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## Understanding the Role, Time Commitment and Powers of Municipal Council

As a member of council, you will have the opportunity to shape the future of your municipality. Any ideas or proposed changes you have in mind cannot be achieved without the support of other council members.

### What is the role of municipal council?

A common role of municipal council is to provide essential core services to the community such as:

- Roads and transportation;
- Water treatment and sewer facilities;
- Snow and garbage removal;
- Recreation facilities and programs;
- Land use planning and economic development;
- Building code regulations;
- Crime prevention;
- Fire prevention;
- Animal control; and
- Emergency planning.

While all of the above responsibilities are important aspects of municipal responsibility, council members are not directly responsible for providing these services. Council members' individual responsibilities can be broken as follows:

- Representation and Accountability
  - A councillor's responsibility is to serve the people who elected them to office. A councillor should engage regularly with the public to take into account the views and concerns of all members of a community when voting on matters of concern.
- Governance
  - Municipal council is responsible for shaping the future of the municipality by implementing new policy, by-laws and community goals. Many decisions that council makes are the result of extensive community consultation, research and advice from community members and groups. It is important for council to remember that they must represent the people who voted them to office. Failure to do so may result in a limited term in office.
- Management
  - Members of council are generally responsible for ensuring that municipal staff follows through on the policies, priorities and direction that council has set forth. Council members should also expect to be active members of committees and boards in the community to ensure that they possess the required knowledge to pass on to council.

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## What is the time commitment required of a council member?

Many, if not most, council members have full-time jobs outside of municipal council. It's important not to underestimate the amount of time and dedication required to be an effective member of council.

You will either be elected to a four year term of office and expected to participate in monthly (sometimes bi-weekly) council meetings. Being a member of council, your responsibilities are not restricted to attending regular council meetings. In addition, you will be expected to attend and participate in:

- Council committee meetings;
- Meetings of boards and agencies in which you are appointed as council's representative;
- Learning workshops, training seminars and conferences; and
- Cultural, social and public events promoting or representing your municipality.

You may also need to spend a significant amount of time talking to the public, business, colleagues in other municipalities, municipal staff and your administrator. Continuing interaction with these groups is an essential part of making an informed decision as a council member.

## What powers and authority are granted to municipal council?

Municipal council derives their authority from *The Municipalities Act*, *The Cities Act* or *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2010*. Individual members of council are not permitted to make decisions on their own on behalf of the municipality. Any election promise you made during your campaign can only be carried out if you can convince a majority of council that it is in the best interest of the municipality.

When you take office, you will not be starting off from scratch. There will be local legislation existing in the form of bylaws, which will remain in effect until they are amended or repealed. It would be a good idea to contact your municipality and become familiar with local legislation prior to running for council so that you have a good idea of what policies exist in your community, and what kind of changes you might want to consider.

- For more information contact Municipal Advisory Services

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- [Council Responsibilities](#)

Provides a list of some of the responsibilities of council

- Council Responsibilities – Administration

The responsibilities of every council regarding administrators is provided in Section 110 of the Municipalities Act

- [The Municipalities Act](#)

(Queen's Printer)

- [The Cities Act](#)

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- [The Northern Municipalities Act, 2010](#)

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