



## Complaints Handling Policy

---

### **Title**

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

### **Purpose**

2. The purpose of this policy is to enable the Village of Pugwash to promptly and effectively address program and service delivery concerns raised by members of the public. The policy will assist the Village in providing excellent service to the public, and contribute to continuous improvement of operations. The Village 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.

3. This policy is not meant to address:

1. Complaints about non-municipal services;
2. Issues already addressed by legislation, or an existing Village bylaw, policy or procedure;
3. A decision of the Pugwash Village Commission.
4. internal employee complaints.

### **Interpretation**

4. In this policy:

1. “Complainant” means the individual filing the complaint with the Village;
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 Village in accordance with this policy;
3. “Commission” means Commission of the Village of Pugwash;
4. “Designated Officer” means the Village Clerk Treasurer;
5. “Employee” means an employee of the Village;
6. “Chair” means the Chair of the Village;
7. “Ombudsman” means the Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman.

### **Designated Officer**

5. A Designated Officer may delegate the authority to investigate a complaint to another employee, where they deems appropriate.

6. A Designated Officer may not delegate the authority to investigate a complaint to an employee who is or may be named in the complaint.

7. If a complaint is made against the Designated Officer, the Chair shall review the matter and may:

1. Refer the matter to or consult with another employee;
2. Consult with the Commission
3. Consult with legal counsel; or
4. Refer the matter to the Ombudsman.

### **Frontline Resolution**

8. 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.

9. 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**

10. 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
  - d. Any action(s) being requested of the Village.
3. Complaints may be submitted on the form provided in Schedule A.

### **Receipt and Acknowledgement**

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

### **Investigation**

13. The Designated Officer shall review the issues identified by the complainant and in doing so may:

1. Review relevant village, municipal and provincial legislation;
2. Review the Village'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.

14. The Designated Officer shall maintain a file of the complaint in compliance with the Village's records management policy.

### **Decision**

15. 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 Village has or will take as a result of the complaint.

16. If the Designated Officer is unable to provide a response within 30 calendar days, they shall notify the complainant of the delay and provide an estimate of when a response will be provided.

18. Decisions made by the Designated Officer may not be appealed to the Pugwash Village Commission.

**Complaints Regarding Staff/Services Contracted by the Village of Pugwash**

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

20. Complaints regarding services provided by a service provider contracted by the Village of Pugwash 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**

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

22. Copies of all correspondence and notices shall be retained in the complaint file.

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

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

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

26. The Designated Officer or their delegate shall make dated records of any communications and attempted contacts with complainants

## Schedule A – Complaint Form

Name	
Home Phone	
Cell number	

Work Phone	
e-mail address	
Mailing address	

*What is your complaint? 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?*

*Thank you for taking the time to explain your concern. We will provide a response to your concern within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving your complaint. If you have any questions about the process, please contact the Municipal Clerk/Treasurer at 902-243-2946*

## **Schedule A – Complaint Form**

**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:
--