

Staff Report

Report To: Corporate Services Committee
Report From: Carly McArthur, Communications Advisor
Meeting Date: November 14, 2024
Report Code: CM-24-037
Subject: Report A Concern Form

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CM-24-037 respecting the Report A Concern Form, the Corporate Services Committee recommends that City Council receive the report for information purposes.

Highlights:

- OwenSound.ca/ReportAConcern is an online form for service requests with a streamlined and standardized process for response.
- Since 2017, the City has received over 1500 completed submissions.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Service Excellence.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

None.

Background:

Report a Concern is one method for contacting the City to request service or to identify a concern, via a standard online form.

In 2017, the City of Owen Sound created an online form to streamline and standardize the process for service requests made by residents. The simple online form asks a few questions about the concern or service request, including what category the request would fall under. Based on the form selection, a completed response is directed to the appropriate staff member with the particular issues outlined. This submission receives a tracking number and initiates a workflow internally to complete the service request and respond to the submitter appropriately.

By utilizing an easy-to-access online form, this process avoids additional emails and calls to multiple people. The online form was initially created with the launch of the City's website in 2017. Since then, it has continued to be modified based on feedback received.

The form can be easily accessed by visiting OwenSound.ca/ReportAConcern or by scanning a QR code on a Councillor's business card or other City promotional materials. Clicking on 'Report A City Issue' opens a new tab that initially asks what the topic of the concern is.

Once a topic is selected, mandatory questions tailored to that topic must be completed. The form also includes an option to upload an image relating to the concern being submitted, where applicable.

Once the required fields are complete, the form asks for the submitter's contact information in case further follow-up is required. Upon submission, the completed form is sent via email, with a tracking number, to the appropriate staff based on the topic selected (it is always sent to more than one staff member in case of staff absences). Submitters will also receive a copy of their answers, providing they have included a valid email address.

By digitalizing this essential function, the City has increased response and also provided the community with a more convenient, transparent, and efficient way to engage with city services. This user-friendly online form represents Owen Sound's ongoing commitment to leveraging technology to better serve residents and improve operational efficiency.

The form is promoted with a key icon on the City's website homepage, through social media posts, media releases, and included in signage and ongoing messaging to direct people to use the Report A Concern form.

There is an easy-to-use web address – OwenSound.ca/ReportAConcern – as well as a QR code that is used in such promotions.

Analysis:

As of October 15, 2024, 1532 completed form submissions had been received across all City departments.

The chart below shows the number of submissions received per year. Seasonality seems to affect the number of submissions, with many years having the highest number coming in Spring and Summer.

Submission Breakdown by Years:

Year	Season/Quarter	# of Submissions
2017	April – December	43
2018	January – December	81
2019	January – December	95
2020	January – December	147
2021	January – December	130
2022	January – December	224
2023	January – December	406
2024	January – October 15	406 to date

Submission Breakdown by Categories:

Topic of Concern	# of Submissions (2017-2024)
Animal Concern	52
By-law Complaint	263
Garbage or Recycling Issue	111
General Concern	400
Graffiti Issue	10
Playground Equipment Issue	26

Pothole Issue	100
Road Sign Issue	42
Sewer Back-up	12
Sidewalk Issue	64
Snow Removal Issue	53
Streetlight Issue	72
Traffic Signal Issue	77
Transit Service Issue	15
Tree Issue	187
Water Main Break Issue	3
Water Quality Concern	12
Webcam Issue	6
Winter Snow Plow Damage	8
No Selection*	19

*With adjustments to the form, a topic selection is mandatory as of mid-2020.

Financial Implications:

No financial implications.

Communication Strategy:

City's website, social media, signage and ongoing messaging to direct people to use the Report A Concern form.

Consultation:

Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness

Attachments:

None.

Recommended by:

Carly McArthur, Communications Advisor

Michelle Palmer, Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Carly McArthur, Communications Advisor at cmcarthur@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1211.