

Complaints and Compliments - Process Enhancements

Date: March 8, 2024

To: Service Excellence Committee

From: Executive Director, Customer Experience

Wards: All

SUMMARY

At its meeting on December 18, 2023, the City of Toronto's Service Excellence Committee requested the City Manager, in consultation with the Executive Director of the Customer Experience Division (CXD), to report back to the Service Excellence Committee by the end of March 2024 on efforts underway to enhance the complaints and compliments mechanisms across various divisions and City Offices.

This report responds to the Committee's request by summarizing the achievements of 2023 and presenting a strategic framework for 2024, focusing on Phase 1 outcomes and the preparation for further expansion.

The City of Toronto's Complaints and Compliments project is a strategic initiative designed to improve, standardize and simplify the process of making a complaint or providing feedback to the City, for increased transparency, fairness, and accessibility. Throughout 2023, considerable progress was made in the design and development of new business processes, content simplification, and preparation for the Phase 1 launch. The strategic approach for the upcoming year is focused on a rigorous evaluation of the initial implementation, continuous stakeholder engagement, and the thoughtful expansion of the project's reach to additional divisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Customer Experience recommends that:

1. Service Excellence Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact from the adoption of the recommendations in this report. The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact statement.

DECISION HISTORY

The Service Excellence Committee, at its meeting on December 18, 2023, requested the City Manager, in consultation with the Executive Director, Customer Excellence (311), to report back to the Service Excellence Committee by the end of March 2024 on efforts underway to enhance the compliments and complaints mechanisms across various divisions and City Offices: <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.SE1.1>.

COMMENTS

The Complaints and Compliments project is a crucial step towards creating a more customer-centric complaints process for Toronto residents, businesses, and visitors. By modernizing and standardizing the City's multiple intake processes to one common process, the project aims to make the journey of filing a complaint or compliment more consistent, seamless, accessible, transparent, and fair for all.

Defining the Capability

CXD worked with the Integrated Service Divisions (ISDs) that had an existing complaints intake process via 311; these include Municipal Licensing and Standards – Animal Services, Solid Waste Management Services, Toronto Water, Transportation Services – Operations and Maintenance. CXD also collaborated with the Deputy City Managers' Offices for Corporate Services and Infrastructure Services, and the City Manager's Office to re-imagine the City's complaints capability to address the current-state challenges and enable the public to initiate a complaint for the above ISDs when, where and how they prefer.

In early 2023, CXD leveraged best practices from external organizations and internal City practices, as well as findings from customer engagements to develop a first iteration of corporate complaints standards for the City of Toronto. The standards were the outcome of approximately 20 weeks of divisional engagements involving the five ISDs listed above plus Urban Forestry, eight enabler groups, and 49 staff members participating in work sessions to design the standards, as well as public engagements. See Appendix 1 for further details on these engagements.

The complaints standards define the future vision, culture and customer-service principles for the complaints capability and were used during design and delivery to ensure a standardized approach is adopted across divisions.

Standards and the Future State - An Integrated, City-Wide Complaints Process

The project's vision is to build a City-wide, customer-centric, and integrated end-to-end complaints process, encompassing standards that include:

- **Improved Information, Navigation and Centralized Intake:** Customers will no longer have to understand our organizational structure in order to file a complaint, as the new City-wide process is clearer, more intuitive and customer-centric; guiding customers through a seamless journey. Customers have access to a centralized complaints intake process, through a channel of their choice - phone, online (including a mobile app), in-person and via mail.
- **Seamless Triage and Life-Cycle Management:** Customers will experience a more integrated, end-to-end complaints process that tracks, assesses, and triages complaints. Customers can opt-in to receive status updates ensuring they are updated throughout the process.
- **Proactive Closing-of-the-Loop:** Customers will be informed when their complaint is resolved or closed and will receive relevant information in relation to their complaint and its investigation. Customers will also be given the opportunity to provide feedback on their complaint experience to enable continuous improvement of the process.
- **Improved Escalation:** Customers will be informed of an escalation process associated with their complaint. The escalation process will enable senior management to see an initial complaint and understand how it was handled, making the process much more efficient for all involved.
- **Enhanced Accountability:** The City will have one system to track complaints which will allow for City-wide reporting and accountability, ensuring data driven decisions.

These standards drove the scope of the Complaints and Compliments project, designing a future state with a focus on the following outcomes (see Appendix 1):

- Improved content and navigation on toronto.ca
- Streamlined complaints initiation and escalation for the public
- Access through 311's phone channel, website, or mobile app 24/7/365
- Clear, consistent experience in preferred language and channel of choice
- Tracking number for convenient follow-up and to stay up to date through notifications via SMS or e-mail
- Improved transparency and accountability (data and analytics)

Phase 1 - Current Progress

Throughout 2023 and into early 2024, CXD partnered with Technology Services, the Deputy City Managers' Offices for Corporate Services and Infrastructure Services, the City Manager's Office and the previously mentioned ISDs (Municipal Licensing and

Standards – Animal Services, Solid Waste Management Services, Toronto Water, Transportation Services – Operations and Maintenance) to deliver the following outcomes for the ISDs:

- Common and standardized Complaints and Compliments processes
- Updated webpages for a common self-service experience
- Standardized reporting and metrics
- Standardized escalation processes
- Increased customer transparency with the ability to request status updates on their complaint or escalation

These outcomes were achieved and delivered through key phases and milestones of the projects:

- **Design and Development:** Collaborated with the divisions involved in the initial phase of the project to jointly develop new and common business processes. These processes were designed to improve the management of the complaints lifecycle and centralize customer communication. This shift toward a unified record system is expected to increase transparency, strengthen accountability, and enhance the generation of insights across the entire process.
- **Consultation:** Engaged 24 subject matter experts from the City's equity, diversity, and inclusion groups to ensure the new experience is equitable, inclusive, and meets diverse needs and experiences of the public. These groups included: Indigenous Affairs Office, Equity and Human Rights (Accessibility Unit and Equity Unit), Toronto Newcomer Office, Poverty Reduction Strategy, Confronting Anti-Black Racism, Youth Equity Strategy, and Strategic Public and Employee Communications.
- **Simplified Complaints Content:** Developed new webpages related to complaints on toronto.ca and the corresponding mobile app. This content aims to simplify and standardize the submission process across participating divisions. Public feedback was solicited through prototype testing to refine the self-service webpages for complaints intake.
- **Launched Phase 1:** Successfully initiated on February 24, 2024, the launch of Phase 1 is a key first step in assessing and continually refining the new system. Insights and improvements gained from this phase, as well as customers, will be reviewed and carried forward to the next phase.

Next Steps and Future Planning

As we move forward to expand Complaints and Compliments beyond the ISDs, the primary objective remains to provide a standardized customer-centric process across all City divisions. To accomplish this, the project's strategic focus throughout 2024 will be on the following:

- **Evaluating Phase 1 Outcomes:** Following the launch of Phase 1, the team will undertake a thorough evaluation of the outcomes. This assessment will guide the planning for future enhancements and facilitate the integration of additional divisions into the project in 2024.

- **Initiating Phase 2 - Scaling the Project:** Identify further divisions for integration into the expansion of Complaints and Compliments project. The objective is to scale the project's reach while maintaining a sustainable model that incorporates findings from the initial phase.
- **Development of Escalation Policy Framework:** As part of Phase 2, establish a comprehensive corporate policy encompassing guidelines, process, and standards to effectively manage and optimize response times for escalations.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Continuous refinement of process as key focus, leveraging data and user feedback to implement iterative enhancements that support service quality.
- **Change Management:** Ongoing engagements with internal stakeholders to provide updates on enhancements, experience and overall progress.
- **Advertisements:** In response to CABR Action Item 19.5 (advertise the City's complaints processes in communities of African descent), advertising materials geared towards Black youth audiences in Toronto have been generated with the goal of connecting residents to the ways in which they can notify the City of issues in their community. The campaign will help to connect Black youth and all residents to 311 channels so they can submit service requests to the City, and it is also expected to drive traffic towards the City's complaints pages and processes. The campaign is planned to launch in late 2024.

Divisional Engagement

Divisional partnership and engagement are essential to overall success and meeting the primary objective. The project will continue to lead discussions with divisional partners and stakeholders to ensure process standardization. Examples of such divisional engagements will include:

- Compiling lessons learned from the Phase 1 divisional partners and stakeholders.
- Collaborating with other divisional partners to determine readiness through process reviews and understanding change management needs
- Establishing common service level recommendations for complaint handling
- Establishing common service levels recommendations for escalation handling
- Developing a roadmap for continuous scalability (rollout) and ongoing improvements

The Complaints and Compliments project is an example of the City's ongoing commitment to enhancing service quality and promoting transparency. As the project advances into its next phase, the strategic priorities laid out are crucial. They not only ensure sustained progress but also align seamlessly with the City's overarching objectives of delivering exceptional service and maintaining transparent operations.

CONTACT

Gary A. Yorke, Executive Director, Customer Experience, 416-338-7789
 Gary.A.Yorke@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Gary A. Yorke
Executive Director, Customer Experience

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1 - Complaints and Compliments Capability Project