



my local government
it's for me

How to Get Involved



toronto.ca/mylocalgovernment



Land Acknowledgement

The land the City of Toronto stands on today is the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississauga of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississauga of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa Bands.

To contact and learn more about the City Clerk's Office and local government:
[Toronto.ca/mylocalgovernment](https://toronto.ca/mylocalgovernment)
clerks@toronto.ca

Table of contents

Your local government

About your government in Canada	4
About your City Council.....	6
Toronto wards	12
How decisions are made	14

Get Involved

Be informed

Watch City Council and committee meetings.....	18
Follow along with the agenda.....	18
Subscribe to email updates	18
Follow on social media	18
Public Notices	19
Access information	19

Have your say

Contact your councillor	20
Participate in a committee meeting.....	21
Participate in the budget.....	22
Participate in a consultation.....	23
Participate in a local poll	23
Vote in local elections	24

Serve your city

Apply to serve on a City board.....	26
Become a candidate.....	28

Online resources.....	31
-----------------------	----

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.

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. Powers are defined by the City of Toronto Act, 2006.

Provincial



The Government of Ontario provides services across the province and is responsible for:

health, education, driver and vehicle licensing, energy, human rights, natural resources, environment, social services and more. Powers are defined by the Constitution Act, 1867.

Federal



The Government of Canada provides services across the country and is responsible for:

national defence and Canadian Armed Forces, postal service, banking, immigration and citizenship, census, foreign affairs and international trade, agriculture and more. Powers are defined by the Constitution Act, 1867.

City of Toronto **facts**

About **2.9** million **people**



150+ **city Services**



5,600 km of **roads**



6,100 km of **water mains**



83 **fire stations** and **45** **ambulance stations**



1,600 **named parks**



100 **libraries**



**Based on 2019 figures toronto.ca/budget*

About your City Council

City Council is made up of 26 members: the Mayor, who is elected city-wide, and 25 Councillors who are elected in each ward across the city. The Mayor and Councillors each have one vote at Council and a majority vote decides most matters. The Mayor and Councillors are not elected to represent a political party. Each member of Council is independent and can choose how they vote on any issue.

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 engage with 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.

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.

Committees are each made up of between 5 and 8 Councillors. Committees hear from the public and make recommendations to City Council on specific items. City Council and its committees meet on a monthly cycle throughout the year. Each cycle starts with committee meetings and ends with a full City Council meeting.

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 four standing committees:

- Economic and Community Development Committee
- General Government and Licensing Committee
- Infrastructure and Environment Committee
- Planning and Housing Committee



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.

Toronto Public Service

The Public Service is guided by a Toronto Public Service bylaw that defines the roles between the City's administration and City Council. The bylaw states the public service's professional, impartial and ethical standards.

The City Manager is the head of the public service and is accountable to City Council. The City Manager is responsible for:

- the delivery of services, policy direction and program delivery of all City divisions
- providing Council with a single point of administrative accountability and strategic leadership
- providing organizational leadership to the Toronto Public Service

The City Manager is appointed by Council on the recommendation of the Mayor, and is assisted by three Deputy City Managers and one Chief Financial Officer.

The City Clerk is an officer of the City and their duties are outlined in provincial legislation and delegated by Council. Council appoints the Clerk who reports to Council for statutory responsibilities and the City Manager for administrative purposes.

The services provided by the City Clerk's Office include:

- supporting Council's decision making processes
- corporate information management
- assisting the Mayor and Councillors in their ceremonial and civic duties
- delivering provincially-mandated services such as marriage licenses
- providing administrative, budget and business support to Members of Council and the Integrity Commissioner, Lobbyist Registrar and Ombudsman
- administering elections

The City Solicitor oversees the Legal Services division and reports to Council for statutory purposes, and to the City Manager for administrative purposes.

Diversity Our Strength is the City of Toronto's motto. It refers to the combined strength of the seven former municipalities that make up the City of Toronto.

Divisions and Division Heads are responsible for managing City divisions. Divisions deliver one or more City services. The division head is responsible for:

- responding to questions about their programs and services at Standing Committees and Council meetings
- setting service objectives for their division and monitoring progress
- day-to-day operations
- staff and budgets within their service
- working collaboratively to achieve Council priorities



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



@311toronto



311

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** – listens to and investigates complaints about City services when efforts to resolve an issue have failed. The service is free and for everyone.

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

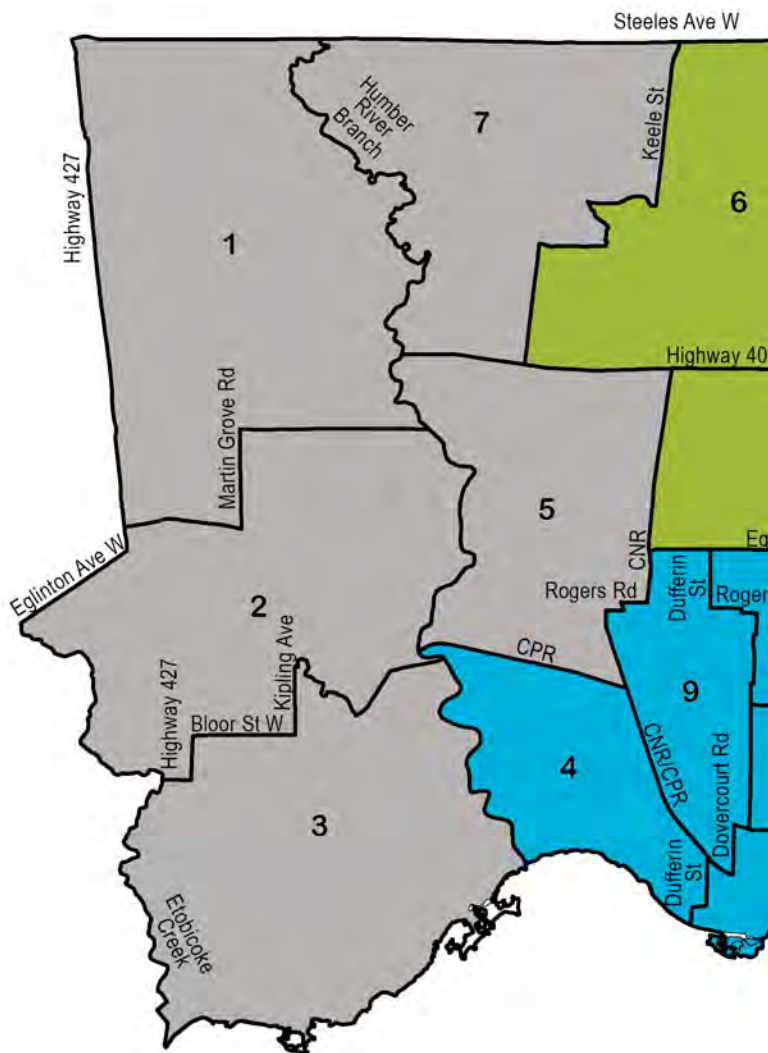


Toronto wards

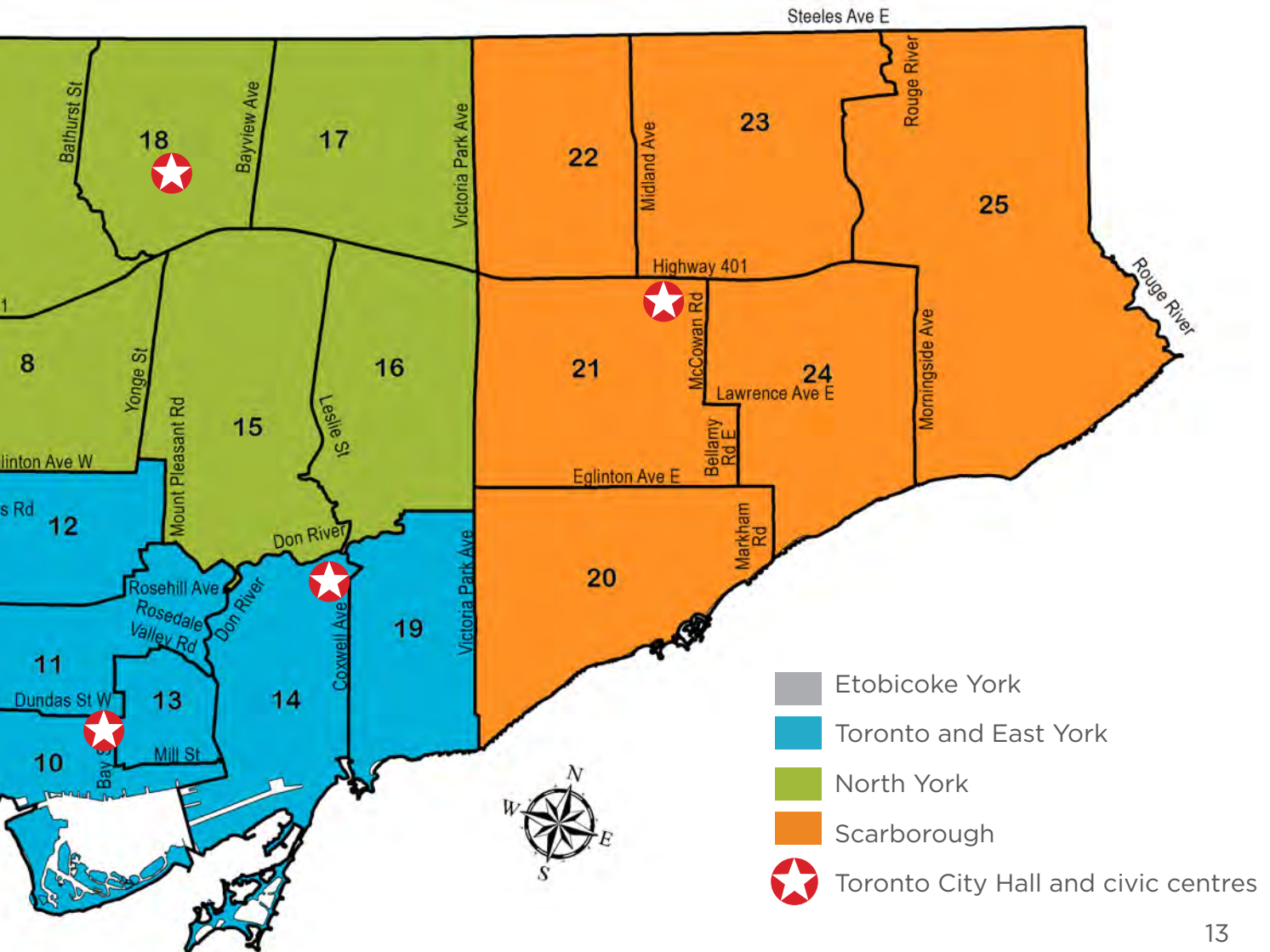
The City of Toronto is divided into areas called wards. Each ward is identified by a name and number and has an elected official called a Councillor. The Councillor in your ward represents you. There is also a Mayor who represents the whole city. Wards are divided into four areas and each area has a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

- Ward 1** Etobicoke North
- Ward 2** Etobicoke Centre
- Ward 3** Etobicoke-Lakeshore
- Ward 4** Parkdale-High Park
- Ward 5** York South-Weston
- Ward 6** York Centre
- Ward 7** Humber River-Black Creek
- Ward 8** Eglinton-Lawrence
- Ward 9** Davenport
- Ward 10** Spadina-Fort York
- Ward 11** University-Rosedale
- Ward 12** Toronto-St.Paul's
- Ward 13** Toronto Centre
- Ward 14** Toronto-Danforth
- Ward 15** Don Valley West
- Ward 16** Don Valley East
- Ward 17** Don Valley North
- Ward 18** Willowdale
- Ward 19** Beaches-East York
- Ward 20** Scarborough Southwest
- Ward 21** Scarborough Centre
- Ward 22** Scarborough-Agincourt
- Ward 23** Scarborough North
- Ward 24** Scarborough-Guildwood
- Ward 25** Scarborough-Rouge Park

For more information visit
toronto.ca/wardboundaries.

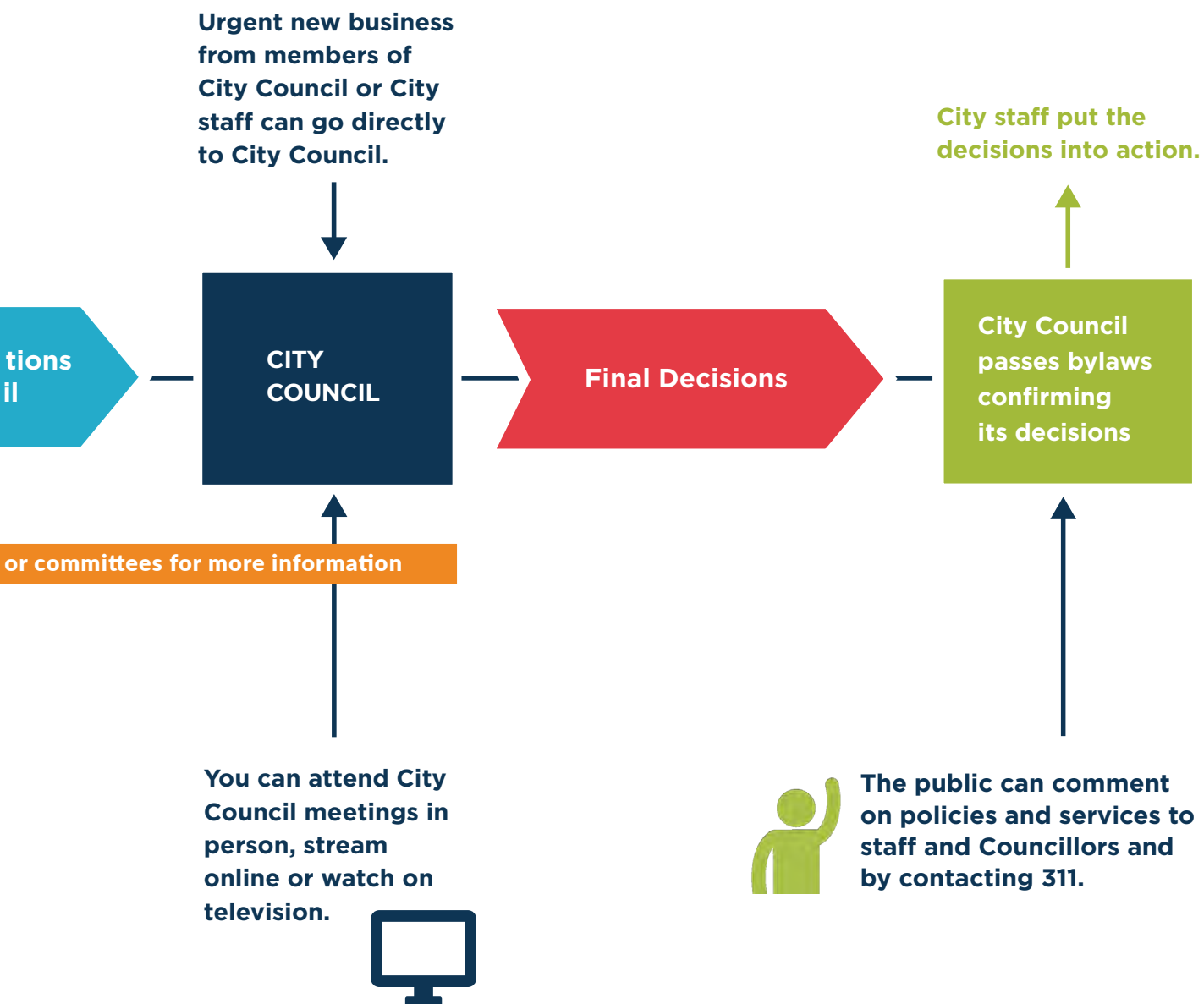


To find your Councillor and ward visit
toronto.ca/councillors or call 311.



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
- View public notices
- Access information

Have your say:

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



Get

Involved

Serve your city:

- Apply to serve on 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. 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 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.

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

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.

Follow on social media

Join the conversation and stay informed.



youtube.com/TorontoCityCouncilLive



Facebook.com/torontocityclerk



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



[@torontoclerk](https://instagram.com/torontoclerk)

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

View public notices

The City issues **public notices** to let the public know about meetings of committees and Council, 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/notices.

Access information

There are a number of ways you can access City of Toronto information. A great way to start is by contacting 311, searching the toronto.ca website or by contacting City staff. Many types of City information can be accessed without asking, for example:

- 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. For more information visit toronto.ca/archives.
- 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.

In cases where information is not already available to the public, you may also file a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. For more information on when and how to make an FOI request visit toronto.ca/foi.

City information is public and everyone has a right to access it; however, there are a few exceptions such as where records contain personal information. City records containing personal information, for example phone numbers or birthdates must be carefully managed and kept private.


For more information on how to access City information visit toronto.ca/cityrecords.

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.

Follow Archives:

 @TorontoArchives

 @toronto_archives

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.

Call or email your Councillor, or visit their website to:

- share your views on issues affecting the city or your neighbourhood
- get help accessing City services
- join their mailing list
- invite your Councillor to a community event or meeting





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 will be listed on the public record of the meeting. In order to speak at a meeting register in advance with the committee clerk. You will appear in the live broadcast and video archive of the meeting.

Write to City Council or committee

You can submit comments to a committee on anything listed on its agenda by email, fax or mail to the committee clerk. Your name will be listed on the public record of the meeting and your email, fax or letter will be made available for anyone to read.

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 the City budget

The City's budget is a financial plan that describes how much money the City will bring in and spend within a year. There are two types of budget, operating and capital.

Operating Budget

The operating budget covers day-to-day spending on services such as recreation programs, parks maintenance, public health, city roads, transit, police and other emergency services.

Capital Budget

The capital budget funds the City's infrastructure that supports service delivery. It pays for the construction and repair of transit, roads, bridges, parks and public buildings such as libraries, community centres and fire stations.

Rate-supported Programs

The City also has three rate-supported programs: Toronto Water, Solid Waste Management Services and the Toronto Parking Authority. These programs are funded almost entirely by the user in the form of fees.

How to Get Involved



Give a deputation, which is a short five-minute speech where you can share your comments directly with Budget Committee members. To register to speak, call 416-392-4666 or email buc@toronto.ca.

If you cannot attend in person to make a deputation, you can submit a written deputation to the Budget Committee by email to buc@toronto.ca, fax 416-392-2980 or mail to Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W., 10th floor, West Tower, Toronto, ON M5H 2N2.



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



@GetInvolvedTO



Call 311

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. The next general municipal election will be held on **October 24, 2022**. Eligible voters can vote for Mayor, Councillor and School Board Trustee.

The City is responsible for running elections on behalf of the four school boards in Toronto. The role of the School Board Trustee is to develop and monitor school policies, approve budgets and represent education interests of residents. The four school boards are:

- Toronto District School Board (Public)
- Toronto Catholic District School Board (Catholic)
- Conseil scolaire Viamonde (French Public)
- Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir (French Catholic)

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.



VOTE
toronto.ca/elections

It is important to check if you are on the voters' list and your information is correct, especially if you have recently moved or changed your name.
Visit [Voterlookup.ca](https://voterlookup.ca)

Voters' list

The voters' list is a list of eligible electors in the City of Toronto. The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) is responsible for preparing the preliminary list of electors for each municipality and school board in Ontario. It is MPAC's Municipal Property Assessment database of property owners and tenants that is used to prepare the final voters' list for Election Day.

For more information visit toronto.ca/elections/voters.

Work in a voting place

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 more information visit toronto.ca/elections.

Accessible Elections

The City Clerk is committed to ensuring persons with disabilities have full and equal access to elections and the ability to vote privately and independently. For more information about accommodations for voters, visit toronto.ca/VoterAccommodations.

For more information:



toronto.ca/elections



elections@toronto.ca



416-338-1111



voterlookup.ca



[@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 boards, committees and tribunals. 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.

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 two 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.

To run for Trustee on any of the four school boards you must be:

- a Canadian citizen; and
- at least 18 years of age; and
- a resident in the area of jurisdiction of the board; and
- not legally prohibited from voting, and
- not disqualified by any legislation from holding municipal office.





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/thecityoftoronto

City Council Live YouTube channel:

youtube.com/TorontoCityCouncilLive

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/getinvolved

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

toronto.ca/mylocalgovernment

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

Published in 2019