



**Policy:** Accountability and Transparency Policy

**Policy Number:** CP-01

**Effective Date:** February 9, 2026 (adopted by By-law 014-2026)

**Revised Date:**

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### Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to reaffirm the Municipality of Thames Centre's commitment to good governance by establishing a comprehensive framework for promoting accountability, transparency, and public trust in all municipal operations. It ensures that the Municipality operates in an open, responsive, and responsible manner to its citizens and stakeholders.

This policy is required in accordance with Section 270 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

### Application & Scope

This policy applies to all elected officials (Members of Council), municipal employees (full-time, part-time, temporary, and paid-on-call firefighters), volunteers, and third-party contractors or service providers acting on behalf of the Municipality of Thames Centre. It encompasses all municipal activities, decisions, and processes, including but not limited to:

- Legislative functions and decision-making
- Administrative operations and service delivery
- Financial management and procurement
- Human resource practices
- Public engagement and communication

This policy is developed in accordance with, and subject to, the *Municipal Act, 2001*, and all other applicable provincial and federal legislation.

### Principles

The Municipality of Thames Centre is guided by the following core principles:

- **Open Governance:** Municipal activities, decisions, and information will be conducted openly and made accessible to the public, fostering an environment of trust and understanding.

- **Integrity and Ethical Conduct:** All individuals covered by this policy will act with honesty, fairness, impartiality, and professionalism, upholding the highest ethical standards in public service.
- **Accountability:** The Municipality and its representatives will take responsibility for their decisions, actions, and inactions, and be answerable to the public they serve.
- **Transparency:** Information regarding municipal operations, decision-making processes, and performance will be clear, accessible, timely, and easily understandable.
- **Public Participation:** The Municipality encourages and facilitates meaningful public engagement in decision-making processes, recognizing the value of community input.
- **Responsiveness:** The Municipality is committed to promptly and respectfully addressing public inquiries, concerns, and feedback.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Financial resources and physical infrastructure will be managed efficiently, effectively, and responsibly, with clear reporting on their use.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- **Accountability:** The obligation of the Municipality and its representatives to answer for their decisions, actions, and performance to the public and stakeholders, including effective systems for review and redress.
- **Transparency:** The practice of making information about municipal operations, decision-making processes, and performance readily available and understandable to the public, except where legal or privacy considerations necessitate confidentiality.
- **Stakeholders:** Includes, but is not limited to, residents, businesses, community groups, employees, and other governmental bodies with an interest in the Municipality's operations

## Policy Provisions

To uphold its commitment to accountability and transparency, the Municipality has implemented and will continue to implement the following:

### Information Accessibility and Open Data

- **Proactive Disclosure:** The Municipality operates under the **Routine Disclosure & Active Dissemination Policy**, which outlines the specific types of municipal records and information available to the public through routine disclosure and proactive dissemination, minimizing the need for formal requests.
- **Freedom of Information:** The Municipality will respond to requests for municipal records in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection*

of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), as further detailed in its **Routine Disclosure & Active Dissemination Policy**.

- **Website Presence:** Maintain a dedicated municipal website where citizens can access key municipal records, decisions, reports, meeting agendas, minutes, and other relevant documents.
- **Plain Language:** Strive to present complex information in clear, concise, and easily understandable language.

## Public Meetings and Engagement

- **Open Meetings:** All Council and Committee meetings will be open to the public, with clear public notice of meeting schedules, agendas, and locations. Exceptions for closed sessions will strictly adhere to the *Municipal Act, 2001*.
- **Public Participation:** Provide opportunities for public deputations, submissions, and feedback at public meetings and through formal consultation processes on key issues and policy development.
- **Digital Access:** Where feasible, provide live streaming or recordings of public meetings on the municipal website.
- **Notices:** Adhere to all statutory and municipal requirements for public notices regarding planning matters, by-laws, and other significant decisions

## Financial Accountability and Reporting

- **Annual Budget Process:** Conduct an open and transparent annual budget process, including public consultation opportunities.
- **Financial Reporting:** Publish annual financial statements, audit reports (Internal/External Audit Process), and other financial reports on the municipal website.
- **Procurement:** Implement a comprehensive Procurement of Goods and Services Policy to ensure fair, open, and transparent purchasing practices.
- **Asset Management:** Develop and maintain policies for the Sale and Disposition of Land and other municipal assets, and for the efficient management of physical infrastructure.
- **Development Charges and Fees:** Maintain and publish by-laws related to Development Charges and other municipal fees (**Fees and Charges By-law**).

## Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest

- **Codes of Conduct:** All Members of Council and municipal employees will adhere to a Council Code of Conduct Policy and an Employee Code of Conduct Policy, respectively, promoting ethical behavior and integrity.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Strict adherence to the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* and related municipal policies to prevent and manage conflicts of interest.
- **Confidentiality:** Employees and officials will adhere to confidentiality agreements and policies to protect sensitive information.

- **Integrity Commissioner:** Maintain an Integrity Commissioner to provide independent advice, education, and investigation services regarding ethical conduct for Members of Council.

## Protect of Personal Information

The Municipality is committed to protecting personal information in its custody or control and complying with the privacy protection requirements mandated by the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*. Detailed policies and procedures for the collection, use, retention, disclosure, and protection of personal information, as well as the handling of privacy breaches, are outlined in the **Access to Records and Protection of Personal Privacy Policy** and the **Privacy Breach Policy**.

## Legislated Compliance

The Municipality will continually ensure compliance with all applicable provincial statutes and regulations, including but not limited to:

- *Municipal Act, 2001*
- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
- *Planning Act*
- *Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act*
- *Provincial Offences Act*
- *Safe Drinking Water Act*
- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*
- And any other relevant legislation

## Performance Measurement and Reporting

- Utilize results-oriented tools to measure municipal performance against established service standards and goals.
- Publish annual reports and other performance indicators, including an Annual Accountability Report, to demonstrate progress and identify areas for improvement

## Internal Accountability and Human Resources

- **Hiring Practices:** The Municipality maintains fair, effective, and transparent hiring processes as detailed in the **Hiring Policy**, which covers employment criteria, recruitment, internal applications, probationary periods, and conflicts of interest such as the hiring of relatives, along with required background checks and driver's abstracts.
- **Staff Performance:** Utilize a Staff Performance Management and Evaluation system to ensure accountability and professional development.
- **Training and Education:** Provide ongoing training for Council and staff on accountability, transparency, ethical conduct, and compliance with relevant policies and legislation.

- **Records Management:** Adhere to a Records Retention By-law for systematic management and preservation of municipal records

## Monitoring and Enforcement

- **Complaint Mechanism:** The Municipal Clerk will serve as the primary point of contact for receiving complaints and concerns related to this policy.
- **Notification Protocol:** Upon receipt of a complaint, the Municipal Clerk shall notify the appropriate party for investigation and resolution:
  - For staff-related matters: The relevant Department Head or Director.
  - For closed meeting matters: The Closed Meeting Investigator.
  - For Council-related matters: The Integrity Commissioner.
- **Consequences of Non-Compliance:** Violations of this policy will be addressed promptly and consistently, with appropriate disciplinary actions or corrective measures taken as deemed necessary, in accordance with relevant policies, by-laws, and legislation

## Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed by [relevant committee/department, e.g., Director of Legislative Services or Chief Administrative Officer] at least every three (3) years, or as necessary due to legislative changes, best practice evolution, or operational needs, to ensure its continued effectiveness and relevance.

## Related Documents

- *Municipal Act, 2001*
- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*
- Access to Records and Protection of Personal Privacy Policy
- Privacy Breach Policy
- Routine Disclosure & Active Dissemination Policy
- Hiring Policy
- Records Retention By-law
- Fees & Charges By-law
- Accessibility Policy
- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*
- Council Code of Conduct Policy
- Employee Code of Conduct Policy
- Procurement of Goods and Services Policy
- Council Procedural By-law
- Public Notice Policy
- *Planning Act*