

# Condominium Authority of Ontario (CAO) Advisory Process Terms of Reference

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As an organization committed to serving condominium communities, the CAO seeks feedback and input to better understand the needs of condominium owners and other condominium community members. The CAO's Administrative Agreement, Section 7.2(4), requires that the CAO's Board of Directors establish an Advisory Process that allows condominium communities to provide direct input to the Board.

The CAO's Advisory Process offers several mechanisms through which condominium communities can provide advice and recommendations to the Board of Directors and management on issues important to these communities. These terms of reference outline how the CAO will connect with condominium communities to obtain, consider, and prioritize their feedback. Each year the CAO will report publicly on the input received and the priorities to address what we heard.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The CAO strives to respond to the needs of the people it serves. It was launched after extensive consultation with condominium communities, and it continues to engage with condominium community members. This input is critical to identifying priority issues facing the community, for achieving our user-centred customer service and systems design goals, and for helping us to innovate and optimize both our new and existing services.

The CAO offers owners, directors, managers, residents, buyers, industry professionals and the public a suite of digital services including:

- Easy-to-use information to help everyone understand their rights and responsibilities under the *Condominium Act, 1998*
- Free online resources, tools, and *Guided Steps to Common Issues* to help condominium owners and residents resolve common issues and disputes on their own
- Accessible, cost-effective, easy-to-use online dispute resolution through the Condominium Authority Tribunal (CAT)

- Mandatory training for condominium directors elected or appointed on or after November 1, 2017, to help them understand their oversight and legal obligations
- Easy-to-navigate condominium returns and notice-of-change systems for condominium corporations to file and update key information
- A publicly available and searchable Condominium Public Registry, containing important information provided by every condominium corporation in Ontario
- Integrated information and customer service teams who respond to telephone and email inquiries to help users better understand the legal and governance framework that governs condominium communities.

Feedback from people who use our services helps to provide input to the CAO's advisory processes and helps to:

- **Inform** the CAO's vision and strategic goals to respond to the needs of condominium communities across the province
- **Build relationships** with key members of the condominium community to create better awareness of the CAO's role and vision for customer service, consumer protection, reducing administrative burden, and delivering value for money
- **Engage** condominium owners, directors, managers, residents, buyers, industry professionals and the public to gain insights into current and emerging issues
- **Obtain feedback** regarding the CAO's services in order to address issues and enhance the user experience.

### 3. THE ADVISORY PROCESS

#### 3.1 Purpose

The CAO's Advisory Process gives condominium owners, directors, residents, buyers, managers, industry professionals and the public different ways to provide timely advice and feedback to the Board and the CAO's management on matters relating to CAO services or issues of concern in their condominium communities across Ontario. These processes also provide opportunities to learn more about the CAO's activities.

### 3.2 CAO Engagement Mechanisms

The CAO's Advisory Process will integrate and consolidate feedback and advice received from:

- i. Advisory panels or focus groups
- ii. Condominium board directors
- iii. Users of Guided Steps to Common Issues
- iv. Users of the Condominium Authority Tribunal
- v. User experience sessions
- vi. Industry and public events where the CAO participates
- vii. Website users
- viii. Public awareness polls
- ix. Social media engagement and the CAO's database
- x. CAO Information Services team

The CAO will promote opportunities to provide feedback and input through all the organization's communications channels, including social media platforms and email campaigns. The CAO will gather, organize and respond to feedback throughout the Advisory Process. The CAO invites members of the condominium community and the public to identify issues and areas for improvement to the CAO's services. All channels will include questions about people's experience using CAO services.

#### **i. Advisory Panels or Focus Groups**

To obtain advice regarding new or emerging issues and existing services, the CAO will reach out to owners and other condominium community members to establish ad hoc advisory panels or focus groups, typically by means of an online forum or teleconference.

The CAO will consider various factors in consulting with condominium owners to gather direct feedback on specific issues. Condominium owners and other community members will also be asked to propose priority topics or areas for discussion. Advisory panels or focus groups will complement the ongoing Advisory Process mechanisms, consistent with the CAO's digital strategy to provide accessible and cost-effective service delivery.

**ii. Condominium Board Directors**

At the conclusion of the CAO's mandatory training program for condominium board directors, individuals will be invited to provide feedback regarding the training program.

**iii. Users of Guided Steps to Common Issues**

Users of the CAO's *Guided Steps to Common Issues* will be asked if the information on the website is useful.

**iv. Users of the Condominium Authority Tribunal**

While a Condominium Authority Tribunal (CAT) case is active and throughout Stages 1, 2 and 3, users of the CAT's online dispute resolution system are routinely asked to provide feedback about their experience by completing our Open Case Feedback Survey. After their case has closed, users will be invited to complete a Case Closure Survey, providing feedback on their experience with the dispute resolution process and the outcome of their case.

**v. User-Experience Sessions**

The CAO will conduct in-person or online user-experience sessions to obtain feedback on new or enhanced technology solutions. These sessions will allow the CAO to gather information about what features and navigation users prefer in order to help the CAO achieve its goals for user-centred systems.

**vi. Industry and Public Events**

The CAO will participate in industry and public events across Ontario throughout the year. The CAO will provide updates on CAO activities, and provincial and regional trends. Wherever possible the CAO will host a booth, and its Information Services team will engage with attendees and answer questions about CAO services and the *Condominium Act, 1998*. At every industry or public event where the CAO participates, it will use surveys to gather feedback and collect input.

**vii. Website Users**

The CAO will identify areas of the website to host user-experience surveys. This will allow users to provide immediate feedback and give input about whether information and services were helpful, as well as whether they meet accessibility requirements. The CAO will actively promote user-experience surveys online.

**viii. Public Awareness Poll**

The CAO will continue to have an independent third-party conduct a poll to measure public awareness of the CAO and our services. Questions about the CAO will be included in an annual omnibus survey of 1,000 Ontarians. This random sampling of Ontarians will reflect the overall population based on census data. Respondents will be asked about their awareness of the CAO and its role in the condominium sector and their perception of the value of the CAO's services.

**ix. Social Media Engagement and CAO's Database**

The CAO will use social media platforms to engage with condominium communities on specific issues or topics and will reach out to condominium corporation representatives from across the province who have been identified by condominium corporations in condo returns or notices of change and are contained within the CAO's database to obtain direct feedback.

**x. Information Services team**

The CAO's Information Services team regularly interacts with condominium owners, directors, residents, buyers, managers, industry professionals and the public and serves as a key channel for all condominium community members to make suggestions about the CAO's services and identify issues of concern.

**4. PROMOTION OF THE CAO'S ADVISORY PROCESS**

4.2.1. The CAO will develop a communications strategy to promote awareness of the Advisory Process and the numerous opportunities for owners, directors, managers, residents, buyers, industry professionals and the public to provide the CAO with their views. Outreach will use a mix of digital and traditional channels, including eblasts and social media.

**5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

5.1 The CAO Board of Directors established a working group comprised of two members of the board to provide strategic guidance to CAO staff in implementing and monitoring the Advisory Process.

5.2 CAO staff will collect and analyse the findings from the various feedback channels and report the information to the Board.

## 6. ANALYTICS AND REPORTING ON FEEDBACK

6.1 The CAO will develop a quarterly dashboard report for the Board that consolidates the feedback obtained from owners, directors, managers, residents, buyers, industry professionals and the public. The CAO will maintain an inventory of all feedback received, and how it was addressed. As required by Section 7.2(4) of the Administrative Agreement, a report on the activities and advice provided by this process shall be included in the CAO's annual report. The annual report will highlight what the CAO heard, areas of importance to condominium communities and opportunities for improvement.