



CANDIDATE GUIDE
What to expect if elected

Election Day

OCTOBER 20, 2025

okotoks.ca/election





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Introduction

Information has been assembled as a resource for prospective candidates containing answers to some of the most frequently received questions regarding becoming an elected official.

This package is provided for information only and has no legislative sanction. As this information is not inclusive of all the information contained within the specific acts and other legislation, and as legislation changes from time to time, any person wishing a complete copy of the *Municipal Government Act*, or any other act, is encouraged to view an online copy or order copies from the Government of Alberta, King's Printer or search the Open Government program publications at https://open.alberta.ca/opendata

The Alberta Municipal Affairs (https://www.alberta.ca/municipal-affairs) website notes the roles and responsibilities of municipal officials as well as other information for prospective candidates. To learn more, candidates are encouraged to access this information and use these resources.

Should you have any questions regarding any information contained in this booklet, please do not hesitate to contact:

Town of Okotoks
P.O. Box 20, Station Main
5 Elizabeth Street
Okotoks, AB T1S 1K1
Attention: Cathy Duplessis, Returning Officer

Phone: 403-995-2774

Email: <u>elections@okotoks.ca</u>



Introduction to Municipal Councils

The Canadian Constitution delegates responsibility for municipal institutions to the provinces. Through a variety of legislation, the Alberta Legislative Assembly has delegated some of its authority to municipal councils. The Act you will use most often is the *Municipal Government Act (MGA)*.

As a member of Council, you will have the opportunity to significantly influence the future of your community. Your power as a member of Council depends on your ability to persuade the other members of Council to adopt your view. All decisions must be made at meetings, held in public, at which a quorum is present.

As an individual member of Council, you will not have the power to commit the Town of Okotoks to any expenditure or to direct the activities of the employees. Any promise you make as part of your election campaign that involves municipal expenditures or the activities of the Town can only be carried out if you can convince a majority of Council that it is a viable idea.

Local legislation is in the form of bylaws. Generally, these remain in effect until they are amended or repealed, so you will not be starting with a blank slate and creating your ideal municipality from scratch. If you are running with some kind of reform in mind, you will have to become familiar with what exists, how it has been created - by bylaw, resolution, or tradition - and why it exists, before you will be able to start implementing your changes.

Some examples of local documents you will often refer to are the Council Procedure Bylaw, Land Use Bylaw, and the bylaw establishing the position of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).

As a member of Council, it will be your duty to establish policy for your municipality. It is the job of the administration to implement the policy. Alberta municipalities have highly educated, competent, and dedicated administrators and you will need the support, advice, and assistance of the administrative staff if you are to be an effective member of Council. Their training, experience, and understanding of how and why things have developed as they have, will be an important resource for you.

The best way to find out what the job is all about is to spend some time reading Council agendas and minutes, and talking to the current members of Council. Sit in on some Council meetings. This will help you in your campaign and will assist you in assuming office.

Council's principal role in the municipal organization (*MGA* section 201):

- develop and evaluate the policies and programs of the municipality; and
- carry out the powers, duties, and functions expressly given to it under the MGA or any other enactment.

A Council must not exercise a power or function or perform a duty that is by the MGA or any other enactment or bylaw specifically assigned to the chief administrative officer or a designated officer.



Elected Officials' Duties

The *Municipal Government Act* (*MGA*) outlines the duties of the Mayor and Councillors and defines the roles of a Council.

A Councillor has the following duties (MGA section 153):

- 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 promote an integrated and strategic approach to intermunicipal land use planning and service delivery with neighbouring municipalities;
- 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 or a person designated by the chief administrative officer;
- to keep in confidence matters discussed in private at a Council or Council committee meeting until discussed at a meeting held in public;
- to adhere to the code of conduct established by Council (section 146.1(1) of the MGA); and
- to perform any other duty or function imposed on Councillors by this or any other enactment or by Council.

The Mayor, or chief elected official, has the following duties (MGA section 154):

In addition to performing the duties of a Councillor, the Mayor must:

- preside when in attendance at a Council meeting unless a bylaw provides that another Councillor or other person is to preside; and
- perform any other duty imposed on a chief elected official by the MGA or any other enactment or bylaw.

Other traditional roles of the Mayor include:

- representing the Town of Okotoks at public functions/ceremonies;
- communicating Council policy to the media and the public;
- meeting with provincial elected officials; and
- being the principal link between Council and the Chief Administrative Officer.

The chief elected official may be a member of a board, commission, subdivision authority, or development authority established under Part 17 of the MGA only if the chief elected official is appointed in the chief elected official's personal name.

Council's principal role in the municipal organization (MGA section 201):

- develop and evaluate the policies and programs of the municipality; and
- carry out the powers, duties, and functions expressly given to it under the MGA or any other enactment.



Opportunities and Challenges

The work of elected officials can be both rewarding and challenging.

Rewarding opportunities to:

- quide the municipal organization at the policy level;
- provide leadership to the community;
- engage with citizens, community groups, and regional partners;
- address the needs of the community;
- speak to complex municipal issues as part of the decision-making process;
- frequently speak in public; and
- engage with residents in a variety of ways, such as business openings, developer open houses, community events, etc.

Challenges can include:

- being in the public eye that can result in a lack of privacy;
- addressing citizens' concerns especially when matters are complex and multi-dimensional;
 and
- time demands and high stress levels that may place pressure on personal and family life.



Time Commitment

The role of Mayor is a full-time position averaging 40 hours per week, and Councillors are part-time averaging 20 hours per week.

The Mayor is provided a dedicated office and Councillors are provided a shared space at the Municipal Centre. Administrative staff is also provided to support elected officials.

Work hours for elected officials are not typical business hours. Some obligations require attendance during evenings and weekends.

One of the key commitments for members of Council is attendance and participation at a variety of Council and Council committee meetings. These meetings can often extend into the evenings, and at times late at night for some public hearings.

In a typical month, members of Council can expect to commit one (1) full day per week to Council or Governance and Priorities Committee meetings along with several hours for additional committee meetings. Candidates should be prepared to spend time preparing for each meeting by reviewing agenda materials and reports.

Below is a summary of the meetings you will attend:

1. Council meetings

- Two (2) meetings per month scheduled on the second and fourth Monday. Meetings begin at 2:00 p.m. and typically end by 8:00 p.m.
- Public hearings are held as part of Council meetings as required and begin at 6:30 p.m.
- Special Council meetings may be called at any time to address emergent matters.
- One (1) Council meeting only is held in July, August, and December.

2. Budget meetings

• Meetings for the annual review of Okotoks' multi-year budget are scheduled annually in mid-November for three (3) consecutive days. The municipality has a four-year budgeting process.

3. Governance and Priorities Committee meetings

- The Mayor and all members of Council are members of the Governance and Priorities Committee, and chaired by the Deputy Mayor.
- This meeting is scheduled on the third Monday each month with the exception of July and August. Meetings must be held a minimum of eight (8) times per year or at the call of the Chair.
- Meetings begin at 4:30 p.m. and typically end by 8:00 p.m.

• The purpose of this meeting is to enhance the organizational governance framework in order to ensure that roles and responsibilities of Council, the Chief Administrative Officer, and Administration can be differentiated, explained, and understood by all stakeholders.

4. Council Committees

- The Mayor appoints Councillors to serve on various committees established by Council
 and other external boards, committees, and commissions to which the Town of Okotoks
 is a member.
- To the extent possible, appointments are made based on individual interest, as well as maintaining a balance in commitment of time.
- Committee meetings are scheduled in the day or evening.
- The Mayor is an ex officio member of most Council committees. As an ex officio member, the Mayor has the right to attend and participate in meetings but does not have the right to vote.
- The Mayor is specifically appointed to several committees, including those with a regional scope.

5. Deputy Mayor

- All Councillors are responsible for serving as Deputy Mayor on a rotational six (6) month basis.
- The Deputy Mayor is responsible for filling in for the Mayor and chairing meetings when absent.



Committees and Boards

The Mayor appoints Councillors to serve on various governance committees established by Council and other external boards, committees, and commissions to which the Town of Okotoks is a member.

Governance Committees

- Emergency Advisory Committee
- Family and Community Support Services Committee
- · Governance and Priorities Committee
- Okotoks Public Library Board
- Policing Committee
- United Way/Okotoks Partnership

Regional Boards

- Bow River Basin Water Council
- Calgary Metropolitan Region Board
- · Community Futures Highwood
- Foothills-Okotoks Recreation Society
- Foothills Regional Emergency Services Commission
- Foothills Regional Services Commission (Landfill)
- Foothills-Okotoks Regional Fieldhouse Society
- Friends of Champion Park Society
- Mayors and Reeves of Southwest Alberta Committee
- Okotoks / Foothills County Intermunicipal Committee
- Westwinds Communities

Tribunal Boards

Council has also established tribunal boards. These boards do not have Council Members appointed to them and are legislated provincially, as follows:

- Assessment Review Board
- Subdivision and Development Appeal Board

Committee meetings are scheduled in the day or evening.

The Mayor is an ex officio member of most Council committees. As an ex officio member, the Mayor has the right to attend and participate in meetings but does not have the right to vote.



Associations and Conferences

The Town of Okotoks is a member and active participant in associations that represent municipal interests to the provincial and federal governments. The Town is a member of the Alberta Municipalities (ABMunis) and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). There are conferences and conventions related to these associations that occur throughout the year. The Council meeting schedule takes these key events into consideration to ensure members of Council have an opportunity to attend.

ABMunis is an association that represents and supports municipal councils. ABMunis represents a unified voice to the provincial government on behalf of urban communities and provides valuable services to support urban municipalities.

Each year in the fall, an ABMunis convention is held that attracts approximately 1,000 delegates from urban councils and municipal administration (staff). The convention that is held during an election year is strongly geared toward newly elected council members and for this reason, newly elected officials are encouraged to set aside time to attend this event. For 2025, the ABMunis convention runs from November 12-14, 2025.

FCM is the national voice of Canadian municipal governments, dedicated to improving the quality of life in all communities by promoting strong, effective, and accountable municipal governments. The FCM represents the interests of all municipalities on policy and program matters within federal jurisdiction.

The annual FCM conference is usually held in early June. Typically, two members of Council attend the FCM conference each year.

In addition to these, there are other conferences and events related to the official role of elected officials that members of Council may wish to attend. These events may conflict with the Council meeting schedule. Attending and participating in Council meetings is a primary responsibility for members of Council and should take priority over attendance at other events.



Business Plan and Budget Process

Development of the corporate budget is one of the most critical initiatives undertaken by Administration each year.

The process to develop the budget involves detailed fiscal analysis and substantial planning efforts. Developing the budget is a Town-wide initiative requiring inputs from each business centre throughout the organization.

The Town utilizes approved financial policies to allow for a consistent approach across business centres, while ensuring alignment with Council's strategic direction.

Consistent with the requirements outlined in the MGA, the Town of Okotoks recommends a multi-year budget to Council for approval each year which includes a four-year operating budget and ten-year capital budget forecast plan.

This process allows Administration to communicate the financial impacts of upcoming issues and opportunities to Council while offering Administration the ability to refine those impacts annually.

The approved multi-year budget acts as the authority for Administration to utilize the resources necessary to achieve Council's priorities and to deliver key programs and services to residents. Administration manages anticipated revenue decreases by offsetting expenses through the management of operations and the application of the principles of Priority Based Budgeting.



Council Orientation and Training

The first few weeks after the election are very demanding.

Council orientation is mandatory for all members of Council. It is important that all candidates understand the expectation to attend the orientation in the event they are elected.

Orientation and training will begin on October 22, 2025, and continues through to mid-November. Additional orientation dates may be scheduled within 90 days of taking the Oath of Office. Additional training will be offered periodically during the four-year term.

The orientation gives Councillors critical information about their roles and responsibilities, Town functions, processes, and plans and provides an opportunity to become acquainted with fellow Councillors, senior leaders, Town services, operations, and facilities.

Councillors will also gain an understanding of the Business Plan and budget process as part of the orientation, which is especially important given that the budget process begins in November shortly after the election.

Please refer to Schedule A which is a draft Council Orientation schedule to more fully understand the training requirements if elected.



Code of Conduct

A code of conduct ensures that Council Members act in the best interests of the community.

The Code of Conduct Bylaw 14-23 was passed by Council in May 2023.

It provides Council with a framework to guide ethical conduct in a way the upholds the integrity of the Town and the high standards of professional conduct the public expects from elected officials.

It also provides an informal and formal complaint process for members of the public to follow if someone reasonably believes that contravention of the Bylaw may have taken place.

All members of Council are required to sign the Code of Conduct.



Remuneration, Expense Reimbursements, and Benefits

Remuneration

As of July 22, 2024, the annual rate of remuneration for the performance of all regular and usual duties of the Mayor and Councillors is:

Mayor \$108,492 Councillors \$48,309

An independent consultant reviews the compensation of comparative municipalities in Alberta. As per the <u>Council Compensation and Expense Reimbursement Policy GP-C-2.2</u>, Council will be compensated at mid-market range (based on the comparators). A review is conducted once every 4 years. Members of Council have access to an optional Benefit Plan, which includes Life Insurance, Extended Health Care, Dental Care, and a Health Spending Account.

<u>Council Parental Leave Bylaw 02-25</u> provides Council Members the ability to take leave prior to or after the birth or adoption of their child.

Mileage

The mileage reimbursement for business travel for both Mayor and Councillors is the Canada Revenue Agency rate.

Laptops

Town laptops are provided to elected officials to conduct Town business.



Disqualification of Councillors

(Excerpts from the MGA)

Section 174

- (1) A councillor is disqualified from council if:
 - (a) when the councillor was nominated, the councillor was not eligible for nomination as a candidate under the *Local Authorities Election Act*;
 - (b) the councillor ceases to be eligible for nomination as a candidate under the *Local Authorities Election Act*;
 - (b.1) the councillor
 - (i) fails to file a disclosure statement as required under section 147.4 of the Local Authorities Election Act before the end of the time period referred to in section 147.7 of the Local Authorities Election Act, and
 - (ii) has not been relieved from the obligation to file a disclosure statement by a court order under section 147.8 of the *Local Authorities Election Act*;
 - (c) the councillor becomes a judge of a court or a member of the Senate or House of Commons of Canada or of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta;
 - (d) the councillor is absent from all regular council meetings held during any period of 60 consecutive days, starting with the date that the first meeting is missed, unless subsection (2) applies;
 - (e) the councillor is convicted
 - (i) of an offence punishable by imprisonment for 5 or more years, or
 - (ii) of an offence under section 123, 124 or 125 of the Criminal Code (Canada);
 - (f) the councillor does not vote on a matter at a council meeting at which the councillor is present, unless the councillor is required or is permitted to abstain from voting under this or any other enactment;
 - (g) the councillor contravenes section 172; (Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest);
 - (h) the councillor has a pecuniary interest in an agreement that is not binding on the municipality under section 173;
 - (i) the councillor uses information obtained through being on council to gain a pecuniary benefit in respect of any matter;
 - (j) the councillor becomes an employee of the municipality;
 - (k) the councillor is liable to the municipality under section 249.
- (2) A councillor is not disqualified by being absent from regular council meetings under subsection (1)(d) if
 - (a) the absence is authorized by a resolution of council passed at any time:
 - (i) before the end of the last regular meeting of the council in the 60-day period, or
 - (ii) if there is no other regular meeting of the council of the council in the during the 60-day period, before the end of the next regular meeting of the council,

or

(b) the absence is in accordance with a bylaw under section 144.1.

- (3) For the purposes of this section, a councillor is not considered to be absent from a council meeting if the councillor is absent on council business at the direction of council.
- (4) A councillor who is disqualified under this section is eligible to be elected at the next general election in the municipality if the person is eligible for nomination under the *Local Authorities Election Act*.



DATE/LOCATION/TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Wednesday, October 22 Location: Council Chamber (CC) 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.	Council Orientation Overview	 Distribution of Council Handbook and other publications Code of Conduct Review Review Oath of Office process Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Review Various action items Legislative Affairs role, Council Administrator role
3:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Organizational Overview	 Overview of the orientation plan Review the basic roles of Council Review the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)/Council relationship Review the CAO/Mayor relationship Review the CAO performance objectives Review link between strategic plan, priorities, and CAO performance objectives Review the organizational chart and functions of the organization Values and culture of the organization
Friday, October 24 Location: CC 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.	IT sign-up	 Acceptable usage of IT devices Mandatory IT security training Laptop distribution



DATE/LOCATION/TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Friday, October 24 (cont.) 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Okotoks governance framework review	
Monday, October 27 Location: Municipal Centre (MC) Between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., by appointment only	Human Resources sign-up/review	One-on-one sessions with a Human Resources team member
3:45 - 6:00 p.m. Location: CC	Professional individual and group photos of Council	Swearing in ceremony / Signing of documents / Oath of Office
7:00 p.m. Thursday, October 30 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Facility tour	 Swearing in ceremony / Signing of documents / Oath of Office MC and Arts and Learning Campus Waste Water Treatment Plant Foothills-Okotoks Regional Field House Viking Rentals Centre Southridge Emergency Services Water Treatment Plant D'Arcy Affordable Housing Fire Station #1 Okotoks Recreation Centre



DATE/LOCATION/TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Thursday, October 30 (cont.)	Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) 101	Introduction by SLT – overview of respective business centres
Location: CC		
1:00 - 5:00 p.m.		
5:30 - 7:00 p.m.	Indigenous Orientation	
Friday, October 31	Parliamentary procedures and governance training workshop (Roberts	Information session and mock Council Meeting
Location: CC	Rules of Order)	
9:00 a.m 12:30 p.m.		
1:00 - 2:30 p.m.	Mock Council Meeting	Escribe Agenda Software
Monday, November 3	Organizational Meeting / Regular Council Meeting	First official meeting
Location: CC	ocurrent meeting	
2:00 p.m.		
Wednesday, November 5	Legal session	Legal overview of <i>Municipal Government Act</i> , Council's roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest, pecuniary interest, etc.
Location: CC		responsibilities, connect of interest, pecuniary interest, etc.
5:00 - 9:00 p.m.		



DATE/LOCATION/TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Thursday, November 6	Governance Session Session 1 of 2	Council Governance Session
Location: CC		
4:00 - 9:00 p.m.		
Friday, November 7	Management Session	
Location: CC		
7:00 - 8:45 a.m.		
9:00 a.m 12:00 p.m.	Governance Session Session 2 of 2	Attendance: Council and SLT
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Alberta Municipalities (ABMunis) review	 Review of ABMunis processes and procedures/roles and responsibilities
		Review of resolution binder
Monday November 10	Finance 101	Okotoks and Municipal Finance Overview
Location: CC		
4:00 - 9:00 p.m.		
Tuesday, November 11	Remembrance Day	Mayor to place the wreath at the ceremony on behalf of the Town
	OFFICE CLOSED	



DATE/LOCATION/TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
November 12-14 Calgary TELUS Convention Centre	ABMunis Convention	Website: https://www.abmunis.ca/events/2025-convention-trade-show
Friday, November 14 &	Elected Officials Education Program	Due to Remembrance Day activities, EOEP courses will begin in
Saturday, November 15	(EOEP) Munis 101	the afternoon on Friday and continue on Saturday
Calgary TELUS Convention Centre		
Monday, November 17	Regional Relationships, Regional	Hierarchy of Planning (morning)
	Planning	Regional Planning
Location: CC		 Review of the Intermunicipal Committee and regional projects (afternoon)
9:00 a.m 4:00 p.m.		Water Pipeline
		Off-Site Levies 101
Tuesday, November 18	2026 Budget Presentations	Day 1
Location: CC		
(same for all 3 days)		
8:30 a.m 4:30 p.m.		
Wednesday, November 19	2026 Budget Presentations	Day 2
8:30 a.m 4:30 p.m.		



DATE/LOCATION/TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Thursday, November 20	2026 Budget Presentations	Day 3
**8:30 a.m 12:00 p.m.		**this day is booked tentatively depending on remaining work to be completed.
Monday, November 24	Regular Council Meeting	
Location: CC		
2:00 p.m.		
Tuesday, November 25	Emergency Management Agency (EMA)	EMA Orientation
	Meeting	
Location: to be determined		
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.		
Monday, December 1	Governance and Priorities Committee	
Location: CC	Meeting	
4:30 p.m.		
Monday, December 8	Regular Council Meeting	
Location: CC		
2:00 p.m.		



DATE/LOCATION/TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Wednesday, December 10	Public participation orientation	
Location: CC		
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.		
December 24, 25, 26	OFFICE CLOSED	
Monday, January 12, 2026	Regular Council Meeting	
Location: CC		
2:00 p.m.		
Monday, January 19	Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting	
Location: CC		
4:30 p.m.		
Monday, January 26	Regular Council Meeting	
Location: CC		
2:00 p.m.		



DATE/LOCATION/TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Thursday, February 5	2022-2026 Strategic Plan Workshop	Development of the Council Strategic Plan
Location: CC		
5:00 - 9:00 p.m.		
Friday, February 6	2022-2026 Strategic Plan Workshop continued	Development of the Council Strategic Plan
Location: CC		
9:00 a.m 4:00 p.m.		
February 2026	Policy owner/customer workshop	Details to be determined

Other Information:

Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Annual Conferences:

- June 4-7, 2026, Edmonton, AB
- June 10-13, 2027, Halifax, NS