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Corporation of the Municipality of French River Accountability and Transparency Policy

I. Purpose/Application

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 the municipality's activities and services in accordance with the principles as outlined herein. This policy has been developed in accordance with the Act to comply with section 270.

II. Definition(s): Accountability; Transparency

- (i) Accountability – The principle that the municipality will be responsible to its stakeholders for decisions made and policies implemented, as well as its actions or inactions.
- (ii) Transparency – The principle that the municipality actively encourages and fosters stakeholder participation and openness in its decision making processes. Additionally, transparency means that the municipality's decision making process is open and clear to the public.

III. Policy Statement

The Council of the Municipality of French River acknowledges that it is responsible to provide good government for its stakeholders in an accountable and transparent manner, guided by the following principles:

1. Decision making will be open and transparent
2. Municipal operations will be conducted in an ethical and accountable manner
3. Financial resources and physical infrastructure will be managed in an efficient and effective manner
4. Municipal information will be accessible in accordance to legislative requirements
5. Inquiries, concerns and complaints will be responded to in a timely manner
6. Financial oversight, service standards and performance reporting, and all other accountability documents will be made available and accessible to increase the opportunity for the public scrutiny and involvement in municipal operations.

Accountability, transparency and openness are standards of good government that enhance public trust. They are achieved through the municipality adopting measures ensuring, to the best of its ability, that all activities and services are undertaken utilizing a process that is open and accessible to its stakeholders. In addition, wherever possible, the municipality will engage its stakeholders throughout its decision making process which will be open, visible and transparent to the public.

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IV. Policy Requirements

The principles of accountability and transparency shall apply equally to the political process and decision making and to the administrative management of the municipality. Policies, procedures and practices have been divided in the following categories:

- i. Legislated Requirements
 - ii. Financial Matters
 - iii. Internal Governance
 - iv. Public Participation and information sharing
- i. Legislated Requirements

The Municipality of French River is accountable and transparent to taxpayers by fulfilling various legislated responsibilities and disclosure of information. The following are provincial statutes that govern how the Municipality conducts its business in a public, accountable and transparent manner:

- 1. Municipal Act, 2001
- 2. Municipal Conflict of Interest Act
- 3. Provincial Offences Act
- 4. Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- 5. Health Information Protection Act
- 6. Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act

ii. Financial Matters

The municipality will be open, accountable and transparent to its stakeholders in its financial dealings as required under the Act. Some examples of how the municipality provides such accountability and transparency are as follows:

- 1. external audit
- 2. year end audited financial statements posted on web site
- 3. monthly interim reports to council
- 4. strategic planning
- 5. asset management and capitalization policy
- 6. procurement policy
- 7. signing authority policy
- 8. records retention
- 9. sale of real property policy
- 10. budget process
- 11. capital acquisition policy
- 12. monthly approval of disbursements

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iii. Internal Governance

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

1. council staff protocol
2. employee performance evaluation
3. hiring policy
4. employee policy manual
5. health and safety policy
6. signing authority policy
7. responsibility for ensuring that administrative practices and procedures recognize Council's commitment to accountability and transparency

iii. Public Participation and Information Sharing

The municipality ensures that it is open and accountable to its stakeholders through implementing processes outlining how, when and under what rules meetings will take place. The municipality's meetings will be open to the public when and as required under the Act, and members of the public will have an opportunity to make delegations or comments in writing on specific items at these meetings. In addition, the municipality has adopted policies which ensure that participation by the public can be meaningful and effective, through timely disclosure of information by various means including print media, websites, etc. Some specific examples include:

1. procedure by-law - code of conduct for councillors
2. strategic plan
3. records retention
4. public notice policy
5. election policy and procedures manual
6. policy for the use of Corporate resources for election purposes
7. minutes and agendas posted on website
8. by-laws affecting the conduct of the public posted on web site
9. year end financial statements and performance measures posted on the website

V. Responsibilities

Council of the Municipality of French River and municipal staff are responsible for adhering to the parameters of this policy and for ensuring accountability for their actions and transparency of municipal operations.

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VI. Monitoring/Contraventions

The municipal Clerk shall be responsible for receiving complaints and/or concerns related to this policy. Upon receipt of a complaint and/or concern, the municipal Clerk shall notify:

1. In the case of staff, the Department Head responsible for the area;
2. In the case of a closed meeting, the Meeting Investigator;
3. In the case of Council, the Head of Council.

This policy is approved by Resolution No 2008-32 of the Council of The Municipality of French River, this 16th day of January, 2008.