



## CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS POLICY

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*The Town of Torbay is dedicated to serve the needs of all citizens in a respectful and responsible manner, while providing excellence in our service offerings and programming.*

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## Principles of Customer Service Standards

The Town of Torbay identifies service excellence as a strategic value, to build and foster a strong customer service culture.

The Town is committed to providing a high standard of service to all customers. Customers include staff, residents, business owners, visitors, tourists, investors and other stakeholders.

The standards outlined in this document reflect “*Service Excellence*” and the Town’s commitment to:

- ✓ Provide a consistent and exceptional customer service experience.
- ✓ Enhance communications with customers and staff.
- ✓ Reduce calls and inquiries from being “bounced around” internally.
- ✓ Provide service excellence at all levels within the Town and focus on the key drivers of customer satisfaction to:
  - Respond and acknowledge receipt of customer contact within a reasonable time frame.
  - Provide accurate information and/or the avenue for the customer to receive it.
  - Provide fair and consistent treatment.
  - Be polite and respectful.
  - Provide a response and ensure completeness of service or request.

These guidelines set minimum standards to communicate with customers efficiently and respectfully.

## Channels of Communication

The customer service standards provide guidelines for quality delivery of services through the following customer communication channels:

- Telephone
- Electronic/Written Correspondence
- In Person

### Telephone:

#### Telephone Response Time

Customer calls are returned as soon as possible when they are received. As a general rule, telephone calls will be returned within two (2) business days.

Staff’s response, within two business days, may not provide a complete resolution, but will be an acknowledgement that the message has been received. Staff should also provide an indication of any further action that will be taken to address the issue.

## **Answering Calls**

When answering an external phone call a consistent greeting should be used. Include a greeting, departmental office and first name.

i.e. *“Good morning, Planning Department, Cathy speaking.”*

When answering an internal call, a greeting and first name is sufficient.

i.e. *“Good afternoon, Tanner speaking.”*

## **Placing a Customer on Hold**

If you need to place a customer on hold, ask permission. If they are not able to wait, provide an alternative solution on how you will contact them. After placing the customer on hold, check back periodically. Thank them for holding.

## **Transferring a Call**

Before transferring a call directly to another staff member/department, provide the caller with the name and extension of the staff member.

## **Voicemail Structure**

### **In Office**

Include your name, department, extension, as well as a prompt to have the caller leave a detailed message containing their name, number, and reason for their call. State that if their call is urgent, dial ‘0’ and they will be redirected to reception for assistance.

*“You’ve reached Richard in the Planning Department at ext. 222. I am unable to take your call at this moment. Please leave a detailed message with your name, number, and reason for your call and I will return your call within 2 business days. If you require immediate assistance, please dial ‘0’ and you will be transferred to reception.”*

### **Out of Office**

Include your name, department, extension, as well as a prompt to have the caller leave a detailed message containing their name, number, and reason for their call and that you will respond upon your return. In addition, staff can provide callers with an alternate contact while they are away from the office or have them dial ‘0’ to be redirected to reception for assistance.

*“You’ve reached Shirley in the Finance Department at ext. 225. I will be out of the office until June 15<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. Please include your name, number and reason for your call and I will respond upon my return.”*

*“If you require assistance, please contact Charlene Hall at ext. 211.”*

OR

*“If you require assistance, please dial ‘0’ and you will be transferred to reception.”*

### **Absences**

Voicemails are the responsibility of staff. If you are out of the office for more than a day and unable to update your voice message, inform your Direct Supervisor that it needs to be changed.

Staff are not expected to change voice messages while they are away for brief periods during the day (i.e. away for a 2-hour meeting). If you are out of the office for an extended period, voicemail should reflect the vacancy.

If an employee is off sick, the Direct Supervisor is responsible for determining the best option to address calls that are left on voicemail during absences (i.e., retrieve messages, call-forward the calls, change voicemail message, etc.)

### **Leaving a Voicemail Message on a Customer’s Phone**

When you leave a voice message for a customer, it is important to leave a call-back number and extension; most callers have call display and often call reception asking who called from the Town of Torbay. Leaving details for the customer will eliminate confusion on who to contact in the Town.

### **Guidelines:**

- Indicate that you are calling from the Town of Torbay and leave a phone number AND phone extension.
- Leave your name, position/department.
- Indicate the time and date of your call.
- Indicate the reason for your call.
- Repeat the call-back number as a common courtesy.
- Speak slowly and clearly and keep the message as brief as possible.

### **Receiving Emergency Calls**

If the call is a Municipal emergency, which cannot wait until the next business day, provide the caller with the after-hours emergency number 709-437-6532.

If the call is an emergency for Fire, Police or Ambulance, provide the 911 number.

### **Corporate Cell Phones**

Corporate cell phone users will follow the same general telephone guidelines as established for internal corporate phones.

## **Electronic and Written Correspondence:**

### **General Guidelines for Correspondence:**

- Utilize the spell check tool whenever necessary for all corporate documents.
- If you are unable to provide a complete resolution to the issue, respond to the customer and outline the next steps.
- If you have received a written/verbal request in error, re-direct the request to the appropriate employee/department as soon as possible for resolution.
- All correspondence should include staff contact information for the customer to contact you directly.

### **Email Correspondence**

Only email accounts assigned to staff by the Town shall be used to conduct and respond to Municipal business.

### **Email Signature**

A standard email signature is required by all Municipal staff for emails and should include the following information:

*[Your Name] [Position / Title]*

*The Town of Torbay [LOGO]*

*[Vision Statement]*

*[Phone and Ext. Number] [Fax Number]*

*[Website] [Email Address] Disclaimer*

*(See Below)*

*Standard Response Time for Emails (2 Business Days)*

### **Email Disclaimer**

The following is the Town's standard email disclaimer, those wishing to make additions to this disclaimer should do so under the advisement of their Direct Supervisor/Manager/Department Head.

*The Town of Torbay is subject to the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPP). All comments and communications directed to the Town are subject to ATIPP and may be deemed releasable under this legislation.*

*If you are not the intended recipient and have received this message in error, please notify me by return e-mail and delete or destroy all copies of this message.*

## Sample Email Signature with Disclaimer

**A. Stewart**

Treasurer

The Town of Torbay

t. (709) 437-6532 ext. 262 f. (709) 437-1309 w. [torbay.ca](http://torbay.ca)

1288 Torbay Road, P.O. Box 1160, Torbay, NL A1K 1K4



***“Our vision is a well-planned, inclusive community serving the needs of all residents and a desired place for all age groups to enjoy life”***

The Town of Torbay is subject to the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPP)*. All comments and communications directed to the Town are subject to *ATIPP* and may be deemed releasable under this legislation. If you are not the intended recipient and have received this message in error, please notify me by return email and delete or destroy all copies of this message.

**Please Note:** That it is the Town’s service target to respond to emails with an initial response within two (2) business days.

### **Email Out of Office Assistant**

Staff are expected to utilize their “Out of Office Assistant” when away from the office and unable to check messages. The message should include duration of absence, appropriate message and alternative staff contact details. Samples are as follows:

*Thank you for contacting the Town of Torbay.*

*Currently, I am out of the office until Monday, February 14, 2018 and will be responding to emails upon my return.*

*If you require immediate response, please contact NAME at [EMAIL](#) or by calling 709-437-6532, ext. NUMBER*

*John Smith*

*(include email signature)*

In the event of an unexpected absence (i.e. illness, emergency, etc.), and depending upon the nature of the position and duration of absence, an employee’s Direct Supervisor may contact IT to apply the appropriate message to the employee’s “Out of Office Assistant”.

**Electronic and Written Correspondence Response Time**

The following indicates the standard response time for staff to respond to electronic and written correspondence. Please note that during periods of high volume and increased departmental demands, customers may experience a longer than normal response time.

**Letters:**

Customers will receive a response to a general inquiry within five (5) business days.

**Email:**

Customers can expect to receive an initial response to an email inquiry within two (2) business days. This refers to both internal and external communication.

**Social Media:**

The Communications Coordinator is responsible for monitoring and responding to social media on behalf of the Town of Torbay. Messages receive a response within two (2) business days.

**In Person:**

The Town Hall is open and ready to serve the public during the following business hours:

**Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

A member of our staff will be available at the front to greet and assist customers. Should staff be required to attend to the telephone and counter enquiries simultaneously, counter enquiries shall take priority with telephone enquiries attended to as soon as possible afterward. Callers have the option to leave voice messages, which should be returned promptly after the customer at the counter has departed.

At times, this staff member may be required to step away momentarily, at which point the public service area will be monitored by another designated staff member.

We ask that customers who require a consultation with specific staff members or departments book an appointment in advance to ensure staff are available and equipped to serve the needs of the customer.

Staff contact information is available on our website <https://torbay.ca/resident/contact-us/> in addition, business cards are available at the Town Hall

**Departmental Standards:**

The Corporate Customer Service Standards provide comprehensive **minimum standards**, departments may institute higher standards in alignment with statutory and non-statutory requirements (policy, procedure etc.).



## **Accessibility**

### **Accessible Formats and Communications Supports**

If a person with a disability needs an accessible format, or help to communicate with us, we will work with the person to provide the format or support that will meet their needs.

If we are not able to meet the person's particular requirement in a reasonable time frame, we will inform them and will work with them to determine an alternate method or will provide a summary of the information.

Generally, and unless otherwise directed by policy or legislation, staff should respond to customers in the same format used by the customer (emails are responded to by email, letters are responded to by letter, etc.).

## **The Customer Service Experience**

The Town of Torbay is dedicated to providing an exceptional '**Customer Service Experience**' by providing customers with quality, consistent customer service delivered in a timely, courteous and respectful manner.

The Town aims to implement these standards at every point and at every stage of interaction with customers, whether in-person, on the phone, or by email or social media, Customers can expect the same consistent level of service each and every time.

### **Tips for a Positive Interaction**

- Listen intently; be positive.
- Respect cultures and diversity.
- Evaluate and clarify customer expectations; ask questions to understand.
- Understand that each customer's need is different and respond promptly and professionally.
- Show understanding and empathy, and be diplomatic.
- Ensure your words, voice, tone, body language and facial expressions are aligned.
- Remember that customers are contacting the Town for assistance. Focus on the drivers of customer satisfaction:
  - Timeliness and acknowledgement
  - Knowledge
  - Fairness
  - Courtesy

## **Tips to Deal With**

- Verbal abuse: Stay calm; be firm and respectful with the customer and advise that verbal abuse will not be tolerated. Inform your Department Head/ Direct Supervisor immediately.
- Threats: Inform your Department Head/Direct Supervisor immediately.
- Complaints about Town employees should be directed through the Town's Formal Complaints Policy.

## **Unreasonable Customer Behaviour**

The Town of Torbay endeavours to provide exemplary service to all members of the public and aims to address customer service requests equitably, comprehensively, and in a timely manner.

Vexatious, frivolous, and/or unreasonably persistent requests may compromise the Town's ability to deliver good customer service in an equitable, efficient and effective manner. The Town's Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy guides staff in identifying and managing these situations, with the intent of dealing with customers in ways that are consistent, fair and reasonable while acknowledging that there may be a need to shield staff from unreasonable behaviour.

## **The Town's front-line staff are available to**

- Provide information on Municipal services and programs.
- Respond to questions or concerns.
- Record and/or facilitate customer service requests, compliments, and complaints.
- Accept payments and program registrations.

## **Customer Service Requests:**

Customer Service Requests (CSR) are issues that cannot be resolved at the first point of contact. These types of requests are processed through the Municipality's customer service management system. Once a Customer Service Request Form is submitted via one of the Municipal outlets (in-person, phone, email or on our website) the system captures and forwards these requests to 'triage' to be assigned to a staff member. The system then allows staff to efficiently manage requests and communication with both staff and customers.

Examples of a '**Customer Service Request**' are:

- Bylaw Infraction
- Downed Sign, Light or Tree
- Municipal service issue
- Parking Complaint
- Pothole
- Sidewalk problem
- Snow clearing

Customers can submit a ‘**Customer Service Request**’ to the Town in one of the following four (4) ways:



In Person



By Telephone  
709-437-6532



By Email  
info@torbay.ca



By visiting our website  
[www.torbay.ca](http://www.torbay.ca)  
☐ Customer Service Request

When submitting a Customer Service Request, customers will be prompted to provide their name and contact information, as well as information related to their concern/issue(s).

Customers using the ‘Customer Service Request Form’ on the Town’s website ([www.torbay.ca](http://www.torbay.ca)) will have an additional option to insert image(s) or document(s) related to their concern, for staff to access and view once submitted. First and last name are required when submitting a ‘Customer Service Request’, failure to include this information will result in the inability to log a CSR.

Customers can expect to receive the following response once a Customer Service Request has been submitted:

- An automated message acknowledging receipt of the request (if an email address was provided at the point of intake).
- A copy of the unique case number assigned to their request.
- An automated acknowledgement of when the case is closed (if an email address has been provided at the point of intake).

It is the intent of the Town to respond to Customer Service Requests within ten (10) business days.

When a Customer Service Request is received for a service or request that is **not** provided or supported by the Municipality, the following process is followed:

- Staff who respond to requests of this nature, will respond in a manner that is consistent with the following:

*Dear [Insert Name of Customer]*

*Thank you for submitting a Customer Service Request Form. Unfortunately, as per [state legislation/mandate/policy] the Municipality does not [provide/support] [insert service/request].*

*The Municipality values and appreciates your feedback and although no resolution can be immediately sought, the data collected may be beneficial and considered for future planning by the Town of Torbay.*

*Thank you,*

*The Town of Torbay*

### **Requests to Speak with the Mayor/Councillor**

If a customer indicates that they would like to speak with the Mayor or Council regarding an issue:

- Ask if you are able to provide assistance. It may be an issue that staff can assist with that can be logged into the customer service management system.
- If it is a matter that cannot be resolved by staff, or the customer wishes to speak with the Mayor/Councillor directly, provide them with Mayor/Councillor's contact information it appears on the website.

### **Complaints**

The Town of Torbay is committed to a consistent and uniform process to respond to complaints received from members of the public regarding programs, facilities, municipal services, municipal staff and procedures. All complaints are managed in accordance with the **Town's Complaints Handling Policy**.

The Town of Torbay recognizes the importance of public feedback and welcomes constructive complaints as a valuable form of feedback regarding our services, operations, and facilities. The information gained from complaints helps improve the quality of the services provided by the municipality and the client experience of residents.

The information provided is a summary of the Town Corporate Complaints Handling Policy. For more information, please view the full policy.

### **Compliments/Feedback**

The Town recognizes the value of public input and seeks feedback and compliments to ensure continuous improvement. Compliments/feedback can be sent to the Municipality by:

- Email [info@torbay.ca](mailto:info@torbay.ca)
- In-person
- By phone 709-437-6532, extension 221

## **Policy Review**

This policy shall be reviewed annually or sooner by the CAO and the Mayor as may be necessary.