



TOWNSHIP OF WELLINGTON NORTH

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY POLICY

DEPARTMENT	CLERK	POLICY NUMBER	2.15
EFFECTIVE DATE	June 22, 2015	LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY	<i>Municipal Act, 2001, Section 270</i>
APPROVED BY:	Blanket Resolution 2015-345 August 10, 2015 (Original Resolution 2015-284)		

POLICY

Accountability, transparency and openness are standards of good government that enhance public trust. They are achieved through the municipality adopting measures ensuring, to the best of its ability, that all activities and services are undertaken utilizing a process that is open and accessible to its stakeholders. In addition, wherever possible, the municipality will engage its stakeholders throughout its decision making process which will be open, visible and transparent to the public.

PURPOSE

Section 270 (1) 5 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* (the Act) provides that all municipalities shall adopt and maintain a policy with respect to the manner in which the municipality will try to ensure that it is accountable to the public for its actions, and the manner in which the municipality will try to ensure that its actions are transparent to the public.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the delivery of the municipality's activities and services in accordance with the principles as outlined herein.

PRINCIPLES

The principles of accountability and transparency shall apply equally to the political process and decision making and to the administrative management of the municipality.

The Council and staff of the Township of Wellington North acknowledges that it is responsible to provide good government for its stakeholders in an accountable and transparent manner by:

- Encouraging public access and participation to ensure that decision making is responsive to the needs of its constituents and receptive to their opinions;
- Delivery high quality services in an accessible manner to our citizens; and
- Promoting the efficient use of public resources.
- Making records available for review other than those specifically prohibited by law

DEFINITIONS

Accountability: The principle that the municipality is obligated to demonstrate and take responsibility for its actions, decisions and policies and that it is answerable to the public at large.

Transparency: The principle that the municipality will conduct its business in an accessible, clear and visible manner and that its activities are open to examination by its stakeholders.

PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES:

1. Financial Matters

The municipality will be open, accountable and transparent to its stakeholders in its financial dealings as required under the Act. Some examples of how the municipality provides such accountability and transparency are as follows:

- Internal/external audit
- Reporting/statements
- Long term financial planning
- Asset management
- Purchasing/procurement policy
- Sale of land
- Budget process, including service analysis
- Open and inclusive priority setting
- Development Charges
- Fees and Charges

2. Internal governance

The municipality's administrative practices ensure specific accountability on the part of its employees through the following initiatives:

- Code of conduct for staff
- Performance management and evaluation
- Orientation/continuing education
- Health and Safety
- Compensation/benefit
- Responsibility for ensuring that administrative practices and procedures recognize Council's commitment to accountability and transparency (CAO)
- Employee policy manual including but not limited to:
 - Workplace harassment policy
 - Workplace violence policy
 - Absence from Work
 - Bereavement Leave
 - Code of Ethics
 - Complaints
 - Discharge
 - Discipline
 - Documentation
 - Dress Code
 - Drugs and Alcohol
 - E-Mail, Internet and Computer Use
 - Employee Benefits
 - Employment Status Date
 - Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy
 - Hiring Procedure
 - Hiring and Promotion (Conflicts of Interest)
 - Hours of Work
 - Jury Duty and Attendance in Court
 - Leave of Absence
 - Loss of Driving Licence
 - Notice of Job Vacancy
 - Overtime

- Professional Development and Training
- Rest Periods
- Retirement/Separation
- Safety
- Sick Leave/Family Leave
- Statutory Holidays
- Storm Closings/Snow Days
- Telephones
- Termination Date
- Theft
- Tuition Assistance
- Vacation
- Workers Compensation

3. Public Participation

The municipality ensures that it is open and accountable to its stakeholders through implementing processes outlining how, when and under what rules meetings will take place.

The municipality's meetings will be open to the public when and as required under the Act, and members of the public will have an opportunity to make delegations or comments in writing on specific items at these meetings. In addition, the municipality has adopted policies which ensure that participation by the public can be meaningful and effective, through timely disclosure of information by various means including print media, websites, etc.

Some specific examples include but are not limited to:

- Code of Conduct for members of Council
- Procedural By-Law
- Inclusive strategic planning
- Delegation rules
- Records retention
- Planning processes
- Provision and procedures for Notice Policy
- Closed Meeting Investigator
- Sale of Land Policy and procedures

4. Actions to promote accountability and transparency

Schedule "A" attached provides a number of actions that have been established by the Township to promote accountability and transparency.

POLICY REVIEW AND PROCEDURE

This Policy will be reviewed as required, but in any case no later than five (5) years from the date of the most recent review. The Clerk will be responsible for initiating the review of this Policy.

SCHEDULE "A"

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Agendas, supporting documentation and Minutes of the Council are posted on the Township's website no later than 12 noon on the Friday prior to the meeting date.

Closed Session Committee and Council Agendas identify the title of the item wherever possible and the criteria or reason for the closed meeting.

Quarterly Budget Reports advise members of Council and the public as to the status of the budget expenditures and flag any areas of concern.

The Sale of Land By-Law/Policy sets out the procedure for the sale or disposal of Township owned land.

The Purchasing/Procurement By-Law/Policy identifies the process for the purchase of goods and services.

The Hiring Policy provides for the hiring of Township staff and addresses such matters as the hiring of relatives and the process to be followed in recruitment of new staff. Employment opportunities are posted on the Town's website and are advertised generally.

The Notice Requirements By-Law/Policy provides for the giving of notice to the public in respect of various matters.

Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for members of Council, which provides that members of Council shall carry out their duties in an impartial and objective basis and addresses such matters as conflict of interest, release of confidential information, etc.

Council has adopted a code of Conduct for Staff which requires staff to carry out their duties on an impartial and objective basis and addresses such matters as conflict of interest, release of confidential information, acceptance of gifts and invitations, etc.

With respect to tax write-offs and uncollectibles, a report is prepared to Council and the public, for the purpose of considering write-offs and uncollectibles.

Public Meetings are scheduled in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning Act*. Where Council believes that there is sufficient reason to schedule more than the one Public Meeting required by the *Act* in order to provide additional information and opportunity for the public to be heard, additional Public Meetings are held.

The Town prepares financial statements, which are audited by the Town's external auditor and are approved by Council. Once approved, the Audited Financial Statements are posted on the Town's website.

The Financial Information Return (FIR) is a data collection tool used by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to collect financial and statistical information on municipalities. The FIR is a standard document comprised of a number of Schedules, which are updated each year to comply with current legislation and reporting requirements. The FIR for each municipality including the Township of Wellington North is posted on the Ministry of Finance website.

The Annual Drinking Water Reports for Wellington North are available for public viewing at the Town Hall and Public Works Department during regular business hours or by visiting the Town's website. The reports provide a brief description for the water systems in the previous year, and the most recent water quality data.

The Clerk has been appointed to oversee the administration of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA) within the municipality to ensure that information available to the public is properly disclosed and that in accordance with MFIPPA the privacy of an individual's personal information existing in government records is protected.

The Fees and Charges By-Law is updated annually at a meeting open to the public.

A Public Presentation is held by the Administration and Finance Committee annually, to present the Budget for public feedback.

The Development Charges By-Law provides for annual reporting of the actual expenditures and proposed expenditures. There is a legislated requirement to review the By-Law within a five (5) year period.

The Township's website has a full listing of Committee and Council Agendas dating back several years as well as copies of by-laws, policies and procedures governing the municipality.

The Township's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is reviewed at least every five (5) years and posted on the Town's website outlining the Township's strategy to prevent and remove barriers. A progress report is submitted annually to Council on the progress of measures taken to implement the strategy outlined in the Accessibility Plan, and is posted on the Township's website.