

COUNCIL ATTACHMENT 3



STATUS

Council Approved	Y	N
CAO Approved:	Y	N

TITLE: Accountability and Transparency Policy	NO.: Approval Date: Last Updated:
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POLICY STATEMENT:

A policy to establish the manner in which Regional Council will try to ensure that it is accountable to the public for its actions, and the manner in which Regional Council will try to ensure that its actions are transparent to the public, as required by the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

APPLICATION:

This policy applies to Regional Council, Committees of Council and Regional staff.

PURPOSE:

The *Municipal Act, 2001* 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 in achieving these objectives.

DEFINITIONS:

In this policy, the terms “accountability” and “transparency” shall have the following meanings:

Accountability – The principle that the Region will be answerable to its constituents for the decisions it makes and policies it implements, as well as its actions or inactions.

Transparency – The principle that the Region actively encourages and fosters public access to and participation in its decision making process. Additionally, transparency means that the Region’s decision making process is open and clear to the public.

DESCRIPTION:

Regional Council acknowledges that it is responsible for providing good government with respect to matters within its jurisdiction in an accountable and transparent manner by:

- facilitating public access to information about the Region’s services and programs, and encouraging public participation to ensure that business is conducted openly and

- decision making is responsive to the needs of constituents and receptive to their opinions
- delivering high quality services to residents and businesses and actively seeking input for enhancing service delivery and achieving best practices
- promoting the efficient and effective use of public resources and permitting constituents the opportunity to evaluate the Region's performance in this regard

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

Regional Council has endorsed policies that contribute to creating an accountable and transparent municipal organization. The specific policies are identified below. Regional Council will continue to support the principles set out in this policy in its future initiatives.

i. Financial Matters

The Region will be open, accountable and transparent to its constituents and other affected parties in its financial dealings. Practices and procedures supporting this principle include the following:

1. *internal audits*: the Region's internal Auditor conducts independent assessments to evaluate risk and monitors compliance with purchasing and other procedures. The Auditor reports directly to Council quarterly through the Audit Committee in public session
2. *external audits*: the Region complies with the statutory requirement to appoint an auditor who conducts an annual independent audit and reports on financial statements. The auditor's report is available to the public
3. *business planning and budget process*: Regional Council has adopted a business planning and budget process that imposes stringent requirements on the CAO and Commissioners to provide a rationale for proposed programs and expenditures. Commissioners are also required to prepare a 10 year capital plan which provides advance notice of future initiatives and expenditures. The business planning and budget process is presented at various stages of development with opportunities for public input
4. *procurement policy*: the Region's purchasing by-law and procedures establish a mandatory process for the purchase of goods and services in order to ensure transparency and competitive procurement. Delegated authority to staff is subject to clear limits and is monitored through regular reporting to Council and internal audits

5. *sale of land*: the Region's sale of land policy requires that all surplus property be subject to a market appraisal and that at least 90% of appraised value be achieved

ii. Administrative Management

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

1. *code of conduct*: Regional staff are subject to a code of conduct governing financial responsibilities and ethical behaviour. Managers are responsible for ensuring compliance with the code of conduct and reviewing requirements in annual performance appraisals
2. *performance management*: all Regional staff are required to prepare annual performance plans through which individual performance is linked to Regional objectives. Employees are held accountable for achieving their objectives through annual performance appraisals
3. *hiring policy*: Regional Council has adopted a hiring policy under the *Municipal Act, 2001* which provides for a fair and transparent process and includes provisions governing hiring of relatives
4. *execution of documents by-law*: the by-law governing execution of documents provides clear direction and accountability for staff for matters that can be authorized without a report to Council
5. *delegated authority*: where matters have been delegated to staff, such authority is given within clear limits and includes the requirement to report to Council on the exercise of such authority. This ensures that decisions affecting interested parties will not be made without public accountability

iii. Public Participation

Regional Council ensures that its decision making will be transparent by adhering strictly to the requirements of the *Municipal Act, 2001* in the conduct of meetings of Committees and Council, as embodied in the procedure by-law, including the process for conducting meetings in closed session.

The Region facilitates public involvement in its activities by ensuring adequate notice and relevant information are provided to the public of all meetings and public information sessions. Regional Council has adopted a policy for Public Notice Requirements under the *Municipal Act, 2001*, which demonstrates this commitment to transparency.