

City of St. Catharines
COMPLAINT PROTOCOL

**(for the Code of Conduct of Members of Council, Local Boards and
Advisory Committees)**

PART A - INFORMAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

1. Any individual who identifies or witnesses behaviour or activity by a Member that they believe contravenes the Code of Conduct may seek to address the prohibited behaviour or activity themselves in the following manner by following the Informal Complaint Procedure:
 - (a) document the incident(s) where the Member may have contravened the Code of Conduct including dates, times, locations, other persons present, and any other relevant information;
 - (b) advise a third party about the concerns regarding the Member's actions;
 - (c) advise the Member that the behaviour or activity appears to contravene the Code of Conduct;
 - (d) identify to the Member the specific provision(s) of the Code of Conduct that may have been contravened;
 - (e) encourage the Member to acknowledge and agree to stop the prohibited behaviour or activity and to undertake to refrain from future occurrences of the prohibited behaviour or activity;
 - (f) request the Integrity Commissioner to assist in informal discussion of the alleged complaint with the Member in an attempt to settle or resolve the issue;
 - (g) if applicable:
 - (i) confirm to the Member that his or her response is satisfactory, or
 - (ii) advise the Member that his or her response is unsatisfactory;
 - (h) consider the need to pursue the matter in accordance with the Formal Complaint Procedure set out in Part B, or in accordance with any other applicable judicial or quasi-judicial process or complaint procedure.
2. Individuals are strongly encouraged to pursue the Informal Complaint Procedure as the first means of remedying behaviour or activity of a Member that they believe violates the Code of Conduct.
3. With the consent of both the complaining individual and the Member, the Integrity Commissioner may participate in any informal process. The parties involved are encouraged to take advantage of the Integrity Commissioner's potential role as a mediator/conciliator of issues relating to a complaint.

4. The Informal Complaint Procedure is not a precondition or a prerequisite to pursuing the Formal Complaint Procedure set out in Part B.

PART B - FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Formal Complaints

- 1.(1) Any individual who identifies or witnesses behaviour or activity by a Member that they reasonably believe contravenes the Code of Conduct may file a formal complaint to request an inquiry by the Integrity Commissioner as to whether a Member has contravened the Code of Conduct in accordance with the following requirements:
 - (a) all complaints shall be in writing on the prescribed form and shall be dated and signed by an identifiable individual;
 - (b) the complaint must set out reasonable and probable grounds for the allegation that the Member has contravened the Code of Conduct and must be accompanied by a supporting sworn affidavit setting out the evidence in full in support of the allegation; and
 - (c) Council may also file a complaint against any of its Members by passing a resolution requesting the Integrity Commissioner to undertake an inquiry.
- (2) Individuals filing a formal complaint must provide a full and complete record of evidence to the Integrity Commissioner who is under no obligation whatsoever to, but may, seek additional information to supplement or complete the evidentiary record to substantiate or support the allegation set out in the complaint.

Filing of Complaint and Classification by Integrity Commissioner

- 2.(1) The complaint may be filed with the City Clerk by hard copy or directly with Integrity Commissioner by a sealed hard copy or by e-mail to the email address(es) set out on the City's website.
- (2) The Integrity Commissioner shall initially classify the complaint to determine if the matter is, on its face, a complaint with respect to non-compliance with the Code of Conduct and not covered by other legislation or other Council procedures, policies or rules as set out in Section 3.

Complaints Outside Integrity Commissioner's Jurisdiction

3. If the complaint, including the supporting affidavit, is not, on its face, a complaint with respect to non-compliance with the Code of Conduct or the complaint relates to matters addressed by other legislation or complaint procedure under another City procedure, policy or rule, the Integrity Commissioner shall advise the complainant in writing as follows:

Criminal Matter

- (a) if the complaint is, on its face, an allegation of a criminal nature consistent with the *Criminal Code*, the complainant shall be advised that:

- (i) the Integrity Commissioner will refer it to the appropriate police service, or
- (ii) the complainant may pursue it with the appropriate police service if the complainant wishes to pursue any such allegation;

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

- (b) if the complaint is more appropriately addressed under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the complainant shall be advised that the matter must be referred to the City Clerk to deal with under its access and privacy policies under the statute;

Other Procedure, Policy or Rule Applies

- (c) if the complaint appears to fall within the scope of another procedure, policy or rule of the City, the complainant shall be advised to pursue the matter under such procedure, policy or rule with the appropriate City official;

Lack of Jurisdiction

- (d) if the complaint is, for any other reason not within the jurisdiction of the Integrity Commissioner (for example, it relates to a decision of Council or a local board as a whole and not one or more individual Members), the complainant shall be so advised and provided with any additional reasons and referrals as the Integrity Commissioner considers appropriate;

Matter Already Pending

- (e) if the complaint is in relation to a matter which is subject to an outstanding complaint under another process such as a court proceeding, a human rights or workplace harassment complaint or similar process, or to a civil matter that is pending before the courts, the Integrity Commissioner may, in his/her sole discretion, suspend any investigation, in whole or in part, pending the result of the other process;

Similar Matter Already Pending

- (f) if the complaint is in relation to a similar matter which is subject to an outstanding complaint before the Integrity Commissioner, the Integrity Commissioner may, in his/her sole discretion, consider the matter in conjunction with the similar matter or deal with it separately, including not undertaking an inquiry if the matter can be adequately addressed in any report and/or recommendations made with respect to the complaint in the similar matter; and

Other Ethical Code or Policy Applies

- (g) if the complaint is in relation to a matter which is governed by a code of conduct, ethical code or similar procedure or policy of another body or entity which also governs the Members (for example, another board, body or committee to which the Member has been appointed), the Integrity Commissioner shall consider the most appropriate forum for the complaint and may, in his/her sole discretion, defer

consideration of the matter pending any determination made by the other body or entity and shall so advise the complainant and, if necessary, the Member.

Limitation Period

4. The Integrity Commissioner shall not accept a complaint for which the event giving rise to the complaint occurred or came to the attention of the complainant more than six (6) months prior to the date of the filing of the complaint. The complainant must establish that the event giving rise to the complaint occurred and/or came to the complainant's attention within six (6) months of the complaint being filed in accordance with Section 2.

Refusal to Conduct Investigation

5. The Integrity Commissioner has a discretion as to whether to carry out an investigation. If the Integrity Commissioner is satisfied, after considering the information contained in the complaint, that a complaint:
 - (a) is frivolous or vexatious,
 - (b) is not made in good faith,
 - (c) constitutes an abuse of process,
 - (d) discloses no grounds or insufficient grounds for an investigation, or
 - (e) does not warrant a full investigation,

the Integrity Commissioner shall not be required to conduct an investigation and, where this becomes apparent during the course of an investigation, the Integrity Commissioner shall terminate the inquiry and provide notice to the complainant and, if necessary, to the Member.

Opportunities for Resolution

6. Following receipt and review of a formal complaint or at any time during the investigation where the Integrity Commissioner, in his or her discretion, believes that an opportunity to resolve the matter may be successfully pursued without a formal investigation, and both the complainant and the Member agree, efforts may be pursued to achieve an informal resolution.

Investigation

7. (1) The Integrity Commissioner may proceed as follows, except where the Integrity Commissioner has a full factual record and believes, in his/her sole discretion, that no additional information is required, or where otherwise required by the *Public Inquiries Act, 2009*, or where the Integrity Commissioner has not otherwise terminated the inquiry:
 - (a) provide the Member with an outline of the complaint with sufficient particularity to allow the Member to understand the complaint against him or her but shall not have any obligation to disclose:

- (i) the identity of the complainant, or
- (ii) the identity of any witnesses set out in the complaint or persons that are questioned/interviewed by the Integrity Commissioner,

unless it is essential for the Member to adequately respond to the complaint, which determination shall be made in the Integrity Commissioner's sole and absolute discretion;

- (b) request that the Member provide a written response to the allegations in the complaint to the Integrity Commissioner within ten (10) business days; and
 - (c) provide a copy of the Member's response to the complainant with a request that any written reply be provided by the complainant to the Integrity Commissioner within ten (10) business days;
 - (d) extend the timelines set out above if the Integrity Commissioner deems it necessary to do so in his/her sole and absolute discretion.
- (2) If necessary, after reviewing the submitted materials, the Integrity Commissioner may contact and speak to or correspond with any other persons, access and examine any other documents or electronic materials, including any materials on the City's computers and servers, and may enter any City work location relevant to the complaint for the purpose of investigation and potential resolution.
 - (3) The Integrity Commissioner may, but is under no obligation, to provide the Member with a draft of the proposed draft report on the complaint.
 - (4) The Integrity Commissioner shall not issue a report finding a violation of the Code of Conduct on the part of any Member unless the Member has had an opportunity either in person or in writing to comment to the Integrity Commissioner on any preliminary or proposed finding(s).
 - (5) The Integrity Commissioner may, but is under no obligation, to advise either the Member or the complainant of any proposed sanction or recommendation the Integrity Commissioner may include in the report to Council.
 - (6) The Integrity Commissioner may make interim reports to Council where necessary and as required to address any instances of interference, obstruction, intimidation, delay, reprisal or retaliation by the Member or by any other person encountered during the formal complaint investigation.
 - (7) The Integrity Commissioner is entitled to make such additional inquiries and provide such additional reports to Council where necessary and as required to address any instances of non-compliance with any decision of Council including the failure to comply with any penalties or corrective measure or actions imposed by Council.
 - (8) The Integrity Commissioner shall retain all records related to the complaint and investigation but may provide copies of certain records, in confidence, to City administrative staff who are required to ensure that any such records are securely and confidentially retained.

No Complaint Prior to Municipal Election

8. (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Complaint Protocol, no complaint may be filed with the Integrity Commissioner, no report shall be made by the Integrity Commissioner to Council and Council cannot consider the imposition of penalties pursuant to subsection 223.4(5) of the *Municipal Act, 2001* during the period of time starting on nomination day for a regular municipal election year, as set out in section 31 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and ending on the voting day in a regular election as set out in section 5 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.
- (2) If the Integrity Commissioner has received a complaint and has commenced an inquiry but has not completed the inquiry before nomination day in a regular municipal election year, the Integrity Commissioner shall terminate the inquiry on nomination day but may commence an inquiry in respect of the same complaint if within six (6) weeks after the voting day in a regular municipal election the individual who made the request makes a written request to the Integrity Commissioner in accordance with subsection 223.4(8) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

Advice Provided to Member by Integrity Commissioner

9. (1) Subject to Section 9(2), a Member is entitled to rely upon any written advice given by the Integrity Commissioner to the Member respecting the Code of Conduct in any subsequent consideration of the conduct of the Member in the same matter provided that the Member fully disclosed in writing all relevant facts known to him or her to the Integrity Commissioner and acted in accordance with the written advice provided by the Integrity Commissioner.
- (2) A Member under investigation by the Integrity Commissioner shall not request advice from the Integrity Commissioner as to the Member's rights under the Code of Conduct or generally at law with respect to any matter that the Integrity Commissioner is investigating or reviewing with respect to the Member, nor is the Member entitled to rely upon any statement(s) made by the Integrity Commissioner during the course of any investigation or review that may impact the Member's rights under the Code of Conduct or at law.

Investigation Report

10. (1) The Integrity Commissioner shall report to the complainant and the Member no later than ninety (90) days after the official receipt of any complaint. If the investigation process is anticipated to or takes more than ninety (90) days, the Integrity Commissioner shall provide an interim report to Council and must advise the parties of the approximate date the report will be available. The Integrity Commissioner may also, at his/her discretion, advise any witnesses or other persons of the approximate date the report will be available.
- (2) Where the complaint is sustained in whole or in part, the Integrity Commissioner shall report to Council outlining the findings, the terms of any settlement and/or any recommended remedial or corrective measure or action.
- (3) The Integrity Commissioner may provide a copy of the report to the complainant and the Member whose conduct has been investigated in advance of the public release of the report, in strict confidence until the report is publicly released. The Member shall have the right to address the report when it is considered by Council but cannot vote on the matter.

- (4) Where the complaint is not sustained, the Integrity Commissioner is not obligated to report to Council on the result of the investigation or any findings but may do so at his/her discretion and may also include such information as he/she deems necessary in a report or as part of an annual or other periodic report by the Integrity Commissioner.

Findings

11. If the Integrity Commissioner determines that:
- (a) there has been no contravention of the Code of Conduct, or
 - (b) a contravention occurred but:
 - (i) the Member took all reasonable measures to prevent it,
 - (ii) it was trivial,
 - (iii) it was committed through inadvertence, or
 - (iv) it resulted from an error in judgment made in good faith,

the Integrity Commissioner may so state in the report and may make appropriate recommendations pursuant to the *Municipal Act, 2001*, including but not limited to, a recommendation of no penalty.

Report to Council

12. Upon receipt of a report from the Integrity Commissioner, the City Clerk shall place the report on the next regular agenda of Council for consideration by Council and Council must consider the report at that meeting and may accept or refuse the recommendations set out in the report and accept, refuse or vary any penalties or sanctions contained in the report. A report from the Integrity Commissioner may also be considered by Council in advance of its next regular meeting should Council agree to hold a special or other meeting before its next regular meeting to consider the report.

Duty of Council

13. Council shall consider and make a determination on the Integrity Commissioner's report at the same meeting at which the report is tabled.

Public Disclosure

- 14.(1) The Integrity Commissioner and every person acting under his or her jurisdiction shall preserve confidentiality where appropriate and where it does not interfere with the course of any investigation, except as required by law and as required by this Complaint Protocol.
- (2) The Integrity Commissioner shall retain all records related to the complaint and investigation although copies may be provided to the City's administrative staff, subject to the duty of confidentiality under subsection 223.5 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

- (3) The identity of the Member who is the subject of the complaint shall not be treated as confidential information in the Integrity Commissioner's report to Council. The identity of the complainant may be disclosed if deemed appropriate and necessary by the Integrity Commissioner or if consented to by the complainant.
- (4) All reports from the Integrity Commissioner to Council shall be made available to the public by the City Clerk.

Periodic Reports to Council

- 15.(1) The Integrity Commissioner shall provide an annual report to Council summarizing his or her activities, including a report on all complaints received and on their disposition (including complaints deemed and ruled not to be within the jurisdiction of the Integrity Commissioner and complaints not investigated and/or terminated), unless no complaints were received during the calendar year, in which case the City Clerk shall report to Council accordingly and no annual report shall be made by the Integrity Commissioner.
- (2) Notwithstanding Section 15(1), Council may by resolution request that the Integrity Commissioner provide a periodic report more frequently than once a year.

Delegation

- 16. The Integrity Commissioner may delegate in writing to any person, other than a Member of Council, any of the Integrity Commissioner's powers and duties under Part V.1 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*.