



MEMO

To: Public Service Committee
From: Bill Goulding, Acting Director of Public Works
Date: May 11, 2023
Subject: Public Works Reporting Hotline Update

Traditionally, informal communication between staff and residents occurs at all operational levels. While staff recognizes that these neighbourly interactions are an important part of the community culture of Elliot Lake, these unstructured conversations can often leave constituents with unmet expectations and can leave staff vulnerable to dealing with inappropriate behaviour from disgruntled residents.

Disturbingly, there have been several recent incidents where residents have interacted with the Department of Public Work's staff in a negative way. These events have led to reduced employee morale, reduced staff productivity, and increased staff downtime. Frustratingly, these interactions between staff and residents seldom seem to result in satisfaction or progress for anyone involved.

In terms of municipal process, it is important that interactions with the public are tracked and recorded properly to ensure compliance with municipal recordkeeping requirements as well as best practices relating to the City's insurance policy.

Most importantly, maintaining a comprehensive record of feedback and reporting from residents allows staff to be better able to properly follow up on and act upon identified issues.

Given the volume and variety of issues brought forth to staff by the community, it is impractical to expect workers at all levels to be able to engage properly in constituent relations and to document those interactions with the care and attention that is required of the City. Coordinating the inter-staff communication and reporting involved is burdensome and ties up significant amounts of staff time.

With this in mind, staff has been working towards implementing systems around this issue to improve compliance, to reduce staff workload and to increase the effectiveness of operations in dealing with the issues that constituents bring forward.

In January 2023, the Public Works Department implemented an incident reporting line to report infrastructure/water line issues. This system uses an automated attendant to record voice messages from callers that are then automatically transcribed and emailed to the appropriate Public Works staff to address. It leverages the newly upgraded phone system at City Hall, and was able to be implemented very low cost.

This system has proven to be very effective in allowing staff to address reported issues appropriately and efficiently. It has worked so well that in the near future, staff is working towards incorporating this call in reporting line into the main directories of City Hall's phone system.

The intent is to expand the scope of use of this system to direct all incoming Public Works feedback, service requests and reporting to this line in the very near future.

The reporting hotline system has been supplemented with an email address (alertpw@elliottlake.ca) where constituents can report their issue via email if they prefer. The City website has also been modified to include a Public Works option in the pull-down menu on the Report a Concern page located at <https://www.elliottlake.ca/reportaconcern>

Public Works staff will shortly be issued business cards that contain the above contact information for the reporting system, and will be directed to distribute them to residents that wish to leave actionable feedback.

Staff has traditionally accommodated the public attending the Public Works offices on Timber Rd., but will begin directing visitors and callers who wish to report an issue to either the reporting line, the reporting email, the website or City Hall in the in the event that they do not have a telephone, use email or have access to the internet. A public handset will be made available at City Hall so that these visitors can access and use the system.

Staff expects that it will take some time to educate the public on these changes, and anticipates that flexible adjustments to the approach will need to be made over time in order to best meet the needs of the community.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Gabel", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.