



Accountability and Transparency Policy

I. Purpose/Application:

Section 270 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* (the Act) requires that all municipalities 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 City activities and services in accordance with the principles set out herein. This policy has been developed in accordance with the *Act*.

II. Definition(s):

i). Accountability – Being accountable means that Oshawa City Council is clear in its actions, that its decision-making processes are understandable, that it is accessible to the citizens it represents and, finally, it is responsible for its decisions.

ii). Transparency – Transparency requires that the City actively encourages and fosters stakeholder participation. Additionally, transparency means that the City's decision making process is accessible to, and presented in a form understandable by, the general public.

iii). Stakeholder – For the purposes of this policy, means any person or organization having an interest in the City's actions.

III. Policy Statement

The Council of the City acknowledges that it is responsible to provide good government and to further the public interest. A well-managed and accountable government is judged not only on its service delivery role, but also on its representative and democratic role.

Accountability and transparency are two of the principles that guide public sector governance, in addition to integrity, stewardship, leadership, efficiency and customer service.

The three main reasons why there is a need for accountability in public service are as follows:

1. To ensure the responsible and appropriate exercise of powers;
2. To provide assurance in respect to the effective and efficient use of public resources and an adherence to the public interest; and
3. To ensure a process of continuous improvement regarding public administration and governance.

Accountability and transparency will be accomplished by:

1. Providing the resources to keep the public and its elected representatives fully informed;
2. Encouraging public participation and consultation to ensure that decision making is open, visible, inclusive and responsive to citizen preferences and needs;
3. Delivering high quality services to our citizens;
4. Promoting the efficient and effective use of public resources; and
5. Ensuring political, administrative and financial accountability, as provided for below.
6. A commitment to full information disclosure.

IV. Policy Requirements

A. Public Participation and Information Sharing

A.1 Transparent Decision Making

Accountability and transparency require that the City ensure that it is open and accountable to its stakeholders by developing and implementing processes that outline how, when and under what rules meetings will take place. As a rule, the City's meetings will be open to the public and

members of the public will have an opportunity to make delegations on specific items at these meetings. Meetings will only be closed to the public where the public interest requires and where holding a closed meeting is permissible by law. Some specific examples of implementing processes include:

1. Council Procedural By-law;
2. A commitment to adopt and follow a Council Charter;
3. Adhering to legislated open meeting requirements and, where necessary, closed meeting procedures; and,
4. A policy establishing how powers delegated to staff will be exercised.

A.2 Communicating and Seeking Input

The City strives to ensure that, wherever possible, processes and decision making occurs in consultation with its stakeholders, and further, that proper notice is provided to the public and full disclosure of all information is provided. Some specific examples include:

1. Establishment of, and adherence to, a formal Notice Policy;
2. Using inserts in billings for increased communications with the public;
3. Maintaining a City Page in the local media;
4. Maintaining a policy respecting the sale and disposition of land;
5. Development of various strategic plans and annual reporting on the plans;
6. Publication of “Inside Oshawa” – the City’s annual report to citizens; and,

7. Actively measuring and reporting on citizen satisfaction to demonstrate a commitment to constantly improve program delivery.

A.3 Integrity and Respect for Relationships

The City strives to be open, accountable and transparent to its stakeholders in its relations with citizens, institutions and businesses. Some examples of how the City provides such accountability and transparency are as follows:

1. A commitment to adopt and maintain a formal Prosecution Policy defining the respective roles and responsibilities of staff, agents, and Council in the administration of justice;
2. Adoption of a Customer Service Strategy, establishment of a Customer Service Centre and the development of Corporate-wide Customer Service Standards;
3. A commitment to adopt and respect a Council Charter establishing guidelines for appropriate conduct to ensure that the public interest is protected and Oshawa residents may have trust in the integrity and impartiality of their local government; and,
4. The City will conduct itself in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and ensure that the public has access to information affecting the City, the disclosure of which will not be detrimental to the broader public interest, and that personal information of third parties in the custody of the City will be released only in accordance with that *Act*.

B. Financial Matters

Accountability and transparency require that the City be open, accountable and transparent to its stakeholders in its financial dealings. Some examples of how the City provides such accountability and transparency are as follows:

1. Maintenance of internal audit controls;
2. Appointment of an Auditor General to identify efficiencies and mitigate financial risks;
3. Conduct of a formal Program Review;
4. Completion of the annual external audit;
5. Making financial statements, reports, agendas and strategic plans available on the City's website;
6. Long term financial planning through approval of a Strategic Financial Plan and financial updates;
7. Maintaining a formal insurance program to mitigate financial risks;
8. A commitment to develop and maintain an Asset Management Program;
9. Maintenance of a public purchasing process in accordance with the City's policies and by-laws governing the purchase of goods and services and achieving value for money, including the establishment of valuation benchmarking against which budgetary and purchasing decisions will be measured;
10. Maintaining an open budget process with adequate notice of meetings;
11. Business planning at the Corporate and Departmental levels; and,
12. Establishing, implementing and refining a system of performance measurement and reporting on all City facilities and major programs, as defined by budget, in 2008.

C. Corporate Administration

Administrative accountability and transparency requires that the City ensure specific accountability on the part of its workforce by ensuring knowledgeable and competent employees through many different means, as follows:

1. Mandatory Code of Ethics for staff;
2. Formal system of staff performance management and evaluation;
3. Formal, open and fair hiring and employment policies;
4. A commitment to assist in funding continuing education;
5. Providing a safe, harassment-free, accessible and healthy workplace;
6. A formal staff recognition program;
7. Establishing, tracking and reporting on clear timelines for achieving objectives;
8. A formal system of compensation and benefit review to ensure equity and competitiveness;
9. A commitment to continuous improvement;
10. A commitment to preserve and demonstrate Oshawa's position as an employer of choice; and,
11. A commitment to a high-degree of productivity.

V. Policy Implementation

Council will determine the manner and timing of consultation with stakeholders related to major policy decisions.

Practices and procedures will reflect current legislative requirements and regulations. In the event of a conflict between this policy and any legislative requirements, the legislative requirements will prevail.

The City Manager is responsible for ensuring that administrative practices and procedures to be followed by staff recognize Council's commitment to accountability and transparency.