

COUNCIL POLICY

CUSTOMER CODE OF CONDUCT



CITY OF
Lethbridge

Policy Number:	CC-72
Approved by:	PENDING CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL
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Policy Owner:	Finance and Corporate Performance

PURPOSE

The Council of the City of Lethbridge has a broad mandate to provide good government, develop and maintain a safe and viable community, and to supply desirable and/or necessary services to the community. In fulfilling this mandate, The City of Lethbridge recognizes the importance of maintaining a positive and productive environment for all Interactions with our Customers. The Customer Code of Conduct Policy aims to foster respectful and constructive communication between Customers and City Representatives. By establishing clear expectations and promoting positive behaviours, we seek to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations and ensure the well-being of all involved parties. The City recognizes the importance of providing a clear understanding of the reasons behind this policy without unnecessarily limiting its scope. The Customer Code of Conduct policy is intended to address those situations where Interactions with Customers are not positive, productive, or respectful.

DEFINITION(S)

Term	Description
<u>City Representative:</u>	Includes but is not limited to any council member, employee, volunteer, contractor, etc.
<u>CRM:</u>	Customer Relationship Management
<u>Customer:</u>	Any individual who interacts with City Representatives, irrespective of the nature or purpose of their Interaction and regardless of whether a monetary exchange is involved.
<u>Forum Shopping:</u>	The practice of strategically navigating through various City departments in search of a more favorable outcome for a case or situation. This could involve presenting the same issue to multiple City Representatives or seeking assistance externally, such as appealing to higher levels of government.

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<u>Interaction:</u>	The written, verbal, or in-person communication of a Customer in the form of inquiries, requests, or direct involvement with a City Representative.
<u>Interactions Under Review:</u>	Interactions that are identified as being in potential breach of the Customer Code of Conduct Policy.
<u>Reframing:</u>	Deliberately attempting to recontextualize the facts of an issue or concern in order to achieve a desired outcome, especially when the issue or concern has already been addressed.
<u>Review:</u>	A formal assessment of all details of an Interaction Under Review, including the efforts of the City in resolving the Interaction Under Review and future expectations for the Customer.

POLICY STATEMENT(S)

City and Customer Expectations

All Customers of the City of Lethbridge are entitled to be treated in a fair and respectful manner. In turn, Customers are expected to treat City Representatives and other Customers in a courteous, respectful, and civil manner. This Customer Code of Conduct Policy is consistent with and complements the following City Policies and Processes, and provincial legislation:

- Administrative Policy HR-10: Employee Code of Conduct
- Administrative Policy SH-10: Workplace Harassment & Violence Prevention
- *Alberta Health and Safety Act*
- *Alberta Human Rights Act*
- City of Lethbridge Inquiry Resolution Process
- Council Code of Conduct Bylaw

City Expectations of Customers

The City of Lethbridge sets the following expectations on its Customers:

Reasonable Demands: Customer Interactions that are attainable, realistic, and proportionate to the resources available to the City of Lethbridge.

Unreasonable demands include:

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- Issuing instructions and making demands about how to handle their Interaction, the priority it should be given, or the outcome to be achieved.
- Emotional blackmail, manipulation, intimidation, harassment, shaming, seduction or portraying themselves as being victimized when this is not the case.
- Insisting on outcomes that are not possible or appropriate in the circumstances, for example asking for someone to be fired or prosecuted, or for an apology or compensation when there is no reasonable basis for this.
- Demanding services of a nature or scale that the City cannot provide, even after a City Representative has explained this to the Customer repeatedly.

Reasonable Cooperation: Customer Interactions that are presented in a reasonably organized manner, with a clear, relevant definition of concerns and appropriate level of detail. The City will strive to collaborate and work together towards finding solutions for all relevant Interactions.

Unreasonable Lack of Cooperation includes:

- Sending a constant stream of complex or disorganized information without clearly defining the issue at hand or explaining how the material provided relates to their Interaction.
- Providing little or no detail around their Interaction or providing information in scattered or sporadic amounts.
- Refusing to follow or accept the City's instructions, suggestions, or advice without a clear or justifiable reason for doing so.
- Arguing that a particular solution is the correct one in the face of valid contrary arguments and explanations.
- Unhelpful behaviour such as withholding information, acting dishonestly and misquoting others.

Reasonable Persistence: Customers are expected to accept reasonable and logical explanations from City Representatives. City Representatives will provide reasonable efforts in resolving every Interaction.

Unreasonable Persistence includes:

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- An unwillingness or inability to accept reasonable and logical explanations (including the results of a Review), that have been comprehensively considered and dealt with (even when it is evident the Customer does understand the information provided).
- Repeatedly demanding a new Review without arguing or presenting a case for one and refusing to accept that we cannot or will not take further action on their Interaction Under Review that has been resolved.
- Reframing an Interaction Under Review that has been Reviewed in an effort to get it taken up again.
- Multiple and repeated phone calls, visits, letters, emails (including carbon copied correspondence) after we have repeatedly asked them not to.
- Forum Shopping.

Reasonable Behaviours: Customer Interactions that are courteous and respectful.

Unreasonable Behaviours include:

- Acts of aggression, verbal abuse, derogatory, racist, or defamatory remarks.
- Harassment, intimidation, or physical violence.
- Rude, confronting, or threatening correspondence.
- Threats of harm to self or third parties, threats with a weapon or threats to damage property, including bomb threats.
- Stalking in person or online.
- Emotional manipulation.

Reasonable Arguments: Customer Interactions that have a cause and effect, where it is possible to resolve the Interaction.

Unreasonable Arguments include:

- Failure to follow a logical sequence that the Customer is able to explain to staff.
- Arguments that are not supported by any evidence or that are based on conspiracy theories.
- Arguments that lead a Customer to reject valid arguments and/or arguments that are contrary to their position.
- Arguments that are trivial when compared to the amount of time, resources, and attention that the Customer demands.

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- Arguments that are false, inflammatory, defamatory, or that the City cannot lawfully agree with.

The above expectations apply to all Customer Interactions with City Representatives including but not limited to:

- Written communication
- Telephone communication
- In-person communication
- Electronic communication, including email and social media

Customer Breach of Policy

A breach of the Customer Code of Conduct policy may result in the City imposing limitations and restrictions on a Customer's future Interactions with City Representatives and access to services, therefore the threshold for considering an Interaction as breaching the Customer Code of Conduct policy is intentionally set high, ensuring that only behaviour significantly impacting the City's effectiveness and efficiency is addressed under this policy.

Notifications

When it has been determined that a Customer is potentially in breach of the Customer Code of Conduct Policy and/or restrictions on future Interactions are being considered, the Customer will be notified in writing (letter or electronic) as identified in Administrative Procedure FS-00PR-01: Resolution of Customer Inquiries.

Restrictions

If it is determined that there is a breach of the Policy, restrictions may be placed on the Customer for a reasonable period in accordance with Administrative Procedure FS-00PR-01: Resolution of Customer Inquiries. Potential restrictions include, but are not limited to:

- a) Limiting Contact Times: Limiting a Customer's contact to a particular time, day, length of time, or frequency.
- b) Limiting Contact Channels: Limiting or modifying the forms of contact that the Customer can have with City Representatives, including face-to-face interviews, telephone, and

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written communications, prohibiting access to Council premises or City facilities, and making contact through a designated City Representative only.

- c) Limiting Subject Matter: Limiting the subject matter of communications that will be considered and responded to under the Interaction(s) Under Review.

A Customer's access to City Representatives may be changed or restricted. In making this determination, the City, in accordance with Administrative Procedure FS-00PR-01, will evaluate all relevant factors associated with a Customer's dealing with City Representatives, including their prior conduct and history of Interactions with the City.

RESPONSIBILITIES

City Manager or designate shall:

- a) Oversee policy implementation.
- b) Establish administrative policies and procedures to effectively administer the Policy.

Director or designate shall:

- a) Collaborate in assessing complaints, establish categories of conduct in contravention to the policy, implement action plans.

Inquiry Resolution Administrator or designate shall:

- a) Facilitate the Review process.
- b) Reassess CRM program annually for active restrictions.

City Employees shall:

- a) Act in accordance with the Customer Code of Conduct Policy.

PROCEDURE(S)

Procedures are outlined and to be adhered to, as per Administrative Procedure FS-00PR-01: Resolution of Customer Inquiries.

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POLICY REVIEW

This policy must be reviewed by City Council, once per term, as stipulated in City Council Policy CC-01: Policy Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. The policy or associated procedures may be reviewed sooner if required due to changes in the business or risk environment.

SUPPORTING REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- Administrative Policy HR-10: Employee Code of Conduct
- Administrative Policy SH-10: Workplace Harassment & Violence Prevention
- Administrative Procedure FS-00PR-01: Resolution of Customer Inquiries
- *Alberta Health and Safety Act*
- *Alberta Human Rights Act*
- *Alberta Ombudsman: Dealing Fairly with Unreasonable Conduct by Complainants*
- City of Lethbridge Inquiry Resolution Process
- Council Code of Conduct Bylaw

REVISION HISTORY

Review Date	Description
[July 9, 2024]	New Policy – Effective Date.