

# HALDIMAND COUNTY

## POLICY No. 2007- 05

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**Subject:** ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

**Purpose:** The *Municipal Act*, 2001, as amended, (the *Act*) requires that a municipality 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.

This policy sets out the steps taken by Haldimand County to comply with this requirement.

**Policy:**

**I. Definitions**

“Accountable/Accountability” means the principle that Haldimand County will be responsible to its constituents for decisions made, policies implemented and its actions or inactions.

“Transparent/Transparency” means the principle that Haldimand County actively encourages and fosters participation and openness in its decision making process and that its decision making process is open and clear to the public.

**II. Policy Statement**

Haldimand County Council (“Council”) is responsible to its constituents to provide good government in respect of all matters within its jurisdiction.

An integral part of that responsibility consists of ensuring that its actions are Transparent, and that it is Accountable for those actions.

A policy of Transparency allows constituents to see and assess Council’s actions, thereby enhancing public trust and confidence.

A policy of Accountability assures constituents that Council understands that it is responsible for its actions.

In keeping with Council’s commitment to the principles of Transparency and Accountability, all corporate policies are available on the County’s website, and examples of those policies are referenced below.

Council is committed to Transparency and Accountability, and adopts the within policy in furtherance of that commitment.

### **III. Policy Requirements**

#### **1. Application**

The principles of Accountability and Transparency shall apply to the substantive and procedural aspects of both the political and decision making processes of Council, and to administrative management of the County.

#### **2. Financial Matters**

Council recognizes that its decisions have significant impacts on the use of public funds, and accordingly, Council acknowledges that its decisions respecting the use of public funds must be transparent, and that Council is accountable for those decisions.

The following policies illustrate how the County provides Accountability and Transparency with respect to financial matters:

- Disposal of Surplus Lands Policy
- Lease Financing Policy
- Tax Rebates to Charitable or Similar Organizations Policy
- Cash Management and Investment Policy
- Expense Reimbursement Policy
- Corporate Vehicle Usage Policy
- Community Hall Capital Funding Policy
- Facility Usage and Solicitation Policy
- Community Partnership Program Grants to Organization Policy

The County shall continue to retain the services of outside auditors to ensure the handling of financial matters in addition to the internal controls provided within the County in accordance with acceptable accounting practices and within the scope of the *Act*.

#### **3. Administrative Management and Accountability of Staff**

Council understands that its decisions are carried out by the management staff of the County, and that it is equally important that the principles of Accountability and Transparency apply to staff.

The municipality's administrative practices ensure Accountability on the part of its staff through the following initiatives:

- Recruitment Policies
- Hiring Managers in the Health and Social Services Department
- Harassment Policy
- Use of Purchasing Cards Policy

Further, the County presently has a Code of Conduct for staff to assist employees in matters of conduct to avoid conflict of interest and to serve the public in a manner beyond reproach. Compliance with this code of conduct is mandatory and a breach of this code may result in discipline.

#### 4. Public Notice and Participation

The County encourages and welcomes public participation in the municipal process.

The County's meetings will be open to the public when and as required under the *Act*, and members of the public will be notified when and how meetings take place in accordance with Haldimand County Public Notice Policy dealing with public notice.

In addition, the County ensures that its meetings are open and accountable to its constituents through the requirements of its Procedural By-law No. 510/04, as amended.

Further, the County will ensure Accountability with respect to public notice and participation through the appointment of a closed meeting investigator who, has the function to investigate, in an independent manner, whether or not there has been a breach of the closed meeting provisions of the *Act*.

In order to continue to be as transparent as possible, notice of all Council and Council in Committee meetings shall be posted on the website pursuant to the requirements of the public notice policy.

Copies of agendas, reports and minutes of the public portion of all Council and Council in Committee meetings shall be made available to the public on the website and also available through the Clerk's office at any time for the purpose of reviewing, once Council has received their copy of the agenda and minutes.

#### 5. Accountability of Council

The County shall ensure Accountability on the part of members of Council through the following initiatives:

- The adoption of a Code of Conduct for members of Council prior to April 1, 2008.
- The appointment of an Integrity Commissioner who will be responsible for reporting functions relating to the Code of Conduct governing the ethical behaviour of members of Council
- The appointment of a Closed Meeting Investigator to ensure that any complaints alleging non-compliance with closed meetings provisions of the *Act* are fully investigated in accordance the *Act*.

6. Council/Staff Protocol

The County has adopted a Council/Staff protocol to expand on the roles of Council and Staff and to provide a framework within which the Mayor, Council and Staff can carry out their respective roles with a view to ensuring that working relationships are effective and result in efficient delivery of services. This assists both Council and staff with the obligation to be Accountable.

**IV. Review and Evaluation of Policy**

Haldimand County shall continue to operate and conduct its affairs in an Accountable and Transparent method by updating and revising its policies, when required, including this policy to be Accountable and Transparent.

If, at any time, the policies adopted by Council cannot be complied with, full reports shall be made to Council for their consideration in open Council.

<b>Topical Index</b>	Corporate Services
<b>Policy Number</b>	2007-05
<b>Short Title</b>	Accountability and Transparency
<b>SMT Approval Date</b>	
<b>Council in Committee</b>	December 10, 2007 Recommendation # 37
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<b>Revisions</b>	