

Running for Municipal Council

What You Need to Know

What do I need to know?

Saskatchewan municipalities need citizens to take on leadership roles as elected officials (council members) to represent the people in the community and provide direction on the policies and programs that will lead to better quality services.

Serving in an elected position is not easy, but being a member of council offers a lot of personal satisfaction; as it is an opportunity to help shape the future of the municipality.

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

- Meetings of council;
- 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 the municipality.

Key Standards and Values for Council Members

- Honesty
- Objectivity
- Transparency and Accountability
- Confidentiality
- Responsibility
- Leadership and Public Interest
- Respect

It is not crucial to have education or experience in a government setting to run for council. You likely have skills, knowledge and abilities that are transferable to the council member's role. You may want to take a self-assessment of

your skills by thinking about your volunteer experience, community involvement, work experience, membership in different organizations and family life. Often these experiences teach you how to work as part of a team, organize and prioritize, make decisions, debate and lead.

What is the purpose of a municipality and the role of council?

A municipality is the "front-line" level of government. The municipality's purpose is to:

- Provide good government;
- Provide services and facilities that council feels are necessary and desirable for all or part of the municipality;
- Provide wise stewardship of public assets;
- Develop and maintain a safe and viable community; and
- Foster economic, social and environmental well-being.

A municipality is a level of government. It is governed by, and acts through, the elected council. Council members make decisions by passing resolutions or enacting bylaws. Bylaws are the laws of the municipality.

Council establishes policies about what services to provide, how those services will be delivered and at what levels. The municipal administrator (or administration) is then charged with implementing those policies. Council relies on the support, advice and assistance of the administration through the decision-making process.

What are the responsibilities of a council member?

If you become a member of council, you must take an Oath of Office in the prescribed form prior to carrying out any power, duty or function as a member of council.

Within 30 days of being elected to council, you must complete and sign a Public Disclosure Statement which is also required at the time of filing your nomination paper. (See “How do I file my nomination” for further details.) This statement must be reviewed annually and updated when required.

Your Oath of Office and Public Disclosure Statement are accessible public documents.

All decisions of council must be made at a meeting 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 interest of the municipality. A member of council, including the mayor or reeve, does not have the authority to make independent decisions on behalf of the municipality, such as committing the municipality to expenditures or directing the activities of municipal employees.

What are Conflict of Interest rules for council members?

A conflict of interest occurs when a council member’s private interests, or a closely connected person’s interests may, or may appear to, be affected by a council decision. A financial interest is always a conflict of interest. If as a council member you think you may have a conflict of interest, you must:

- Declare the nature of the interest before any discussion occurs;
- Leave council chambers; and
- Not vote or discuss the matter with other council members before, during, or after the matter is considered or decided.

You can find more information on conflict of interest rules by searching “conflict of interest” on www.saskatchewan.ca.

What is the municipal election cycle?

Saskatchewan has three types of municipalities.

- Urban (cities, towns, villages and resort villages);
- Rural; and
- Northern (towns, northern villages, northern hamlets and the District).

General elections in urban municipalities are held every four years. The council of an urban municipality has a mayor (elected at large) and at least two councillors. Some urban municipalities are divided into wards and voters elect at least one councillor for each ward.

Each rural municipality is divided into numbered divisions. The council of a rural municipality has a reeve (elected at large) and a councillor for each division. Members of council are elected to four-year terms. General elections in rural municipalities are held every two years on a rotational basis.

In the 2020 general election, elections will be held for Reeves and odd-numbered division councillors. In 2022, elections will be held for even-numbered division councillors.

Northern municipalities hold elections every four years. The election dates may vary; therefore, contact the administrator of your northern municipality for further information.

You can find more information by searching “municipal elections” on www.saskatchewan.ca.

How do I run for council?

Am I eligible?

To be a candidate in a municipal election, you must be:

- 18 years of age on election day;
- A Canadian citizen;
- Not disqualified from being a candidate; and
- Eligible to be nominated as provided for in *The Local Government Election*

How do I file my nomination?

Obtain a nomination paper and a public disclosure statement form, from your municipality. The public disclosure statement identifies the name and nature of employment, financial interests or other involvement that may be seen to affect fairness in making a municipal decision. You can obtain further information on public disclosure statements from your municipality or at www.saskatchewan.ca.

Other attachments to the nomination paper that may be required are:

- A criminal record check if your municipality has passed a bylaw requiring its submission.
- A deposit of \$100 either in cash, a certified cheque or a money order payable to the municipality (if your municipality has a population of 20,000 or more).

Once your municipality publishes a *Notice of Call for Nominations*, you can file your completed nomination paper and all required attachments with the returning officer or nomination officer at the location, during the time specified in the notice. If you need assistance with the form or have questions, contact your municipality.

Different types of municipalities have different requirements for signatures on the nomination form.

In an urban or northern municipality with a population below 20,000, the following applies:

- If you are running for mayor, your nomination form must be signed by five voters from the municipality at large.
- If you are running for councillor and the municipality is divided into wards, your nomination form must be signed by five voters from the ward that you are considering running in.
- If you are running for councillor and the municipality is not divided into wards, your nomination form must be signed by five voters from the municipality at large.

In an urban municipality with a population over 20,000, the following applies:

- If you are running for mayor, your nomination form must be signed by 25 voters from the municipality at large.
- If you are running for councillor and the municipality is divided into wards, your nomination form must be signed by 25 voters from the ward that you are considering running in.
- If you are running for councillor and the municipality is not divided into wards, your nomination form must be signed by 25 voters from the municipality at large.
- You must provide a \$100 deposit when you submit your nomination form. In certain cases, the deposit may be refunded.

In rural municipalities the following applies:

- If you are running for reeve, your nomination form must be signed by at least two voters from the municipality at large.
- If you are running for councillor, your nomination form must be signed by at least two voters from the division you are considering running in.

When do I need to file my nomination?

For general elections, nomination dates and times are legislated as follows:

- Resort villages: by 2 p.m. on the fifth Saturday before election day.
- Rural and urban municipalities: by 4 p.m. on the fifth Wednesday before election day.
- Northern municipalities: by 4 p.m. on the fifth Wednesday before election day. As the election day varies, please contact the administrator of your municipality for further information.

Nomination day for all municipalities is identified in the *Notice of Call for Nominations*. The nomination officer or returning officer will review the nomination paper to ensure it is complete, including all required attachments. Only completed nomination forms will be accepted if it is complete, you will be issued a 'Receipt of Nomination and Candidate's Acceptance' form.

For more information, search "election procedures for municipalities" on www.saskatchewan.ca.

Further information on municipal elections can be obtained by contacting a municipal advisor at:

Ministry of Government Relations
Advisory Services and Municipal Relations
Phone: 306-787-2680
Email: muninfo@gov.sk.ca