

Shared roles: when powers or duties are delegated to others

The City of Toronto Act, 2006 gives City Council the ability to delegate powers and duties to a person or body subject to certain restrictions. For example, City Council may delegate certain powers to:

- One or more members of City Council or a Council committee
- A body with at least two members, half of whom are members of City Council, individuals appointed by Council, or a combination of these
- An individual who is an officer, employee or agent of the City.

For example, City Council has delegated final decision-making authority on local transportation regulations such as speed bumps and traffic lights to the Community Councils, and it also delegates powers to the City Manager and other senior officials for the day to day running of the City.

“Delegate” is to temporarily give powers and duties to someone else; to allow or trust someone else to do a task or make a decision.

“Body” is a group of people created for a particular task or purpose.

The City of Toronto Act, 2006 requires that some of Council’s powers cannot be delegated, for example:

- The power to appoint or remove from office an officer of the City whose appointment is required by the City of Toronto Act.
- The power to impose a tax, set a tax rate or establish a tax ratio.
- The power to adopt an official plan or an amendment to an official plan under the Planning Act.
- The power to pass a zoning by law under the Planning Act.
- The power to adopt or amend the budget of the City.

For more information

- City of Toronto Act, 2006, Part IV: The City and its Governance – e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_06c11_e.htm
- Governing Toronto – toronto.ca/governingtoronto/
- Council procedures see the Municipal Code, Chapter 27 – toronto.ca/legdocs/municode/

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- Phone within Toronto city limits: 311
- Phone outside city limits: 416-392-CITY (2489)
- TTY customers: 416-338-0TTY (0889)
- Email: 311@toronto.ca
- Fax: 416-338-0685

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Your guide to...

The Roles of the Mayor and City Council



City Council

Toronto City Council has direct responsibility for the City’s services. Council also indirectly oversees other major services delivered through its agencies and corporations, such as the Toronto Police Service, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), and the Toronto Public Library.



Toronto’s City Council is made up of the Mayor and 44 Councillors. The Mayor is the only member of Council who is elected by voters from across the city. Each Councillor is elected by voters in one of 44 wards (a geographic area of the city). The term of office for the Mayor and Council is four years.

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The role of Council as set out in the City of Toronto Act, 2006 is:

- to represent the public and to consider the well-being and interests of the City
- to develop and evaluate the policies and programs of the City
- to determine which services the City provides
- to ensure that administrative policies, practices and procedures and controllership policies, practices and procedures are in place to implement the decisions of Council
- to ensure the accountability and transparency of the operations of the City, including the activities of the senior management of the City of Toronto
- to maintain the financial integrity of the City
- to carry out the duties of Council under this or any other Act.

The Mayor

The role of the Mayor as the head of council is to:

- act as chief executive officer
- provide information and make recommendations to Council with respect to Council's role in ensuring that administrative policies, practices and procedures and controllership policies, practices and procedures are in place to implement the decisions of Council and in ensuring the accountability and transparency of the operations of the City, including the activities of the senior management of the City

- preside over (chairs) meetings of council so that its business can be carried out efficiently and effectively
- provide leadership to council
- represent the City at official functions, and
- carry out any other duties under the City of Toronto Act, 2006 or any other Act.

The role of the Mayor as chief executive officer is to:

- uphold and promote the purposes of the City
- promote public involvement in the City's activities
- act as the representative of the City both within and outside the City, and promote the City locally, nationally and internationally
- participate in and foster activities that enhance the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the City and its residents.

The duties and powers of the Mayor include:

- calling special meetings of Council
- expelling any person for improper conduct at a meeting
- acting as a commissioner for taking affidavits (as may any member of Council)
- appointing guards with the powers of peace officers for public works and municipal buildings
- declaring that an emergency exists in the municipality, implementing an emergency plan and declaring when an emergency has ended

- signing all bylaws, together with the City Clerk, passed at meetings at which the Mayor has presided.

The Mayor is a member of all committees and is entitled to one vote. The Mayor also chairs the:

- Executive Committee
- Striking Committee – The Mayor recommends to Council the membership of the Striking Committee and may designate the Deputy Mayor as chair of the Striking Committee
- Civic Appointments Committee – The Mayor may designate any member of Council to chair the Civic Appointments Committee

The Mayor is a member of the Toronto Police Services Board and the Exhibition Place Board of Governors, although City Council, with the consent of the Mayor, may appoint another member to take the Mayor's place.

Council can designate another Member of Council to preside at Council meetings, subject to the consent of the Mayor. Council has decided to do this by establishing the positions of "Speaker" and "Deputy Speaker". The Speaker and Deputy Speaker serve for the term of Council. Council has delegated to the Mayor the power to appoint and remove the Deputy Mayor and Standing Committee chairs.

The Deputy Mayor assists the Mayor, is Vice Chair of Executive Committee and can act as Mayor when the Mayor is absent from the City or absent because of illness, or when the office of the Mayor is vacant. The Deputy Mayor has, and may exercise, all the rights, power and authority of the Mayor, save and except the by-right-of-office powers of the Mayor as a member of a community council.

If the Mayor or head of Council is absent, refuses to act or vacates their elected office, City Council may appoint another Member of Council to act in their place. In such cases, the acting head of Council has all the powers and duties of the Mayor.

City Councillors

Councillors, also known as Members of Council, play both a legislative role and a constituency role. In their legislative role they are responsible for considering and establishing policies and by laws to implement Council's decisions. In their constituency role Councillors are responsible for consulting with the constituents of their ward and for ensuring that all sides of an issue are considered in the decision-making process.

Councillors work on city-wide, ward-based and local neighbourhood issues. To carry out this diverse role effectively Councillors play several roles within the City's governance system. A typical Councillor's workload includes:

- chair or member of a standing committee
- chair or member of a community council
- chair or member of additional committees and boards such as sub-committees, advisory committees, task forces, boards of management, and program operating boards. In addition to these formal appointments most Councillors serve in a volunteer capacity with other community organizations.