

# Running for Municipal Office

Thank you for thinking of running for your local municipal council. Saskatchewan municipalities need citizens like you to assume leadership roles to represent the people in your community or region, and to provide direction on the policies and programs that will lead to better quality services for communities.

Serving in elected positions is not easy, but being a member of council offers a lot of personal satisfaction. The information below will help you decide if you want to run as a candidate for municipal council. (Visit [Information for Council Members](#) to learn more about your new role, if elected.)

## 1. How Municipal Government is Structured

Legislation provides for four types of municipalities:

- **Urban** (cities, towns, villages and resort villages)  
The council of an urban municipality has a mayor (elected at large) and at least two councillors. Members of council are elected to four-year terms. Some urban municipalities are divided into wards and voters elect at least one councillor for each ward.
- **Rural**  
Rural municipalities are governed by a council consisting of a reeve and councillors that represent a numbered division within the rural municipality. Members of council are elected to four-year terms. General elections in rural municipalities are held every two years on a rotational basis. In 2022, elections will be held for even-numbered division councillors. In 2024, general elections will be held for Reeves and odd-numbered division councillors.
- **Northern** (towns, villages and northern hamlets)  
The council of a northern municipality consists of a mayor and at least two councillors. Northern municipalities hold elections every four years. The election dates vary. Contact the administrator of your municipality for further information.
- **Municipal Districts**  
A municipal district is the voluntary restructuring or merger of at least one rural municipality and at least one urban municipality. When a municipal district is incorporated, the council needs to determine what election scheme they will follow (urban or rural).

## 2. Council Roles and Powers

A municipality is the "front-line" level of government. The elected council is the governing body of the municipality. Elected officials make decisions by passing resolutions or enacting bylaws. Bylaws are the laws of the municipality.

If elected as a member of council, you will have the opportunity to help shape the future of your municipality. If you are running with some kind of reform in mind, you will need to know what bylaws and policies are in place. Examples of local documents you may want to refer to are the meeting minutes, council procedure bylaw, code of ethics bylaw, employee code of conduct and the zoning

bylaw. However, any ideas or proposed changes you have in mind cannot be achieved without the support of other council members.

### **Council's Role**

Municipal council derives its authority from *The Municipalities Act, The Cities Act or The Northern Municipalities Act, 2010*. Council's main role is to make decisions about the services the municipality provides to its citizens. Council establishes policies about what essential core services to provide, how those services will be delivered and at what levels, 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.

The municipal administrator (or administration) is then charged with implementing those policies. Council relies on the support, advice and assistance of the administration throughout the decision-making process.

### **Council's Power**

Municipalities have "natural person" powers (with some limitations) and governmental powers (which are those specifically authorized by legislation).

Natural person powers mean that a municipality has the same privileges as an ordinary citizen and can take actions not explicitly set out in legislation. Examples of such powers may include entering into contracts, hiring staff and acquiring property. These examples may have limitations such as road maintenance agreements.

Governmental powers are required by legislation that only council has the authority to enact. Examples of such powers are taxation and bylaws.

For more information about the acts governing Saskatchewan's municipal legislation, visit the [Publications Centre](#).

### 3. Time Commitment

Being elected to your local council means a big time commitment on your part. It's important not to underestimate the amount of time and dedication required to be an effective member of council, especially if you have a full-time job as well.

If elected, you will serve a four-year term. During that time you should plan to attend the following:

- regular and special council meetings;
- meetings of council committees;
- meetings of other boards and agencies as a representative of council;
- conferences, seminars, workshops, and conventions for training and discussion; and
- events that promote or represent your municipality.

You may also need to spend a significant amount of time talking to the public, businesses, 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.

### 4. Running for Municipal Office

It's not crucial to have education or experience in a government setting to run as a candidate. You likely have skills, knowledge and abilities that are transferable to the elected official's role.

You may want to undertake a self-assessment of your skills prior to running for elected office.

Think about your:

- volunteer experience
- community involvement
- work experience
- membership in different organizations
- family life

Often your experiences have taught you how to:

- work as part of a team
- organize and prioritize
- make decisions

- debate
- lead

## 5. Government Employees Seeking Nomination as a Candidate or Becoming a Candidate

### Municipal Employees

An employee wishing to seek a seat on council needs to refer to Section 43 of [The Local Government Election Act, 2015](#).

Employees should also make note of Section 2-54 of [The Saskatchewan Employment Act](#) and its other related provisions.

### Provincial Employees

Refer to Section 2-54 of [The Saskatchewan Employment Act](#) and its other related provisions.

### Federal Employees

Refer to Part 7 of [The Public Service Employment Act](#) and its related provisions.

Employees should also make note of Section 2-54 of [The Saskatchewan Employment Act](#) and its related provisions.

## 6. Campaigning for Election

The purpose of campaigning is to convince electors you are the best candidate for the job. It involves talking to people, distributing brochures and posters, and perhaps paid media advertising.

Rules regarding proper campaign procedures can be found within *The Local Government Election Act, 2015* (advertising, canvassing in or near the polling place, bribery and threats).

Every printed advertisement referencing an election must contain the name and address of the person who has authorized its printing, display and distribution.

No candidate, agent or other person shall canvass or solicit votes in a polling place or within 100 metres of the building where the poll is held and when the polls are open.

You should also check with your municipality; they may have passed a bylaw regarding election contributions and expenditures.

## **7. Responsibilities Once Elected**

If you become a member of a municipal council, you must take an [Oath or Affirmation of Office](#) in the prescribed form prior to carrying out any power, duty or function as a member of that council.

*The Local Government Election Act, 2015* requires a Public Disclosure Statement be attached to your nomination paper. Once elected and within 30 days, you will have to submit another Public Disclosure Statement to meet the requirements of *The Municipalities Act*. This document will need to be updated annually by completing the Public Disclosure Annual Declaration on or before November 30. If any changes occur throughout the year, elected officials shall complete a Public Disclosure Amendment Form at the time the change occurs.

All decisions of council must be made at meetings open to the public with a majority of council members present. At these meetings, it is important for council members to listen to each other and collectively reach decisions that are in the best interests of the municipality. An individual member of council, including the mayor or reeve, does not have the authority to commit the municipality to any expenditure or direct the activities of municipal employees.

This information was provided by the Government of Saskatchewan. For more information visit <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/municipal-administration/elections/running-for-municipal-office#responsibilities-once-elected>