a request for service, inquiry, feedback, compliment, or suggestion.

“Complainant” means the person who is dissatisfied and filing a complaint. A third party, which could include a member of Council, could report a complaint on behalf of the complainant with their consent.

“Compliment” means an expression of appreciation relating to the Municipality’s programs, services, facilities and employees. This type of communication does not require a response.

“Inquiry” means a general or specific request for information relating to the Municipality’s programs, services, facilities and employees.

“Feedback” or **“Suggestion”** means an opinion, comment and expression of interest relating to the Municipality’s programs, services, facilities and employees or an idea

submitted to the Municipality with the aim of improving programs, services or facilities. This type of communication does not require a response.

“Investigator” means the employee(s) assigned to investigate a specific Complaint.

“Officer” means a Municipal By-Law Enforcement Officer, a Building Inspector, a Property Standards Officer, a Chief Building Official or anyone appointed by the Municipality of St.-Charles to enforce the provisions of the applicable By-Law.

“Request for Service” means a request made by a member of the public for a specific service provided by the Municipality. For example, a request for service may include but is not limited to a request to repair / maintain a street surface, report an issue relating to municipal services, or report damage to a facility or park. This type of communication does not require a response.

“Frivolous or Vexatious Complaint” means the Complaint is initiated with malicious intent or is part of a pattern of conduct by the Complainant that amounts to an abuse of the Complaint process. For greater clarity “frivolous” and “vexatious” means lacking basis or merit; a matter that has little prospect of success; no serious purpose of value; without reasonable or probable cause or excuse; harassing; annoying; retaliatory or repetitive; instituted maliciously or on the basis of improper motives; intended to embarrass, harass or to be a nuisance.

Responsibilities

Employees are responsible to ensure that they have knowledge of and understand the Municipality’s requirement to receive and track complaints, the process through which a complaint can be made and the service standards that apply to complaints. They are also responsible for receiving, tracking and responding to complaints as deemed appropriate or required by their position.

Department Heads and Managers are responsible to ensure that all employees within their department are aware of and understand this Policy and for facilitating a prompt response to all complaints to ensure that service standards are achieved.

Department Heads, Managers, Chief Administrative Officer, Municipal Law Enforcement Officer and Clerk are responsible for investigating Complaints in accordance with this Policy.

Any dispute from the public regarding any provision of this policy shall be referred to the Chief Administrative Officer, who shall be responsible for clarifying and resolving any ambiguity which may exist within this policy.

As per By-Law 2018-66 – Being a By-Law to Authorize the Adoption of a Council Code of Conduct:

“6.7.2 Operational inquiries and complaints received from the public shall be addressed by Members as follows:

- a) Members who are approached by the public with inquiries / complaints regarding operational matters should encourage the party to contact the appropriate department for review / resolution;
- b) where the member of the public is reluctant to contact the department directly, the Member should take the person’s name, phone number and details of the inquiry / complaint and advise them that the matter will be referred to the CAO for review / resolution;
- c) members of the public should be encouraged to provide their issues / matters of concern in writing to the appropriate department;
- d) where the inquiry / complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the member of the public, the Member shall refer the member of the public to the Municipality’s complaint policy for any further action, or place the matter on an agenda to be dealt with by Council or the appropriate Committee.

The Municipality will make every effort to resolve complaints received in a timely, courteous, impartial and professional manner.

All complainants will be treated with respect and will not receive adverse treatment or any form of reprisal.

Procedure

A complaint may be made in a number of ways:

- in person or by mail at the Municipal Office at 2 King St East, ON P0M 2W0;
- online at www.stcharlesontario.ca where a fillable online form will be provided. The form can be directly submitted through the website, or printed to submit in person; or
- by phone at 705-867-2032.
 - verbal complaints received by phone must be documented in writing by the staff member receiving the complaint, must include the same information that is required for complaints submitted in writing and the complaint must indicate that the complainant has given their consent.

Complaints regarding by-law violations will be investigated and processed in accordance with the provisions of the applicable legislation and by the applicable Officer.

All Complaints must be filed as soon as possible following the occurrence of the incident, or upon identification of the issue.

A Complaint shall include the following information:

- Contact information of the complainant;

- Date and time of occurrence;
- Specific details to be considered in the investigation;
- Details of, where it occurred, and who was involved (if applicable); and,
- Signature and date.

Complaints lacking sufficient information may not be investigated. Frivolous or Vexatious complaints, as determined by the CAO or designate in consultation with the appropriate Department Head, may not be investigated. Anonymous complaints are difficult, if not impossible, to assess or investigate and **will not** be dealt with through the complaint handling process.

Once a complaint is received, staff will document the complaint and the complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate department for investigation and action. Within 5 (five) business days of receipt of the complaint, an acknowledgement will be provided to the complainant either in person at the point of service by the staff member receiving it, by phone or in writing (by e-mail or mail). The acknowledgement will identify who will be assigned to investigate and follow up on the complaint as well as their contact information.

The Investigator assigned to the Complaint shall review the issues identified by the Complainant and in doing so may review relevant municipal and provincial legislation, relevant municipal policies and procedures, interview employees or persons external to the municipality, review file documents, identify actions that may be taken to address the complaint or improve municipal operations.

Within thirty (30) business days of receipt of a Complaint, the Investigator shall provide a response in writing to the Complainant and will include:

- whether the complaint was validated;
- if the complaint is not validated, provide reason(s) for their decision; and
- any actions the Municipality has or will take as a result of the complaint.

If a resolution is unable to be provided within thirty (30) business days, the complainant shall be notified of the delay and an estimate of when a response will be provided.

Complaints that can be resolved quickly or easily may combine the acknowledgement and final response within the five (5) business days' time period.

Once the Municipality has communicated the decision to the complainant, there is no appeal process at the municipal level. Complainants that are dissatisfied with the outcome or process may submit a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman at www.ombudsman.on.ca. The Ontario Ombudsman has authority to look at how the issue was handled at the local level, the steps taken, and the outcome. The Ombudsman has authority to consider whether the process was fair, transparent, and in accordance with the applicable policies and by-laws of the municipality.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be dealt with in a confidential manner according to the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA) as amended. Information will be collected, used and disclosed in accordance with the MFIPPA rules. The identity of the complainant will be made known only to those who need to know in order to consider the complaint. All participants in the complaints process shall keep details of the complaint confidential except as may be required by law.

Complaints received by one department are to be limited to that specific department unless the complaint involves more than one department.

Attachments

- Complaint Form

Policy Review

The Municipality of St.-Charles will review this Policy within four (4) years of the date of the last review.

Dated at St.-Charles, Ontario, this 20th day of April, 2022.

X 

Paul Schoppmann
Mayor

X 

Tammy Godden
Clerk



COMPLAINT FORM (Policy PR-001)

THE CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF ST.-CHARLES

PO Box 70, 2 King Street East,
St.-Charles, Ontario P0M 2W0
Tel: 705-867-2032 Fax: 705-867-5789

Occurrence # _____ Date (DD/MM/YYYY): _____ Time: _____

Complainant Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

Postal Code: _____ Home Phone / Cell Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

What is your preferred method of communication: _____

Description of Complaint: *(Please include details of the matter such as date(s), time(s), specific location, and background information. Please use the back of this form if further space is required, additional information, such as relevant photographs, can be attached to this form but if used the person who provided them may be summoned to Court):*

Signature of Complainant: _____

(Please note: Unsigned and/or incomplete forms will not be processed. Any complaints received electronically are deemed to be signed.)

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

Complaint Received by: _____ Date: _____

Complaint Entered Into OS Ticket: Yes No Ticket #: _____

Department Forwarded to: _____

Acknowledgment of Complaint

Complaints will be acknowledged within two (2) business days of receipt of complaint. Complaints received electronically, will be acknowledged by e-mail.

Complaints received in person may be acknowledged at the point of service by the staff member receiving the form or will be acknowledged by letter.

Acknowledgment Date: _____ Acknowledgment Method: _____

Staff Signature _____

Thank you for taking the time to inform us of your concerns. As per the municipal Complaint Policy, a response to your complaint will be provided within twenty (20) business days of the receipt of the complaint. If you have any questions or concerns during the process, please contact the Municipal Office.

Notice of Collection: The personal information collected on this form is collected under the authority of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) and will be used to receive and investigate public complaints. Questions about this collection can be directed to the Municipal Clerk.