



Accountability and Transparency Policy Best Practice

This document is meant to be used in conjunction with the accompanying *Accountability and Transparency Policy*.

For each municipality, the content and format of the Accountability and Transparency Policy template can be modified to suit the needs of your municipality. The guidelines, checklists or best practice have been prepared to help you consider how to apply Open Government concepts to your municipal operations and decision-making.

Policy Principles

Section 3 of the Policy contains a substantial list of principles that apply to Accountability and Transparency Policies in general. Some of these may not apply to your municipality, while there may be others that apply but are not listed. This list should be customized in accordance with your situation.

Open Government Commitments

Section 5.3 of the Policy simply states that Council will meet 6 times per year. This is the minimum legislated schedule, but your municipality may have a different schedule. Section 110 (3) of the Municipal Government Act requires that Council hold 6 meetings per year and that these meetings are open to the public. Best practice is to hold Council meetings once a month or more frequently. For example, the Town of Alberton meets once a month while the Town of North Rustico meets two times each month.

Section 5.4 of the policy lists how the municipality meeting schedule will be distributed. Creating an annual schedule of meetings is a requirement under section 110 (3) of the Municipal Government Act. The schedule must include date, time and place of the meeting. Many municipal websites include a statement like “The Council meets on the third Monday of each month at 6:00 pm. In the event that the third Monday is a holiday, the meeting is held on the following day.” A better practice would be to include the list of dates that the Council is meeting such as January 2, 2018, February 5, 2018 etc. This avoids confusion around statutory holidays and can take into consideration things like a summer schedule where Council may not meet as

frequently. In addition, the schedule must include a clear statement about the time and place of the meeting. Council committee meetings should also be included on this schedule. This should be customized for your municipality.

Section 5.5 of the policy notes that Council will only hold a closed meeting after a public resolution. Under section 119 (1) of the Municipal Government Act, Council may close all or part of a meeting to the public by resolution to discuss specific matters as laid out in this section. Council must identify the section of 119 (1) of the Municipal Government Act it will be considering at the closed meeting in the resolution. Council should also make a resolution to return to the public meeting.

Section 5.6 of the policy notes how agendas will be made available to the public. Best practice suggests that agendas and reports under consideration be made available in advance of public deliberations. The Town of Kensington publishes a tentative agenda package which includes minutes of the previous meeting, reports, applications and correspondence. This should be customized for your municipality.

Section 5.7 of the policy describes how minutes will be made available. Best practice suggests that the minutes be made available on the Council website after adoption at the next Council meeting. Providing public viewing is a minimum standard and Council should consider ways of routinely sharing minutes and Council decisions. This should be customized for your municipality.

Section 5.8 of the policy gives the available of documents for public inspection. Best practice suggests that Council bylaws and policies should be available on the Council website. The Town of Stratford has posted all bylaws and policies on the Town's website. These bylaws and policies are easy to locate and are available as a PDF so that they can be easily downloaded and printed if required at <http://www.townofstratford.ca/town-hall/government/bylaws/by-laws/>. This should be customized for your municipality.

Section 5.9 ensures that meetings have time set aside for public input. This represents best practice. Individuals who wish to speak about specific matters such as a development proposal or tax issue may be heard by a Committee of Council. Council should promote opportunities for public input.

Section 5.10 deals with making sure financial practices are open and transparent. Best practice suggests that the budget and the audited financial statements be posted on the Council website. Most PEI municipalities have posted their budget. Few municipalities have posted their audited financial statements. The Town of Borden-Carleton has posted its consolidated financial statements for 2016 in its entirety.