

Title	Public Complaint Handling Policy
Policy Number	CPL-16-15
Policy Type	Operating
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Review Date	October 2024
Notes	Initially adopted October 17, 2016 and revised October 15, 2018 and October 19, 2020



Purpose

The Caledon Public Library is committed to the provision of exceptional library services and to this end, recognizes the importance of public input as a valuable means for continual improvement. This policy outlines the principles and processes that direct the receipt of and response to complaints related to programs, services, facilities and employees of the Library, ensuring and supporting transparency and accountability.

This policy **does not** apply to:

- Feedback
- Suggestions
- Inquiries
- Compliments
- Requests for service
- Requests for considerations of library materials
- Anonymous complaints

This policy does not apply to complaints made by employees, contractors, or volunteers working on behalf of the Library.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

“Complainant” refers to a customer making a complaint under this policy.

“Complaint” means a written or oral expression of dissatisfaction about services, actions, or lack of actions by an employee, contractor or volunteer of the Library by a customer. Examples include but are not limited to perceptions of:

- A failure to do something agreed to do;
- A failure to observe policy or procedures;
- An error made by an employee, contractor, or volunteer of the Library;
- Unfair or discourteous actions/statements made by an employee, contractor, or volunteer of the Library;
- Issues related to access to services; timeliness of service; or quality of service.

“*Frivolous*” means a Complaint that is reasonably perceived by Library staff to be (a) without reasonable or probable cause, (b) without merit or substance, or (c) trivial;

“*Harassment* or *Harass*” involves engaging in a course of behaviour, comment or conduct, whether it occurs inside or outside the work environment, that is or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. It includes but is not limited to any behaviour, conduct or comment that is directed at or is offensive to another person:

(a) on the grounds of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, age, handicap, sexual orientation, marital status, or family status, as well as any other grounds under the provisions of the Human Rights Code; or

(b) which is reasonably perceived by the recipient as an intention to bully, embarrass, intimidate or ridicule the recipient.

“*Intimidation*” means unwarranted conduct, including, but not limited to: cyberbullying, discrimination, harassment, violence or threats of violence, profanity, personal insults or communication that is deemed threatening;

“*Library*” refers to the Caledon Public Library;

“*Vexatious*” means a Complaint that is Frivolous and which is pursued in a manner that is reasonably perceived by Library staff to be (a) malicious, (b) intended to embarrass or harass the recipient, or (c) intended to be a nuisance.

Guidelines

Anyone personally affected or their representative can submit a complaint and it will be reviewed in accordance with this procedure. The Library reserves the right not to respond to anonymous complaints.

Complaints should be made in person, by phone, by e-mail, by letter, or via the [comments and suggestions form](#) on the Library’s website.

Requests for reconsideration of library materials shall be submitted and addressed as per the *Caledon Public Library Collection Development Policy (CPL-16-12)*.

Step 1: Senior Staff Review

- Complaints which cannot be resolved immediately, will be reviewed and responded to in the following escalating authority order until the complainant believes his/her complaint has been adequately addressed. Any of these steps may be omitted as appropriate. This list does not preclude other staff with sufficient capacity to respond to or resolve the complaint on an immediate basis.
 - A Manager On Call or Person In Charge during Library opening hours;
 - The Manager or Director responsible for the area subject to the complaint;
 - The CEO/Chief Librarian or designate.
- The responding staff member will advise the complainant of the following, as applicable:
 - His or her name and contact information;

- An outline of actions the Library will take with the intent of resolving the complaint;
- Any required actions to be taken on the part of the complainant;
- Estimated timeframes associated with the actions to resolve the complaint.

This response shall be communicated verbally or in writing, as per the complainant's preferred means of communication. However, the responding staff member shall retain written documentation of the complaint, any action taken, and details of the response provided to the complainant.

- Complaints for which there is no further communication from the complainant within sixty (60) days of staff response will be considered closed.

Step 2: Library Board Review

- If after a response from the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate, the complainant does not believe the complaint has been adequately resolved, the complainant may refer the complaint to the Library Board as correspondence or at a future regular meeting, subject to the provisions for making a delegation to the Board as identified within the *Caledon Public Library Board By-laws (CPL-16-01)*. "A delegation wishing to appear before a Committee or the full Board shall submit a written request to the Secretary-Treasurer (CEO) 10 days prior to the scheduled meeting of the Committee or Board. The request must stipulate the subject matter upon which the delegation wishes to speak." Correspondence to the Board should be directed to the CEO/Chief Librarian in the capacity of Secretary-Treasurer to the Board and may be shared publicly as part of the agenda for a regular meeting of the Board.
- The Board as a body will hear the complaint and review the response of the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate for the following purposes:
 - Opportunities to make recommendations to the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate on the matter;
 - Opportunities for amendments to Board policy;
 - Opportunities for further refinement of customer complaint management.

The Board may not overturn staff decisions unless a finding is made that existing policy was not followed correctly.

- The Board's review will be presented verbally to the complainant at the meeting and recorded in minutes. Should further review or investigation be deemed necessary, the Board will advise the complainant and ensure that he/she is informed of any future Board meetings or actions on the matter.
- The Board's review is considered the final appeal of the complaint.
- Where a complainant makes direct contact with a Board member when initiating a complaint, the Board member should refer the complainant to the CEO/Chief Librarian. A Board member may not interfere in the handling of a specific case by approaching individual staff members. Concerns about the management of a case should be conveyed to the CEO/Chief Librarian. The CEO/Chief Librarian may inform the concerned Board member about the action taken in the

case or authorize a Director or Manager to communicate the information directly to the Board member.

Threats, Intimidation

- Staff should immediately report to a Manager, Director or the CEO/Chief Librarian:
 - Any implied or explicit threats made against the safety of the staff member or the safety of others in the course of handling the complaint;
 - Any intimidation behaviour in the course of handling the complaint, which may be established by a variety of circumstances that may include:
 - the content, tone and language of a person's correspondence, especially if the language used is insulting, offensive or abusive; or,
 - unsubstantiated, derogatory or inflammatory allegations against Library staff.
- Harassment, discrimination, threats or matters of a similar nature will be dealt with through the *Caledon Public Library Public Code of Conduct (CPL-16-11)* and the *Caledon Public Library Personnel Policy (CPL-19-09)*.

Potentially Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints

- Where the complaint may be considered frivolous or vexatious or there appears to be a pattern of frivolous or vexatious complaints, the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate may seek advice from the Library Board and/or give direction to staff to ensure valid complaints are heard and addressed in a professional and mutually respectful manner, while ensuring efficient use of Library resources.
- Despite any step in this policy, in the case of a frivolous or vexatious complaint, the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate may deem or recommend the Library Board deem a complaint file closed.

Responsibilities of Employees

- Staff will treat all complaints as confidential and protect the complainant's privacy according to the *Caledon Public Library Privacy Policy (CPL-15-01)* and Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Complaints that are referred to the Library Board as correspondence or by a delegation shall be considered in camera only if the subject matter meets the criteria for closed session identified within the Public Libraries Act.
- The CEO/Chief Librarian shall oversee the creation and maintenance of a mechanism for recording and tracking complaints. Library management will routinely review complaint trends for the purpose of continuous service and process improvements.

Feedback

Questions regarding this policy, complaints to the CEO/Chief Librarian or requests to delegate to the Library Board should be directed to the following:

Office of the CEO and Chief Librarian
Caledon Public Library

150 Queen St S.
Bolton, ON L7E 1E3
905.857.1400 X 215
ceo@caledon.library.on.ca

Related Documents

- [Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#), R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56
- [Public Libraries Act](#), R.S.O. 1990, c. P.44
- CPL-15-01 Caledon Public Library Privacy Policy
- CPL-16-01 Caledon Public Library Board By-Laws
- CPL-16-09 Caledon Public Library Personnel Policy
- CPL-16-11 Caledon Public Library Public Code of Conduct
- CPL-16-12 Caledon Public Library Collection Development Policy