

# Roles And Responsibilities Of Officials In A Local Government

## Council roles and responsibilities

The council is the governing body of the municipal corporation and the custodian of its powers, both legislative and administrative. The Municipal Government Act provides that councils can only exercise the powers of the municipal corporation in the proper form, either by **bylaw or resolution**.

The councillor's job is to work with other council members to set the overall direction of the municipality through their role as a policy maker. The policies that council sets are the guidelines for administration to follow as it does the job of running a municipality. A councillor will spend a lot of time while on council creating new policies and programs or reviewing the current ones to make sure they are working as they should.

## The Councillors

Under the Municipal Government Act, councillors have the following duties:

- To consider the welfare and interests of the municipality as a whole and, to bring to council's attention anything that would promote the welfare or interests of the municipality
- To participate generally in developing and evaluating the policies and programs of the municipality
- To participate in council meetings and council committee meetings and meetings of other bodies to which they are appointed by the council
- To obtain information about the operation or administration of the municipality from the chief administrative officer
- To keep in confidence matters discussed in private at a council committee meeting until discussed at a meeting held in public
- To perform any other duty or function imposed on councillors by this or any other enactment or by the council.

## The Chief Elected Official (CEO): Mayor, Reeve or I.D. Chairperson

The CEO, in addition to performing a councillor's duties, must preside when attending a council meeting, unless a bylaw provides otherwise. The CEO must also perform any other duty imposed under the MGA or any other enactment. In practice, the CEO is also generally the main spokesperson for the municipality, unless that duty is delegated to another councillor. The title CEO may be changed to one that council feels is appropriate to the office, such as mayor, reeve, or I.D. chairperson.

The CEO of a city or town is elected by a vote of a municipality's electors, unless the council passes a bylaw requiring council to appoint the CEO from among the councillors. In a village, summer village, or municipal district, council appoints the CEO from among the councillors unless it passes a bylaw providing that the official is to be elected by a vote of the municipality's electors. The CEO role includes:

- Chairperson of council
- Consensus seeker amongst members of council
- Liaison with senior staff
- Advisor to council
- Ex officio member on various boards and committees
- Key representative with regard to ceremonial responsibilities
- Liaison with other levels of government
- Advice with regard to policy development

A deputy CEO will assume this role if the CEO is not available.

To learn more about elected officials please visit the websites for the:

[Alberta Urban Municipalities Association \(AUMA\)](#) - Deals with issues and services for urban municipalities

[Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties \(AAMDC\)](#) - Deals with issues and services for rural municipalities

### **The Entire Municipality**

A councillor is elected to look after the interests of the entire municipality. A councillor who is in a municipality that has wards must be careful not to place the interest of the ward or electoral district above the interest of the whole municipality. As tough as it may be at times, the councillor must base any decision on what is best for the entire municipality. Council's effectiveness depends on councillors providing input on their areas while thinking and voting for the whole municipality. Councillors also have to make certain that they do not put themselves in a conflict of interest situation. They must ensure that decisions made do not benefit them, their immediate family, or their friends.

### **Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)**

Every council must establish, by bylaw, a position of CAO. The council may give the position an appropriate title, such as Town Manager or Administrator. The CAO is the administrative head of the municipality. The CAO's responsibilities include ensuring that the municipality's policies and programs are implemented, advising and informing the council on the operation of the municipality, performing other duties assigned by the council, and ensuring appropriate staffing is in place.

Staying out of the day-to-day operation of the municipality allows councilors to concentrate on policy making and program monitoring. Councillors should work with the CAO to keep

informed on what the municipality is doing and will depend on the administration to provide information so that they can make sound decisions.

A performance appraisal system for the CAO is a key building block for a lasting and positive relationship between council and the CAO. Section 205.1 of the Municipal Government Act states that a council must provide the CAO with an annual written performance evaluation.

### **Designated Officers**

A CAO may delegate any of his or her powers, duties, or functions to a designated officer or to another employee. Designated officer positions are established by bylaw and are subject to the CAO's supervision, unless otherwise provided by bylaw. A designated officer may also further delegate to an employee of the municipality any of those powers, duties, or functions.

To learn more about municipal administrators in Alberta, visit the website for the:

[Society for Local Government Managers of Alberta \(SLGM\)](#) - Deals with administrator interests and training

[Alberta Rural Municipal Administrator's Association \(ARMAA\)](#) - Represents rural administrators in Alberta

[Local Government Administration Association \(LGAA\)](#) - Represents municipal administrators in Alberta