

## Local complaint processes

Every municipality should have a clear process to respond to public complaints.

Local **complaint processes** should be:

- Publicly accessible
- Approved by council
- Distinct from the **Code of Conduct / Integrity Commissioner** process for members of council, local boards and committees

They should also:

- Encourage complaint resolution
- Include timelines for responding
- Specify whether complaints can be made anonymously
- Prohibit retaliation against complainants
- Require written records be kept of complaints, action taken, and outcomes
- Indicate how frivolous or vexatious complaints will be handled



All staff should receive training about the municipality's complaints process.

Complainants should be advised:

- Of the outcome of their complaint
- Where they can go next if they remain dissatisfied
- That they can contact the Ontario Ombudsman if they are unhappy with the municipality's final response to their complaint

In reviewing complaints that have gone through a local complaints process, the Ombudsman and staff can look at how the issue was handled at the local level, the steps taken, and the outcome. The Ombudsman cannot overturn decisions, but can consider whether the process was fair, transparent and in accordance with policy and/or by-laws.

**Questions? [info@ombudsman.on.ca](mailto:info@ombudsman.on.ca)**

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