Governance and Accountability of Council:
What you need to know

What is a municipality?

Simply put, a municipality is the first "frontline" level of government. Saskatchewan has three types of municipalities.

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

What powers does a municipality have?

Provincial legislation gives a municipality autonomy to act according to its own direction on matters within its jurisdiction. It has natural person powers, with limitations, and governmental power to enact bylaws and to raise revenues through taxation. Natural person powers mean that a municipality has the same privileges as an ordinary citizen and can exercise actions that are not explicitly set out in legislation. The elected council can hire staff to manage daily administration and provide municipal services (e.g. roads, utilities, recreation facilities).

A municipality has the power to adopt bylaws to:

- Provide for the health and safety of the municipality's residents;
- Regulate activities, businesses, nuisances, streets and roads, transportation and transportation services;
- Control land development and zoning;
- Regulate vehicle and pedestrian traffic;
- Regulate wild and domestic animals and their activities;
- Borrow money; and
- Set local tax policies and rates to cover the costs of providing municipal services.

What is council?

Council is a group of citizens/residents of the municipality, elected by the voters, to govern a municipality.

The council of an urban and northern 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. General elections in urban and northern municipalities are held every four years.

Each rural municipality is divided into numbered divisions. 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 2016 general election, elections will be held for reeves and odd-numbered division councillors. In 2018, elections will be held for even-numbered division councillors.

What are the responsibilities of council?

Council has the power to make decisions about municipal services, establish policies and provide direction for the operations of the municipality. Council makes decisions about what services to provide, how those services will be delivered and at what levels. Members of council are accountable to the people who elect them.

Government of Saskatchewan

What is the administrator's role?

The administrator is appointed by council to manage the general operations of the municipality. The administrator is responsible:

- To advise the council on its legislative responsibilities;
- For the overall day-to-day administration, financial management and human resource management of the municipality in accordance with council's policies and priorities; and
- To advise council on operational and legislative matters.

Who can run for council?

To become a candidate for mayor, reeve or councillor in your municipality, you must meet certain qualifications. Check the information item, "Running for Municipal Council: What You Need to Know," on qualifications for candidacy and for questions about running for council. You can also search "Running for Municipal Council" on the Government of Saskatchewan website.

More information can be found in the "Running for Municipal Council: What you need to know" information item.

What can I do to keep council accountable?

As a private citizen, you can become involved in the governance and electoral process of your municipality and the decision-making of your council. There are a number of ways you can hold your elected officials accountable.

You can become informed about council matters by:

- Attending council meetings as a spectator; and
- Accessing municipal documents such as minutes and bylaws

You can actively participate in council affairs by:

- Writing letters to council;
- Debating council decisions with elected officials;
- Attending council meetings as a part of a delegation to speak to matters;
- Petitioning for a public meeting;
- Petitioning for a referendum; and
- Petitioning for a management or financial audit.

Where can I obtain more information?

You can find detailed information in *A Citizen's Guide to Shaping Council Decisions*. This document can be found by searching "council procedures" on the government website, *www.saskatchewan.ca*.

Answers to any questions, or concerns may also be obtained by contacting a municipal advisor.

Ministry of Government Relations
Advisory Services and Municipal Relations
1010-1855 Victoria Avenue
Regina SK S4P 3T2
Phone (306) 787-2680
E-mail: muninfo@gov.sk.ca

Government of Saskatchewan