



my local government
it's for me

How to Get Involved



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About your government in Canada

The City of Toronto is your local government, also known as municipal government. In Canada we have three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal. Each level has different responsibilities and often work together. The City of Toronto provides services that have a direct impact on our daily lives.

Federal



The **Government of Canada** is responsible for:

national defence and Canadian Armed Forces, postal service, banking, employment, citizenship and immigration, census, foreign affairs and international trade, agriculture and more.

Provincial



The **Government of Ontario** is responsible for:

health, education, driver and vehicle licensing, energy, human rights, natural resources, environment, social services and more.

Municipal



The **City of Toronto** is your local government and is responsible for:

water treatment, parks, libraries, garbage collection, public transit, land use planning, traffic signals, police, paramedics, fire services, sewers, homeless shelters, childcare, recreation centres and more.

City of Toronto **facts**

About **2.8 million people** 

5,600 km of roads 

6,000 km of water mains 

84 fire stations and **45 ambulance stations** 

600 km of park trails 

135 recreation centres 

100 libraries 

**Based on figures from 2014 and 2015.*

About your City Council

City Council is made up of 45 members: the mayor, who is elected city-wide, and 44 councillors who are elected in each ward across the city.

The **mayor** provides leadership to City Council and:

- represents Toronto across Canada and around the world
- works with different levels of government
- chairs the Executive Committee
- appoints councillors to chair the standing committees of City Council

Councillors talk to residents, businesses and community groups about City programs and services and listen to their concerns. Councillors:

- attend City Council and committee meetings
- sit on the boards of City agencies and corporations
- propose changes to the decisions City Council makes
- introduce motions to propose action or raise awareness of issues
- hold or attend community meetings to get input from the public
- host or get involved in community events
- help people access City services

Some councillors take on additional roles by chairing committees or boards.

The mayor and councillors must balance the needs of many different communities and interests across the city. In order to manage their workload and study items in greater detail City Council uses a system of committees. There are two types of committees: standing committees and community councils. City Council also manages its workload by delegating certain responsibilities to City boards.

Committees are each made up of between 3 and 13 councillors. Committees hear from the public and make recommendations to City Council on specific items. City Council and its committees meet on a 4 to 5 week cycle throughout the year. Each cycle starts with committee meetings and ends with a full City Council meeting.

The City of Toronto Act is legislation provided by the provincial government. The Act gives the City power to make decisions and provide the services and programs the public needs.

Standing committees - make recommendations on city-wide issues, such as parks, budget, roads and bridges, garbage and recycling, housing, planning, economic development, licensing and more. Final decisions are made at City Council meetings. There is an executive committee, chaired by the mayor, as well as seven standing committees:

- Executive
- Community Development and Recreation
- Economic Development
- Government Management
- Licensing and Standards
- Parks and Environment
- Planning and Growth Management
- Public Works and Infrastructure



Community councils - make recommendations on local issues such as traffic lights, tree removal, parking permits, fence bylaws, appointments to local boards, local planning and development applications and more. They can make some final decisions without going to City Council. There are four community councils and each represents an area of the city:

- Etobicoke York
- Toronto and East York
- North York
- Scarborough



Boards of agencies and corporations - govern and manage various City services on behalf of City Council. Boards of agencies and corporations include both councillors and members of the public who contribute their skills and experience to the running of the City. Examples of agencies and corporations include the TTC, Toronto Zoo, and Toronto Hydro.

Accessing your local government

The City of Toronto provides many great programs and services for its residents. Ensuring you know how to access these services is a very important part of that.

There are two key places to start when you are looking for information about City services and programs: visit **toronto.ca** or call **311**. The City of Toronto website, **toronto.ca**, is a great resource to find out what is happening in your city, learn about new programs and find information. **311** is also a very useful tool you can use to get information. By contacting **311** you no longer have to try to find the right division or individual at the City to get information or help.



Toronto.ca/311



311



@311toronto

In order to ensure your local government is open and transparent the City of Toronto has four **accountability officers**. Each has a different responsibility:

- **Auditor General** – audits City programs and services and conducts fraud and waste investigations
- **Integrity Commissioner** – provides advice and resolves complaints about Code of Conduct for members of City Council and local boards
- **Lobbyist Registrar** – monitors and manages the public disclosure of lobbying activities and regulation of lobbyists conduct
- **Ombudsman** – investigates as a place of last resort, complaints about City services, including those services delivered by its agencies and corporations.

For more information about the accountability officers and to find out how to contact them visit **toronto.ca/accountability**.



Toronto wards

The City of Toronto is divided into 44 areas called wards. Each ward is identified by a name and number, and has an elected official called a councillor. The councillor in your ward represents you. There is also a mayor who represents the whole city. Wards are divided into four areas and each area has a community council made up of councillors from those wards.

Ward 1 Etobicoke North

Ward 2 Etobicoke North

Ward 3 Etobicoke Centre

Ward 4 Etobicoke Centre

Ward 5 Etobicoke-Lakeshore

Ward 6 Etobicoke-Lakeshore

Ward 7 York West

Ward 8 York West

Ward 9 York Centre

Ward 10 York Centre

Ward 11 York South-Weston

Ward 12 York South-Weston

Ward 13 Parkdale-High Park

Ward 14 Parkdale-High Park

Ward 15 Eglinton-Lawrence

Ward 16 Eglinton-Lawrence

Ward 17 Davenport

Ward 18 Davenport

Ward 19 Trinity-Spadina

Ward 20 Trinity-Spadina

Ward 21 St. Paul's

Ward 22 St. Paul's

Ward 23 Willowdale

Ward 24 Willowdale

Ward 25 Don Valley West

Ward 26 Don Valley West

Ward 27 Toronto Centre-Rosedale

Ward 28 Toronto Centre-Rosedale

Ward 29 Toronto-Danforth

Ward 30 Toronto-Danforth

Ward 31 Beaches-East York

Ward 32 Beaches-East York

Ward 33 Don Valley East

Ward 34 Don Valley East

Ward 35 Scarborough Southwest

Ward 36 Scarborough Southwest

Ward 37 Scarborough Centre

Ward 38 Scarborough Centre

Ward 39 Scarborough-Agincourt

Ward 40 Scarborough-Agincourt

Ward 41 Scarborough-Rouge River

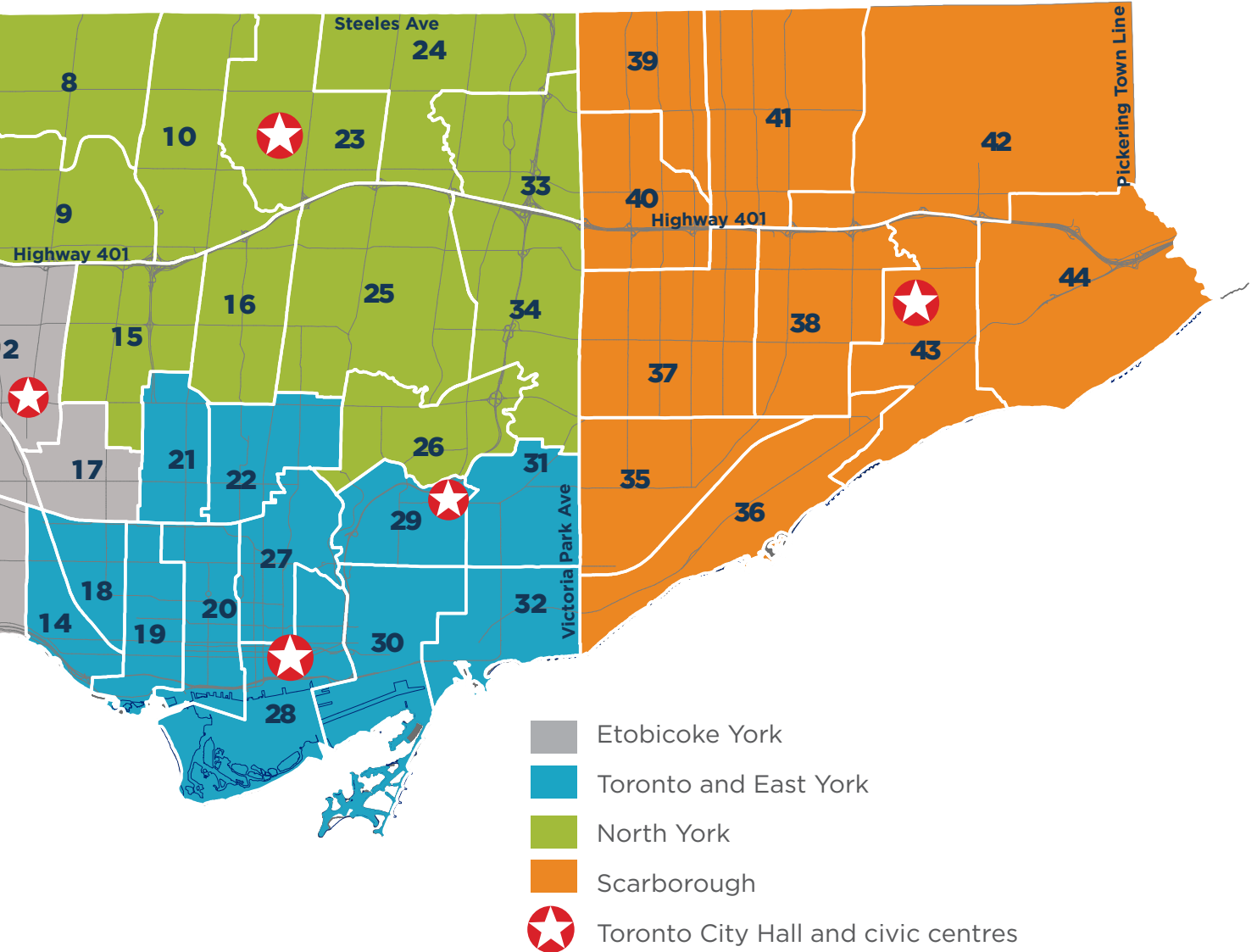
Ward 42 Scarborough-Rouge River

Ward 43 Scarborough East

Ward 44 Scarborough East

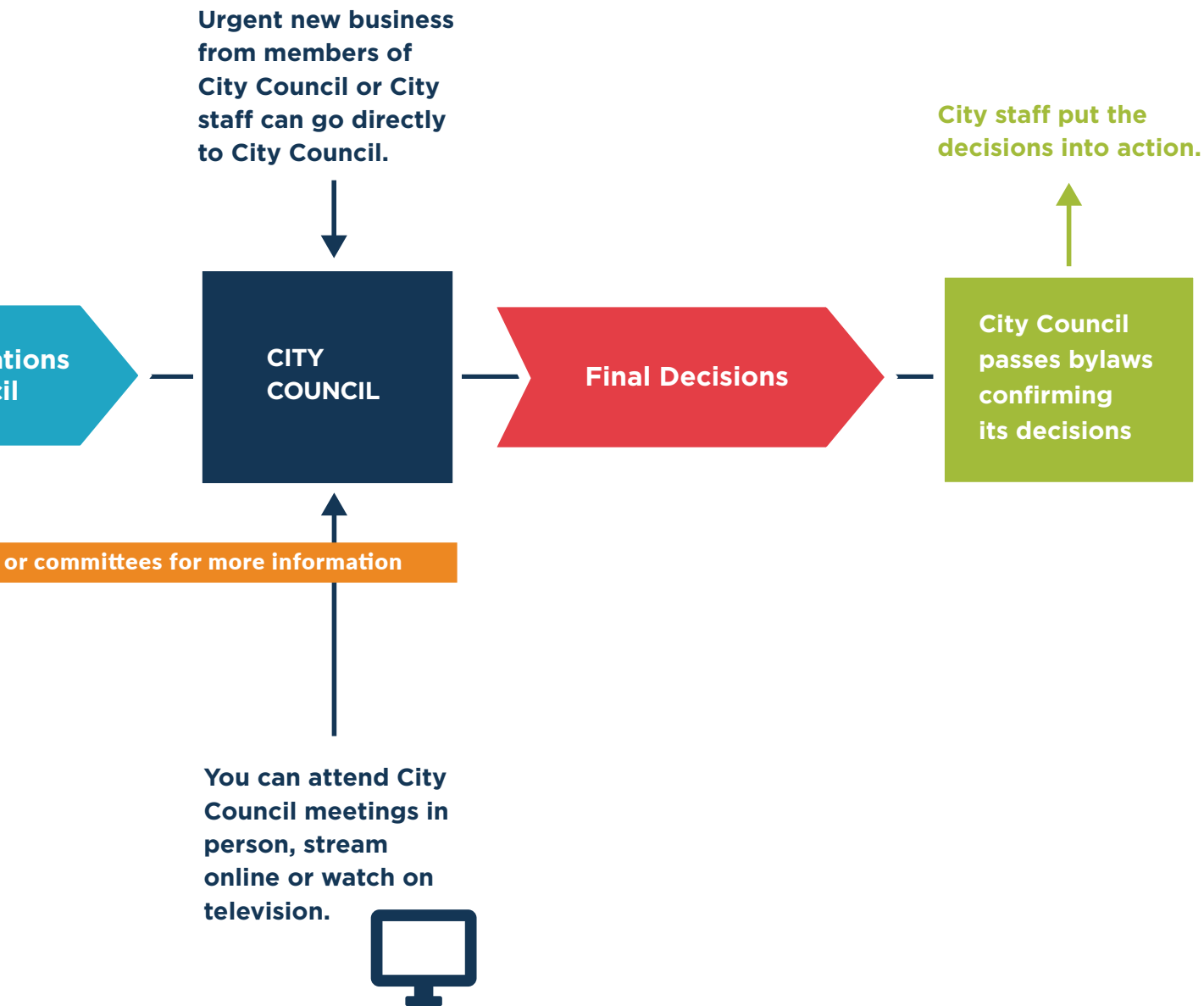


To find your ward visit toronto.ca/councillors and click "Search by Address or Place", or call 311.



How decisions are made







Get involved

Now that you have an understanding of how local government works we want to tell you about the ways you can get involved.

Be informed:

- Watch Council and committee meetings
- Follow along with the agenda
- Subscribe to email updates
- Follow on social media
- Access information

Have your say:

- Contact your councillor
- Participate in a committee meeting
- Participate in a consultation
- Participate in a local poll
- Vote in local elections

Serve your city:

- Apply to become a member of a City board
- Become a candidate



Being informed is a great first step to participating in decision making.

Watch City Council and committee meetings



City Council and committee meetings take place at City Hall and the civic centres. You are always welcome to attend and no tickets are required. If you cannot be there in person, you can stream meetings online or watch them on television. The only time a meeting is not open to the public is when confidential information is being discussed.

Follow along at toronto.ca/council

You can find agendas, decisions and more on the City Council website at toronto.ca/council.

You can access the same information councillors receive before their meetings, including recommendations, background reports and correspondence from the public.

Agendas are published a week in advance of meetings and are updated as information is added. Decisions of committees and City Council are usually published the same or next day.

Use the City Council website to search for agenda items that affect your neighbourhood or issues you are interested in. You can also see the attendance and voting records of the mayor and councillors.

Subscribe to email updates

Subscribing to City Council and committee email updates is a great way to stay informed. You can read about what is being discussed and what decisions have been made. Visit toronto.ca/e-updates to subscribe.

Interested in pre-1998 information?

Information can be found at the Toronto Archives or online at: toronto.ca/archives

Find out how your councillor has voted on issues by visiting the open data reports section at toronto.ca/council.

Follow on social media

Join the conversation and stay informed.

 youtube.com/c/TorontoCityCouncilLive

 Facebook.com/torontocityclerk

 @TorontoCouncil

 @torontoclerk

Access information

City information is public and everyone has a right to access it; however, there are a few exceptions such as personal information. Any personal information that has been given to the City by members of the public will be protected and is not publicly accessible.

There are multiple ways you can access City of Toronto information. Non-emergency information about City services is available by calling **311** or you can contact City staff directly. You can also file a Freedom of Information Request if the information is not publicly available at toronto.ca or from City staff.

The City of Toronto **Archives** keeps records that document the history of Toronto such as City Council bylaws, aerial maps, photographs, neighbourhood plans, assessment rolls and architectural drawings. Visit toronto.ca/archives for more information.

Education programs for school and community groups are available at the Archives and City Hall. For more information email archives@toronto.ca or call 416-392-5561.

The City's **open data** portal provides data sets for you to use. People use the data in a variety of ways, such as for research or developing applications. Find out what data sets are available by visiting toronto.ca/open.

The City issues **public notices** to let the public know about new bylaws, the sale of City property, changes to city planning, new signs, fees and other items. Notices are placed in newspapers, mailed to individual homes or posted on toronto.ca.

Your opinion is important and by sharing your thoughts you have an impact on neighbourhood and city-wide decisions.



Contact your councillor

One of the great things about your local government is that councillors and the mayor are accessible to the public. Your councillor is there to talk to about things going on in your community. If you have a question or want to share your opinion, your councillor is a good place to start.

Every councillor has an office at City Hall with staff who are there to help you. Councillors also have offices in their wards.

You can call, email or visit your councillor's website to:

- share your views on issues affecting the city or your neighbourhood
- find out what is going on in your community
- get help accessing City services
- join their mailing list
- make an appointment
- invite your councillor to a community event or meeting

To find out who your councillor is visit toronto.ca/councillors or call 311.



Participate in a committee meeting

Community council and standing committee meetings are an opportunity to voice your opinion directly to the members of City Council. You can do so in person or in writing. Only community councils and standing committees hear from public presenters. The public cannot speak at City Council. For more information or to contact a committee clerk visit toronto.ca/council.

Speak about an issue at committee

You can speak to a committee for up to five minutes on anything listed on its agenda. Councillors might ask you questions after you speak and your name and contact information will be listed on the public record of the meeting. In order to speak at a meeting register in advance with the committee clerk.

Write to City Council or committee

You can submit your comments in writing by email, fax or mail to the committee clerk. Your name, contact information and comments become part of the public record so that anyone can read your written comments.

Petitions

Petitions can be submitted to the clerk or a member of City Council about an item on the agenda of a committee meeting or City Council meeting. The petition, including all the names of those who have signed it become part of the public record.



Participate in a consultation



City staff consult the public in a variety of ways to gather input about local or city-wide issues through meetings, open houses, online forums and more. You can find out what is happening and make sure your opinions are considered by participating in a consultation. Consultations could be held on topics such as setting priorities for spending money, how the subway system should be expanded or a new garbage strategy.

Find out if there are any consultations or meetings happening in your community:



toronto.ca/involved



Call 311



@GetInvolvedTO

Participate in a local poll

Households or businesses may receive information by mail from the City about a local poll.

The City conducts polls to gather opinions about a possible change in your community. You can take part in a poll if you are 18 years old on or before the final day of polling and if you are an owner, resident or tenant of property in the polling area.

Possible poll topics include:

- opening a boulevard café
- allowing front-yard parking for a specific address
- permit parking changes
- installing traffic calming measures such as speed bumps
- setting up a business improvement area (BIA)

Vote in local elections

Municipal elections happen every four years on the fourth Monday of October. Eligible voters can vote for mayor, councillor and school board trustee.

A by-election can happen between general elections if a City Council or school board seat becomes vacant.

You can vote in Toronto's municipal election if you are:

- a Canadian citizen; and
- at least 18 years old; and
- a resident in the City of Toronto; or
- a non-resident of the City of Toronto, but you or your spouse own or rent property in the City; and
- not prohibited from voting under any law.



Voters' list

The voters' list is the list of eligible electors in the City of Toronto. If you are on the voters' list you will receive a voter information card in the mail that tells you where and when to vote. If you are not on the voters' list you can still vote, as long as you have identification. To find out more about the voters' list and acceptable identification, visit toronto.ca/elections/voters.

Work in a voting place

For every election the City of Toronto hires people to work in voting places across the city. This is a great way to participate in the democratic process. You do not have to be a Canadian citizen to work an election. There are many roles available and everyone is encouraged to apply.

For information about upcoming elections:



toronto.ca/elections



elections@toronto.ca



416-338-1111



[@torontovotes](https://twitter.com/torontovotes)



facebook.com/electionservices

Serving your city allows you to directly influence decisions in your community.

Apply to serve on a City board

The City delivers some of its services through agencies and corporations. Each agency has its own board of directors that includes members of the public. You can apply to become a member of a board of directors and bring your skills to a range of corporate and community boards.

There are more than 40 agency and corporation boards with over 245 public members.

To serve on a City board, you must:

- be a resident of the City of Toronto; and
- be at least 18 years of age; and
- not be a relative of a member of City Council; and
- not be a City or board employee.

You can apply online any time at toronto.ca/ServeYourCity and your application stays on file for three years. You can also see the full list and descriptions of the agencies and corporations.

Find out about new opportunities:



toronto.ca/ServeYourCity



appoint@toronto.ca



416-397-0088

Become a candidate

You can become a candidate and run to be the next mayor, councillor or school board trustee. At the local level of government there are no political parties.

In order to become a candidate, during the nomination period, you need to file a Nomination Paper, provide identification and pay a filing fee.

To run for mayor or councillor, you must be:

- a Canadian citizen; and
- at least 18 years of age; and
- a resident of the City of Toronto; or
- an owner or tenant of land in the City of Toronto, or the spouse of the owner or tenant; and
- not legally prohibited from voting; and
- not disqualified by any legislation from holding municipal office.

For more information about becoming a candidate visit toronto.ca/elections/candidates



Online resources

Your local government

City of Toronto home page:

toronto.ca

Living in Toronto:

toronto.ca/residents

Doing Business in Toronto:

toronto.ca/business

Visiting Toronto:

toronto.ca/visitors

Accessing City Hall:

toronto.ca/city_hall

311 Toronto:

toronto.ca/311

Be informed

City Council schedule, agendas, minutes and videos:

toronto.ca/council

City YouTube channel:

youtube.com/cityoftoronto

Open data:

toronto.ca/open

Subscribe to email updates:

toronto.ca/e-updates

Toronto Archives:

toronto.ca/archives

Have your say

Contact your councillor:

toronto.ca/councillors

Election Services:

toronto.ca/elections

Get involved Toronto:

toronto.ca/involved

Public consultations:

toronto.ca/consultations

Polling:

toronto.ca/polling

Serve your city

Become a candidate:

toronto.ca/elections/candidates

Become a member of a City board:

toronto.ca/ServeYourCity

This information is prepared by staff of the City Clerk's Office in the City of Toronto. Information in this booklet generally refers to services provided by the City Clerk's Office, with the exception of public consultations on page 21.

For more information about the City Clerk's Office and local government, visit toronto.ca/cityclerk

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