

## Blue Monarch Management

Suite 1901, 500 - 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW

Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2V6

[www.bluemonarch.ca](http://www.bluemonarch.ca)



# Final Report

CITY OF AIRDRIE

ELECTED OFFICIALS' COMPENSATION AND RESOURCING REVIEW

NOVEMBER 29, 2024

PREPARED FOR:

CHARLOTTE SATINK

MANAGER LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

## Contents

Executive Summary .....	2
Methodology and Approach.....	5
Key Results.....	9
Analysis of City Provided Data .....	11
Qualitative Data Survey Results.....	12
Qualitative Interview Responses .....	14
Facilitated Discussion Session Overview .....	20
New Candidate Information Package .....	23
Compensation Review .....	25
Report Limitations .....	31

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report represents the culmination of the City of Airdrie's Elected Officials' Compensation and Resourcing Review project, focusing on the time commitments, roles, and compensation benchmarking. This analysis aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how councillors allocate their time across both Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional activities. This investigation and its results serve as the foundation to inform the development of the next Candidate Information Package (CIP) ahead of the upcoming municipal election scheduled for October 2025.

### Methodology

The methodology for this report combined quantitative and qualitative research approaches to assess councillor roles and time commitments. Data was gathered through an online survey to quantify councillors' time commitments, one-on-one interviews for in-depth insights, and city-provided records on meeting participation rates. Additionally, a facilitated discussion session with the Mayor and Council captured strategic feedback on governance and committee roles. Throughout this report, activities are categorized as follows:

- **Mandatory Work:** Outlined by both the Municipal Government Act (MGA) and specific bylaws, time spent in council and committee meetings, including council meetings, strategy sessions, standing committee meetings, and ad-hoc or advisory committee meetings.
- **Discretionary/Optional Activities:** This area captures non mandated activities that councillors engage in based on personal or professional interest.

This report compares the compensation for Airdrie's elected officials, benchmarking against three comparator groups:

- **Group 1: National Peer Cities** – 46 Municipalities with populations over 100,000 across Canada.
- **Group 2: Closely Comparable Cities** – 6 Municipalities with similar population sizes and a growth rate >10%.
- **Group 3: Alberta Peer Group** – 5 Alberta municipalities historically used by Airdrie for comparisons.

### Councillor Time Commitments

The role of a councillor in the City of Airdrie, while requiring dedicated effort, does not inherently demand a full-time commitment based solely on fulfilling the Mandatory Work required. Councillors can generally meet their core responsibilities within part-time hours as confirmed in the independent survey. However, councillors choose to extend their weekly hours, attending discretionary / optional activities. This additional involvement demonstrates their commitment to serving the community but also highlights how the role could easily evolve and exceed 40 hours a week.

	<b>Mandatory Work Average Hours Per Month</b>	<b>Discretionary / Optional Average Hours Per Month</b>
<b>Participation Time</b>	32	73
<b>Preparation Time</b>	19	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>86</b>

The average time spent on both Mandatory Work and Discretionary/Optional activities was reported as 138 hours per month. However, this figure reflects a significant range, with councillors reporting time commitments varying

from 69 to 233 hours per month. This variability underscores the individualized nature of councillor roles and the importance of personal discretion in shaping community engagement.

### Contribution to the Candidate Information Package

Insights from this review will drive the development of an enhanced 2025–2029 CIP, providing prospective candidates with clearer expectations around time commitments and responsibilities to ensure success in their roles. The revised 2025 – 2029 CIP will focus on:

- **Clearer Representation of Time Commitment:** Providing more accurate information on the total time required for both Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional activities.
- **Detailed Breakdown of Responsibilities:** Offering a clearer understanding of what constitutes Mandatory Work, and the time required for preparation, external representation, and community engagement.
- **Learning Curve for First-Time Councillors:** Acknowledging the onboarding challenges faced by new councillors and the importance of providing adequate training and resources to help them acclimate to their roles.

### Council Compensation

Key findings reveal that Airdrie’s mayor and councillor salaries vary across groups.

#### Group 1: Peer Cities:

Airdrie’s mayoral salary of \$127,194 is 4% below the median of \$147,710 and 20% below the average of \$158,119. Councillor salaries of \$59,781 are 7% below the median of \$64,221 and 15% below the average of \$70,742. It is important to note that the Peer Cities group is a heterogeneous set including cities with a mix of At-large and Ward systems, Single Tier and Multiple Tier municipalities and with population ranging from 100,000 to 2.8 million.

#### Group 2: Closely Comparable Cities:

Airdrie’s mayoral salary of \$127,194 is 6% below the median of \$135,204 and 1% below the average of \$128,466, suggesting alignment with its peers. However, councillor salaries of \$59,781 are 20% above both the median and the average of \$49,943.

#### Group 3: Alberta Peer Group:

Airdrie’s mayoral salary of \$127,194 aligns with the median of \$126,678 but is 6% below the average of \$135,184. Councillor salaries of \$59,781 are 11% below the median of \$67,245 and 13% below the average of \$68,585.

### Emerging Themes and General Observations

While these observations and feedback were beyond the original project scope, they emerged consistently throughout our research:

- **Inherent Expectations of the Role:** All councillors noted the role demands an “always-on” status especially when in public, inherent of an elected official’s position.
- **Addressing Incivility:** Incivility from the general public towards councillors was discussed during the facilitated session as a frequent issue, detracting from councillor productivity.



- **Two-Year Board Terms:** During the facilitated session, the mayor and councillors acknowledged extending board and committee terms to two years could enhance councillors' effectiveness by allowing for deeper engagement after the initial learning phase.
- **Importance of Flexibility and Adaptation to an Evolving Governance Structures:** The evolving governance structure in Airdrie, including the formation of new committees and changes in administrative processes, has emerged as a significant theme expressed by all councillors.

### Understanding the Realities of the Councillor Role

The role of an elected official is inherently unique, shaped by each councillor's priorities and personal approach to their responsibilities. For many, Discretionary / Optional activities, such as attending community events or engaging in advocacy, play a significant role, driven by professional aspirations or desire to strengthen their presence within the community. Prospective councillors are encouraged to thoroughly research the position by consulting current members and leveraging public resources available. These efforts can provide valuable insights into the time demands, challenges, and responsibilities of serving as an elected official.

### Conclusion

This report provides a systematic evaluation of Airdrie's councillor roles, with actionable insights to refine the CIP and governance practices. By addressing emerging themes and aligning with best practices, the city can ensure its elected officials are well prepared to serve a grown community effectively.

Moreover, this review may naturally prompt additional governance explorations, as addressing these newly surfaced considerations could help reinforce councillor engagement and satisfaction. While these further inquiries fall outside the current scope, ignoring them could inadvertently impact attraction, engagement and contributions. Proactively addressing these potential adjustments would contribute to a more resilient governance model for Airdrie, enhancing both strategic decision-making and long-term operational effectiveness in the city.

## METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

This project employs a multi-stream analysis approach to provide a comprehensive evaluation.

1. **Quantitative Analysis:** This includes data gathered through an online survey and personal interviews, which measured councillors' time commitment and activities. This data was statistically analyzed to identify key patterns in how time is allocated between Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional activities, and to understand preparation requirements for meetings and community engagements.
2. **Qualitative Analysis:** In-depth interviews with councillors and the long answer portion of the online survey, provided valuable qualitative insights. The interviews explored the councillors' experiences, challenges, and perspectives on the Mandatory Work activities within their roles. The online survey long answer questions focused on the Discretionary / Optional activities.
3. **Review of the Candidate Information Package:** A comparison between the 2021 CIP and councillors' actual reported responsibilities was conducted. This stream focused on identifying any gaps between the expectations set for candidates and the realities of the role.
4. **City of Airdrie-Supplied Statistical Data:** The analysis also incorporated data provided by the City of Airdrie, such as councillor attendance and participation statistics for various activities.
5. **Facilitated Discussion with Mayor and Councillors:** A structured session was held to discuss the value of elected official representation on external boards and committees, providing direct insights and reflections on current responsibilities and strategic participation.

### Project Participants:

City of Airdrie Councillor Participants	City of Airdrie Support Team	Blue Monarch Management Consulting Team
Councillor Darrell Belyk	Charlotte Satink, Manager Legislative Services	Rick Bennett, Project Lead
Councillor Ron Chapman	Karen Jiang, Senior Legislative Services	Leanne Walper, Management Consultant
Councillor Al Jones	Tammy Belsham, Team Leader, Legislative Services	Pooja Agarwal, Management Consultant
Councillor Candice Kolson	Maxine Ressler, Executive Assistant	
Councillor Tina Petrow		
Councillor Heather Spearman		

## Project Timetable

Milestone	Date	Description
Project Kickoff	July 30, 2024	Official start of the project, introduction of consultants to the City of Airdrie and calibration.
Online Survey Distribution	August 21 – 26	Digital survey sent to councillors to collect quantitative data on their time use.
Initial Interviews with Councillors	August 28 – 30	One-on-one interviews to gather qualitative data on councillor activities.
Survey and Interview Data Analysis	September 1 - 17	Analysis of gathered data, identifying key challenges and themes.
Milestone Report Draft	September 18	Submission of the initial report summarizing results from the interviews and surveys.
Council Session Facilitation	October 1	Facilitation of a session with Council to present results and gather feedback.
Final Report	November 29	Submission of the final report summarizing the project and recommended CIP revisions
Mayor and Council Presentation	December 17	Presentation of the final report to Mayor and Council.

## CITY OF AIRDRIE SUPPLIED DATA

The City Clerk's office provided a detailed dataset capturing municipal councillor time allocation within the City of Airdrie, including the newly established governance structure. This data covers the period from 2021 to 2024 and offers a comprehensive breakdown of councillors' involvement across various Mandatory Work activities. A detailed descriptions of the new governance framework was provided, which includes Standing Committees, Advisory Committees and Ad-hoc Committees formed as part of recent structural changes. These commissions handle core aspects of municipal governance, allowing for a more focused allocation of time to specific areas such as budget consultation, strategy sessions, and legal training.

The dataset includes quantitative measures of:

- **Time spent in council and committee meetings (Mandatory Work)** e.g., council meetings, council strategy sessions, standing committee meetings and ad-hoc and advisory committee meetings.
- **Participation in Legislated Boards and Committees approved by the council**, reflecting their responsibilities in the broader governance landscape.

## SURVEY DESIGN AND DISTRIBUTION

The online survey was carefully designed to collect detailed information regarding councillor participation in mainly Discretionary / Optional activities.

### Survey Development

The survey was structured to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of time spent on various activities, with questions designed to elicit both quantitative (e.g., hours spent on activities) and qualitative (e.g., councillor perceptions of activity importance for their role) responses. The key objectives of the survey were to:

- Measure the time commitment associated with Discretionary / Optional activities, including community events, school visits, and meetings with residents. A few questions pertaining to Mandatory Work activities were included for the purpose of data collection and comparison.
- Identify how councillors allocate time to Discretionary / Optional Activities boards and committees, community engagements, and professional development.
- Assess the perceived impact of Discretionary / Optional activities on their role and the community.

### Distribution Process

The survey was distributed digitally via SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool hosted by the City of Airdrie to ensure data integrity and ease of participation. Councillors were sent direct invitations to participate, with reminders issued at intervals to ensure full participation. The survey remained open from August 21 to September 04, allowing ample time for councillors to respond.

### Overview of Councillor Participation

- **Survey Participation:** All councillors (excluding the mayor, who was not required), responded to the survey. This high participation rate provides confidence that the data represents a full picture of councillor activities.
- **Interview Participation:** Following the survey, councillors participated in one-on-one interviews. Each councillor scheduled a 60-minute session where they provided in-depth insights into their roles, time management, and challenges related to balancing Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional activities.

### Interview Structure and Process

The one-on-one interviews were designed to complement the survey data by providing deeper qualitative insights into the councillor experience.

#### 1. Interview Objectives:

- To gather detailed information on time allocation towards participation and preparation for council meetings, committee duties, and community engagements.
- To explore challenges councillors face in executing their official roles.
- To gather inputs for development of the CIP for 2025 municipal elections.

#### 2. Process:

Interviews were semi-structured to allow for flexibility and follow-up on emerging themes while ensuring that all key topics were covered. Questions were tailored to delve into specific areas of the councillors' responsibilities, focusing on time spent on Mandatory Work activities, external representation, and community engagement.

#### 3. Quantitative Analysis:

Data from the survey was analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns in time allocation, participation levels, and councillors' perceptions of their duties. The following metrics were key focus areas:

- **Average hours** spent on Mandatory Work versus Discretionary / Optional activities.
- **Preparation time** for meetings and community events.
- **Perceived impact** of activities on councillor performance and community outcomes.

#### 4. Qualitative Analysis:

The qualitative data collected through interviews was analyzed thematically, identifying key challenges, opportunities, and discrepancies between councillor expectations and

realities. Key themes such as work-life balance, compensation concerns, and community expectations were highlighted.

5. **Application of Artificial Intelligence (AI)** was used to enhance the analysis of qualitative data gathered from the interviews. AI-driven tools were employed to identify recurring themes and sentiments across councillor responses, helping to ensure that no significant insights were missed. Specifically, AI was used to:
  - **Categorize themes:** AI grouped responses into categories (e.g., time management, community engagement, etc.) to streamline the thematic analysis.
  - **Identify sentiment:** AI tools were used to detect positive, neutral, or negative sentiments in councillor responses, providing a clearer understanding of areas of concern or satisfaction.

This methodology ensures a rigorous and comprehensive approach to evaluating councillor activities, balancing both objective data and subjective experiences. By combining survey data, interview insights, and AI-driven analysis, the City of Airdrie is equipped with a holistic view of councillor responsibilities.

## KEY RESULTS

The following section outlines the key results from the comprehensive analysis of councillor activities and responsibilities, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data streams. The results highlight the alignment and discrepancies between councillor expectations and actual time commitments, with a focus on both Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional activities. These insights are instrumental in identifying gaps in councillor workload, governance efficiency, and areas where further support or resources may be necessary to ensure the role is performed effectively.

### QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS KEY RESULTS

#### Online Survey

The online survey focused on the involvement of councillors in Discretionary / Optional activities and the quantitative data collected generated valuable insights:

- **Average time spent on Discretionary / Optional activities:** On an average a councillor spends 73 hours per month (~18 hours per week) on Discretionary / Optional activities.
- **Range of time spent on Discretionary / Optional activities:** The councillor specific time spent on Discretionary / Optional activities ranged from 30 hours per month (~8 hours per week) to 125 hours per month (~31 hours per week).
- **Average time spent on preparation for Discretionary / Optional activities:** In addition to the time spent on the activities themselves, on an average a councillor spends about 13 hours per month (~3 hours per week) preparing for participating in the Discretionary / Optional activities.
- **Range of time spent on preparing for Discretionary / Optional activities:** The specific time councillors spent on preparing for Discretionary / Optional activities ranged from 8 hours per month (~2 hours per week) to 26 hours per month (~7 hours per week).
- **Total time spent on Discretionary / Optional activities:** On average the total time spent on Discretionary / Optional activities is around 87 hours per month (~22 hours per week), with the minimum time for a councillor being 38 hours per month (~10 hours per week) and the maximum being 151 hours per month (~38 hours per week).

#### Interviews

The interviews focused primarily on the involvement of councillors in Mandatory Work activities. However, the conversations covered a much broader range of topics and helped clarify the data collected in the online survey. The quantitative aspects of data analysis from the Interviews yield the following observations:

- **Time spent on Council Meetings, Strategy and Legal sessions and Standing Committee Meetings:** The description of time allocated by each councillor to these mandatory activities aligns with the estimate provided by the City Clerk. The data for these meetings showed no discrepancies. The estimated time commitment for these activities is approximately 24 hours per month.
- **Time toward preparation for Council Meetings, Strategy and Legal sessions, and Budget Consultations:** The range was wide – from 5 hours per month (~1 hour per week) to 49 hours per month (~12 hours per week). The average came out to be 19 hours per month (~5 hours per week).
- **Time spent on legislated boards and committees:** The average time spent on meetings for legislated boards that the councillors are appointed to was gathered as follows:



- Airdrie Mainstreet Square Real Estate Inc - 2 hours per month.
- Airdrie Housing Limited - 8 hours per month.
- Airdrie Municipal Library Board - 3 hours per month.
- Calgary Metropolitan Region Board - 7 hours per month.
- Inter-City Social Policy Forum - 3 hours per month.
- Rocky View Foundation – 2 hours per month
- Rocky View/Airdrie Intermunicipal Committee - 2 hours per month.
- None of the councillors reported any significant time spent on the Joint Use Agreement Committee.
- **Time dedicated towards preparation for external boards and committees:** The range was again wide – from 0.5 hour per month (~0.125 hour per week) to 27 hours per month (~7 hours per week). The average came out to be 7 hours per month (~2 hours per week).

#### IDENTIFICATION OF GAPS TO CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACKAGE

As part of the consulting team's early analysis, several gaps have emerged between the 2021 CIP and the actual experiences of current councillors. While not exhaustive, these results provide an initial basis for refining future iterations of the package.

- **Time Commitment:** Councillors report spending between 69 to 233 hours per month on Mandatory Work and Discretionary/Optional activities. When preparation time is excluded, the average commitment is approximately 106 hours per month, equating to around 26 hours per week. This time investment was not adequately reflected in the 2021 Candidate Information Package, leaving prospective candidates unaware of the demands of the role.
- **Lack of Clarity on Discretionary / Optional Activities:** A significant portion of councillors' time is dedicated to Discretionary / Optional activities, which while being discretionary are often expressed as essential by councillors. This time commitment is not addressed in the 2021 CIP, potentially creating an impression that the time commitment in a councillor role will be limited only to the Mandatory Work activities.
- **Absence of Preparation Time Estimates:** The average time spent by a councillor in preparing for Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional activities is 33 hours per month (~8 hours per week). While the package outlines councillors' core activities, it fails to mention the time required for preparation. Councillors invest hours preparing for meetings and events, which adds to their overall workload but is not factored into the expectations set for candidates.
- **Omission of Learning Curve for First-Time Councillors:** First-time councillors often face a steep learning curve, requiring significant time and effort to acclimate to the role. The 2021 CIP does not highlight the potential challenges of this adjustment period, leaving new councillors unprepared for the demands of onboarding.

## ANALYSIS OF CITY PROVIDED DATA

### COMPARISON WITH THE 2021 CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACKAGE

This section reviews the alignment between the 2021 CIP and the current realities of the City of Airdrie's governance structure. Since the CIP was released, significant changes have occurred, particularly in the governance and committee structure of the City. These changes were not reflected in the 2021 CIP, as the package was created before these shifts took place.

Despite these alterations, the 2021 CIP remains largely accurate in terms of outlining the core responsibilities and Mandatory Work that councillors are expected to perform. The document did well in listing most official duties, such as participation in council meetings, committee sessions, and other key governance tasks. However, the governance structure's evolution—especially the establishment of new commissions and shifts in committee responsibilities—was not anticipated in the CIP, leaving room for further updates to better align future CIP with the present governance model.

Mandatory Work Activity	CIP 2021		City Clerk Data		Councillor Interviews	
	Activity Mentioned	Hours Provided	Activity Mentioned	Hours Provided	Activity Mentioned	Hours Provided
<b>Council Meetings</b>	√	√	√	√	√	√
<b>Council Strategic sessions</b>	√	√	√	√	√	√
<b>Budget Consultation Sessions</b>	√	X	X	X	√	√
<b>Legislated Boards and Committees</b>	√	X	√	X	√	√
<b>Municipal Conferences (Discretionary / Optional)</b>	√	X	X	X	√	√

*In addition to the above, the data provided by the City included time spent on Council Committees in the new Governance structure.*

## QUALITATIVE DATA SURVEY RESULTS

The online survey included six long form questions. The responses provided to these questions align with both the quantitative data gathered in the online survey and the interview question response themes. Below are the question response summaries highlighting the main points from each online survey question.

### Discretionary / Optional Activities Contribution to the Councillor's Role

The councillors agree that attending Discretionary / Optional activities, such as community events, are essential to their role as councillors. Even though these are not legislated responsibilities. These events enhance community visibility, build relationships, provide opportunities for advocacy, and enable councillors to promote municipal priorities while fostering trust and accountability with residents.

### Examples of Discretionary / Optional Activities that have Positively Impacted Council Work

Each councillor shared Discretionary / Optional activities that they felt have had a positive impact on their role as a councillor. Such activities include meeting with indigenous leaders; attending conferences and attending community events such as visiting and hosting international delegates; chairing the 'Mayor's Night of the Arts' committee, which not only supported local performing arts, but also raised money towards Volunteer Airdrie; meeting with local organizations such as the Chamber or Food Bank; fundraising events that will benefit the whole City; and Alberta Municipalities Board Appointment, providing support on mental health issues.

### Discretionary / Optional Activities with the Highest Impact on Councillor Effectiveness

The Discretionary / Optional activities with the highest impact on councillor effectiveness include engaging and interacting with residence and business owners, participating in community events/ gatherings to hear multiple perspectives and participating in inter-governmental forums.

The direct benefits of participating in inter-governmental forums include networking, having the opportunity to advocate for change on larger issues directly with Ministers from the Government of Alberta, brainstorming solutions to these issues with colleagues and learning from municipalities who "have already been there", and bring those learnings back to our community. Developing advanced governance skills from chairing and facilitating meetings, which has contributed to effectiveness chairing for City of Airdrie committee meetings.

\* This question was not completed in the online survey by Councillor Chapman.

### The Motivating Factors to Participate in Discretionary / Optional Activities

Across councillors, there are varying motivating factors that contribute to their engagement in Discretionary / Optional activities. The motivating factors include intrinsic motivation and relate to their need to want to help both the city and residence of Airdrie succeed, being passionate about creating spaces for inclusivity, participating in engagement activities that will help to reduce voter apathy as experienced in the 2021 municipal elections, to gain knowledge about the organizations, businesses, and local & non-local issues in the community for informed decision-making and advocacy. The level of engagement in Discretionary / Optional activities varies greatly from high engagement, making a keen effort to attend many activities and events, to councillors who attend events if they have time.

## Challenges Encountered Participating in Discretionary / Optional Activities

A common challenge across most councillor responses relates to not having enough time to engage in Discretionary / Optional activities, due to the high volume of activities and events. Also, balancing Council and personal life responsibilities is a daily challenge for most councillors.

The opinion on the value of Discretionary / Optional activities varies on Council and this presents challenges regarding Council support in taking on external tasks. This can take a toll on council relationships and mental health overall.

Dealing with residents who approach or call councillors who may be agitated or frustrated can be challenging. Their concern may not be satisfied; however, councillors try to ensure that the residents' perspectives and issues are heard.

\* This question was not completed in the online survey by Councillor Chapman.

## Discretionary / Optional Activities Recommended for Future Council Members

The current councillors recommended the following Discretionary / Optional activities for future Council members to participate in to enhance their effectiveness as a councillor:

- Two councillors recommended taking the full EOEP Training
- Join committees and organizations that allow them to connect with other levels of government
- Attend the Council Meet and Greets with regional partners
- Attend conferences, networking & Chamber of Commerce events,
- Speak with Social agencies informally over coffee to be able to advocate on their behalf
- Basic municipal government training and land use/legal training
- Attending fundraising events, doing school visits and seniors' home visits
- Talk to a professional Counselor for support
- Attend community events, based on the individual councillor's interest and support level
- Take courses related to topics of passion and that would assist in their role, such as the Indigenous Canada course, science literacy course, and commission of oaths course, etc.

In addition to recommending the Discretionary / Optional activities to participate in, one councillor recommended a list of actions to help future councillors improve their soft skills. Such actions include:

- Become familiar with city documents (e.g., bylaws, policies, etc.)
- Take conflict resolution training
- Read the book "Getting To Yes, Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In", by Roger Fisher & William Ury

## QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW RESPONSES

The councillor interviews were a critical part of the data collection process, designed to gather detailed, firsthand insights into the time commitment and responsibilities associated with Mandatory Work activities.

These interviews facilitated by two consultants and averaged 60 minutes long provided mainly qualitative data with quantitative data about time allocation to Mandatory Work activities. Qualitative insights surfaced on councillors' roles, responsibilities, and the personal challenges they face in balancing Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional activities.

### Purpose

In reference to the scope of work and the consultant's guidance from City Administration, the City Council interviews were conducted to focus on Mandatory Work activities to:

- Identify on average the preparation time required for meetings that are initiated by Council and/or Administration including Council Meetings, Council Committee meetings, Council Strategy Sessions, Budget Consultation, and Legal Training Sessions.
- Identify how much meeting time, meeting preparation time and other types of work elected officials currently perform as representatives on nine legislated boards and committees as identified in the Committee Bylaw.
- Collect information of any elected official's involvement at conferences, intergovernmental meetings and other advocacy efforts on behalf of the City and the estimated time commitment of the involvement.
- Collect information of any professional development, training and/or certifications identified by elected officials as part of their role and the estimated time commitment required to complete the training.

Although the councillor interviews focused on the Mandatory Work activities, all six councillors referred often to the Discretionary / Optional activities.

### Format and Presentation of Results

To provide clarity, the content is presented by theme and is typically organized to highlight both the challenges and opportunities related to each topic. This structured approach ensures that both the complexities and potential solutions are addressed in a balanced way. This thematic structure helps to:

1. **Identify key issues:** By grouping related feedback, we can focus on the core concerns and areas where councillors are experiencing challenges, such as time management, work-life balance, or role expectations.
2. **Propose opportunities:** For each challenge, there is an opportunity path for improvement, whether through additional support, clearer communication, policy creation or adjustments to the CIP.

The qualitative data has been presented in themes through both a manual process and supported by AI. This means that the themes produced are not based solely on direct statements in all instances, but also on inferences and logical conclusions made based on the information shared by each councillor. In instances where it is possible to identify specific statements of which councillors contributed to a particular theme, without compromising the integrity of the process, the councillor names are identified. The purpose of sharing themes based on qualitative data is to support next steps of future dialogue and conversations to be held amongst Council.

## SUMMARY OF COUNCILLOR INTERVIEW KEY THEMES

This summary provides an overview of the key challenges and opportunities identified from interviews with Airdrie councillors regarding their roles and responsibilities.

The noteworthy recurring themes emerging from the interview responses provide a comprehensive view of the multifaceted role a councillor:

- **Challenges and Rewards of the Role:** Difficulties and benefits for serving as a councillor.
- **Resident Interaction:** Engagement with community members.
- **Councillor Satisfaction and Tenure:** Job fulfillment and length of service.
- **Community Expectations and Advocacy:** Meeting public demands and representing interests.
- **Balancing Official Duties and Personal Life:** Managing work life boundaries.
- **Compensation and Work-Life Balance:** Pay and its impact on overall balance.
- **Employment Status Changes:** Shifts in councillor employment or adjustments within their employment during tenure.
- **Full-Time Council:** Consideration of council as a full-time role.
- **Seasonal Workload Variations:** Fluctuations in duties across the year.
- **Budget Season:** Intensive workload during financial planning periods.
- **Emergency Situations:** Handling crises and urgent matters.
- **Time Management and Flexibility:** Prioritizing tasks and adapting schedules.
- **Advocacy at Provincial Level:** Representing municipal interests provincially.
- **Quality of Council Meetings:** Effectiveness and productivity of meetings.
- **Social Media:** Navigating online presence.
- **Experience with the Administration Team:** Interaction and collaboration with staff.
- **Time Commitment to Council Work:** Hours dedicated to responsibilities.
- **Availability and Accessibility:** Being reachable and responsive to constituents and staff.
- **Preparation and Research:** Effort spent preparing for meetings and decisions.

Details about these themes are provided below and not in a ranked order, but rather an order that contextually makes sense, where earlier themes help provide context for the themes that come after it.

## DETAIL OF COUNCILLOR INTERVIEW KEY THEMES

### *Key Theme: Mandatory Work vs. Discretionary / Optional Activities*

#### **Challenge**

All councillors are clear about the definition of Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional activities. Having said that, councillors have different interpretations of what activities they consider unavoidable and/or necessary in order to fulfill the responsibilities of their role. Councillor Jones, Councillor Chapman, Councillor Petrow, and Councillor Spearman expressed that they consider attending community events, such as grand openings and school visits, as an essential part of their role, while the remaining councillors see these as Discretionary /



Optional activities. The distinction often depends on personal perspectives and the specific circumstances of each event. Differences among councillors in the choice of Discretionary / Optional activities they are involved in, and the intensity of participation therein can lead to perceptions being formed and may result in potential conflicts.

### **Opportunity**

This theme highlights the varying expectations and responsibilities that councillors feel towards their roles. It underscores the need for clear guidelines and communication to ensure that all councillors have a consistent understanding of their duties. This can be accomplished by reaching a general agreement amongst the councillors on which Discretionary / Optional activities are seen as valuable and impactful for the City of Airdrie. Overall, the need for better coordination and communication among councillors is emphasized.

### *Key Theme: Challenges and Rewards of the Role*

#### **Challenge**

The role of a councillor is seen as both rewarding and challenging. All councillors value the opportunity to meet people and support the community, but they also face challenges working with diverse personalities within the Council and other governmental bodies. Councillor Petrow specifically shared that she found the role to be the best and worst job every day, highlighting the demands of the role, with other councillors alluding to having this same sentiment.

#### **Opportunity**

Recognizing the specific aspects of the role, concerning Mandatory Work activities and Discretionary / Optional activities, can help in providing better support and resources to councillors to manage their time effectively and maximize the rewards.

### *Key Theme: Resident Interaction*

#### **Challenge**

Councillor Kolson and Councillor Spearman highlighted the need for shared responsibilities, especially when it comes to attending community events, while all councillors alluded to this. All councillors expressed that not all of them need to be at certain events and that the councillors should work together to determine who is participating with each event, and essentially 'divide and conquer.'

#### **Opportunity**

One of the most rewarding aspects mentioned is the interaction with residents and receiving positive feedback about the Council's work. This theme highlights the importance of community engagement, and the satisfaction derived from serving the public.

### *Key Theme: Councillor Satisfaction and Tenure*

#### **Challenge**

Job satisfaction and the desire for multiple terms are inferred as being important to the councillors. In general, they believe that one term of four years is not enough time to observe the impact of their role and the projects they are participating on.

#### **Opportunity**

This theme reflects the commitment and dedication of Council members to their public service roles. Longer terms can provide stability and continuity in governance.

### *Key Theme: Community Expectations and Advocacy*

#### **Challenge**

There is a strong expectation from the community for councillors to be highly visible and responsive. This includes attending community events, returning phone calls, and participating in advocacy efforts. There is the potential for overextension and burnout among Councillors. There is the risk of unmet community expectations if councillors are unable to attend all events or communicate with the residents as requested.

**Opportunity**

All councillors feel a sense of duty to meet these expectations, even when it goes beyond their official role. The approach and medium utilized by each councillor may vary, for example, Councillor Chapman prefers to communicate with residents over phone or in person, while Councillor Spearman utilizes social media extensively to engage with the community. Additionally, Councillor Kolson connects with the public through her regular and scheduled presence at the Farmer's Market. This theme highlights the critical role of community engagement and advocacy in the councillor's role. It underscores the need for councillors to balance community expectations with their official responsibilities.

*Key Theme: Balancing Official Duties and Personal Life***Challenge**

Councillor Jones, Councillor Spearman, and Councillor Chapman expressed that they struggle to balance their official duties with personal and family commitments. The demands of the role often extend beyond formal Council meetings to include community events and responding to constituents. This can lead to significant personal sacrifices and stress.

**Opportunity**

This theme emphasizes the importance of work-life balance for councillors. It suggests that the role's demands can impact personal well-being and effectiveness in both professional and personal spheres.

*Key Theme: Compensation and Work-Life Balance***Challenge**

Two councillors have shared concerns about the adequacy of compensation and the ability to balance Council duties with their other employment or business responsibilities. The current compensation may not be sufficient to attract qualified candidates. The financial compensation for the role was seen as insufficient by Councillor Jones and Councillor Spearman in terms of this role serving as a sole source of income. All councillors expressed difficulties in achieving a work-life balance. The demands of Council duties often encroach on personal and family time, leading to stress and potential burnout. In addition, all councillors mentioned that their personal lives have required significant adjustments since taking on their roles.

**Opportunity**

This theme highlights the need to validate the adequacy of the financial compensation for Council Members to attract qualified candidates and maintain basic job satisfaction. Addressing compensation and work-life balance issues is crucial to attracting and satisfying qualified councillors and ensuring they can perform their duties effectively. Each councillor's personal situation is different, and therefore individualized support may be required.

*Key Theme: Employment Status Changes***Challenge**

Several councillors have experienced changes in their employment status since being elected, mainly by choice in an effort to dedicate themselves to the role of councillor as best they can. Councillor Petrow chose to leave her full-time employment position to focus on the councillor role. Councillor Jones, Councillor Belyk, and Councillor Spearman shared that they have had to adjust their employment situation (for example, requesting additional time off or making time for Council duties on a working day) to adequately fulfill their Council responsibilities. Councillor Chapman and Councillor Kolson, who have their own businesses, expressed that they are more able to flexibly adapt to the requirements of the role.

**Opportunity**

Understanding the impact of Council responsibilities on employment status can help in planning support systems for councillors.

### *Key Theme: Full-Time Council*

#### **Challenge**

Councillor Jones, Councillor Chapman, Councillor Kolson and Councillor Belyk shared that just the Mandatory Work activities do not constitute a full-time role. However, they pointed out the evolving nature of the role in alignment with the growth of the city, and the role could look different in the future. Alternatively, Councillor Spearman and Councillor Petrow clearly expressed the need to review the role to either designate it full-time or to have a mix of part-time and full-time positions on the Council to adequately serve the city residents or to meet the enhanced need for advocacy with other government bodies.

#### **Opportunity**

While formal recommendations are beyond the current scope, there are several areas where further evaluation would benefit future decision-making. A structured evaluation could explore the feasibility and implications of transitioning to a full-time Council model, including potential impacts on workload distribution, compensation, and governance efficiency. This research will provide valuable insights for informed decision-making and ensure any structural changes align with the evolving needs of the City and its councillors.

### *Key Theme: Seasonal Workload Variations (Budget Season)*

#### **Challenge**

The data indicates that certain times of the year are busier for Council duties. For example, the period from September to December is particularly hectic due to budget season and increased Council commitments.

#### **Opportunity**

Understanding these seasonal variations can help in better planning and resource allocation. There may be an opportunity to provide additional training and resources during budget season and to implement tools and processes to streamline budget-related tasks.

### *Key Theme: Emergency Situations*

#### **Challenge**

Emergency situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, required councillors to meet more frequently and handle unexpected challenges. The same could be expected in future emergencies and requires the councillors to have flexibility to be available for handling such situations.

#### **Opportunity**

Being prepared for emergencies can ensure a more effective response. The management of urgent matters involves various approaches, including special meetings, virtual setups, and the delegation of authority hierarchy to the councillors. The use of technology, such as virtual meetings through Teams, has been highlighted as helpful.

### *Key Theme: Time Management and Flexibility*

#### **Challenge**

Councillors have adopted various strategies to manage their time effectively. The councillors who are employed have negotiated flexible work schedules with their employers, while others have adjusted their personal schedules to accommodate Council meetings.

#### **Opportunity**

While the shift in 2024 to scheduled and designated Council days has required adjustments, it has also helped in managing time better by allowing for effective planning and predictable interactions with administration.

### *Key Theme: Advocacy at the Provincial Level*

#### **Challenge**

With the city's rapid growth, there is a need for councillors to have experience in advocacy at higher levels of government, in particular the Government of Alberta

**Opportunity**

This theme highlights the importance of equipping councillors with the knowledge, skills and experience needed to advocate effectively at the provincial level. This confirms the need for ongoing professional development for councillors with specific inputs related to current priorities, role of advocacy and its value to create long-term impact for the City.

*Key Theme: Quality of Council Meetings***Challenge**

There is frustration shared by Councillor Belyk and Councillor Kolson regarding their colleagues' lack of preparation and focus during meetings. This includes not reading reports, rehashing old topics, and veering off track, which extends meeting times unnecessarily. Lack of preparation and focus can lead to inefficient meetings, wasting valuable time and resources. The council members tend to have strong opinions, leading to both efficient and inefficient meetings.

**Opportunity**

The administration and legislative services have evolved over the years, contributing to the smooth running of meetings. The agendas are posted online, and meetings are live streamed for residents to engage and stay informed. A highly opinionated council can lead to diverse perspectives and robust discussions, but it can also result in inefficiencies if not managed properly. The new governance structure, if deemed effective post-evaluation, can streamline meetings and improve decision-making.

*Key Theme: Social Media***Challenge**

A significant challenge faced is dealing with misinformation and negative comments on social media. The spreading of misinformation online can be damaging.

**Opportunity**

Developing a robust social media strategy to counter misinformation and engage with the community, as Councillor Spearman does, directly helps to address this issue.

*Key Theme: Experience with the Administration Team***Challenge**

Although the overall experience of working with the City of Airdrie's Council administration team has been generally positive, there have been minor instances where certain staff members did not respond in a timely or accurate manner, which has caused frustration.

**Opportunity**

Improving staff responsiveness and accuracy can enhance the overall efficiency and satisfaction of councillors.

## FACILITATED DISCUSSION SESSION OVERVIEW

On October 1, 2024, a facilitated discussion was held with the Mayor and Council. This session's purpose was to gather insights into the current value of elected official representation on external boards and committees. The City of Airdrie's legislative mandate to engage in these roles was examined to ensure alignment with the city's strategic priorities and the evolving demands on councillors. Key questions addressed whether existing roles on external boards effectively benefit the city, and how future councillor candidates can be better informed of these expectations.

Based upon the feedback the consulting team encourages the consideration of two recommendations, including:

### #1 - Appointment to Boards & Committees

Throughout the facilitated discussion, the mayor and councillors reviewed their participation on various boards and committees, categorizing them as either legislated/required or council agreed. Councillors expressed that current participation levels generally offer positive benefits, reinforcing the city's strategic interests and community representation.

A significant part of the discussion centered on the Alberta Municipalities board, where debate focused less on its inherent value and more on the selection process for councillor participation. This theme of establishing clearer processes for involvement on specific boards and committees aligns with similar practices in other municipalities.

#### **Recommendation: Council Policy on Board and Committee Participation**

Formalize a policy that supports a consistent approach to Mayor and councillor participation in legislated or council agreed external boards and committees (E.g. Alberta Municipalities, Federation of Canadian Municipalities). Such a policy would ensure councillors' participation align with Airdrie's governance goals while providing structured processes to manage participation requests and selection criteria.

Key elements include:

- A requirement for councillors to inform Mayor and council when seeking to participate in legislated or council agreed boards or committees, allowing a transparent review of alignment with Airdrie's strategic interests.
- Provisions for councillors to prepare annual reports summarizing their contributions, key takeaways, and benefits from board participation.
- Structured guidelines for managing scheduling conflicts, which impacts participation with Mandatory Work such as council meetings or other council business, with councillors seeking mayoral or deputy mayoral approval when board activities conflict with council responsibilities.

## #2 – Mandatory Board & Committee Term Length

The recommendation for a two-year minimum term for councillor participation on legislated or council agreed boards and committees emerged from the facilitated discussion with councillors, where it was recognized as a meaningful approach to maximize impact.

### **Recommendation: A Two-Year Minimum Term for Mandatory Board and Committee Participation**

A two-year term for councillor participation on boards and committees is recommended versus a one-year term, as it allows for more meaningful engagement and continuity.

**Rationale:** In the first year, councillors often undergo a learning curve as they familiarize themselves with the committee's objectives, relationships, and context. A second year enables councillors to contribute more effectively as they leverage this acquired knowledge to advance Airdrie's interests more strategically. This approach aligns with best practices in municipal governance, promoting consistency and strengthening Airdrie's long-term representation across specific boards and committees.

## Councillor Reflections

During the facilitated discussion, several themes emerged. These themes reflect the valuable insights and words of wisdom from the current mayor and councillors, intended to inspire and guide future candidates.

- **Time Commitment and Flexibility:** Council members emphasized the extensive time commitment required by the role, noting that it often exceeds typical part-time expectations. Flexibility in other employment arrangements is essential, especially considering that council meetings and advocacy work frequently require availability outside traditional business hours.
- **Evolving Nature of the Councillor Role:** Councillors acknowledged the growing responsibilities related to advocacy and regional representation. The benefit to the City of Airdrie through increased engagement with higher levels of government, particularly with the Government of Alberta, requires councillors to provide not only local governance but also strategic guidance on broader issues impacting the city.
- **Preparation and Learning Curve:** The initial learning curve for new and first term councillors was noted to be substantial, with significant time devoted to orientation, meeting preparation, report review particularly in the first year. Councillors agreed that new and first term candidates should be fully informed of these demands and encouraged to utilize available resources for a smoother transition.

**Balance Between Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional Activities:** Differentiating between mandated council duties and discretionary / optional activities was recognized as essential. Councillors expressed that both types of activities add value but require clear expectations and guidelines to manage their balance effectively.

- **Role of Boards and Committees:** External boards and committees were largely deemed valuable, especially when aligned with Airdrie's strategic objectives. The potential for councillors to contribute effectively was noted, with an emphasis on assessing which committee roles should be prioritized for their alignment with Airdrie's long-term goals.
- **Councillor Compensation and Financial Realities:** The discussion highlighted the need for transparency regarding compensation, especially given the time demands of the role. Council members noted that



candidates should clearly understand the financial implications and limitations of the position, particularly if managing other employment is required.

### Incivility and Its Impact on Councillor Time and Role Fulfillment

During the facilitated discussion, general public incivility towards councillors emerged as a significant challenge impacting councillors' ability to fulfill their roles effectively. Although this theme was mentioned less frequently in individual surveys and interviews, it was a prominent issue in the group setting, where councillors expressed how incivility detracts from their ability to focus on strategic governance and community representation. Not only does it consume time, but it also creates a distracting environment that further intensifies the already demands on councillor time. As this trend appears to be continuing, addressing incivility will likely be necessary to foster a more constructive working atmosphere, ensuring councillors can perform their roles without the additional burden of managing unproductive interactions.

## NEW CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACKAGE

In preparing the updated CIP, the consultants grounded revisions in the research undertaken throughout the project and invaluable feedback from the city's councillors and administration. The process incorporated the previously described quantitative and qualitative data to ensure the updates accurately reflect the responsibilities and time commitments required of councillors.

The quantitative data collected through an online survey and interviews with the councillors measured the time councillors devote to both Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional activities, including the time necessary for effective preparation, meetings, and community engagement.

The one-on-one interviews with councillors captured mostly qualitative data with deeper insights into the councillors' day-to-day experiences, the evolving demands of their roles, and how they interpret their responsibilities. The qualitative feedback from both the interviews and the long answer portion of the survey, helped us bridge any discrepancies between the responsibilities detailed in the previous 2021 CIP and the realities reported by current councillors.

Furthermore, the City Clerk's office provided statistical data on attendance, participation rates, and time allocation across council activities, enriching our analysis and guiding us in refining the CIP's content. The final step in our process was a facilitated session with all of Council and the Mayor, where councillors discussed their role insights and shared direct feedback on the CIP's structure. This comprehensive session provided confirmation of key themes and actionable insights, ensuring that the updated CIP delivers a transparent, informative resource for future candidates.

The proposed revisions to the CIP may not fully align with practices observed across Canadian municipalities, based on our benchmarking research. Many CIPs in other jurisdictions prioritize providing a structured, concise overview of the councillor role, often with minimal emphasis on individual variability. However, in Airdrie, given the considerable variation in councillor participation, we've tailored our approach to address both the average demands and the unique personal experiences each councillor brings to the role.

Our recommendations aim to clarify time requirements and role expectations. We have highlighted both the Mandatory Work duties and the Discretionary / Optional community engagements that shape the workload, allowing prospective candidates to understand that commitment levels can vary.

The revised CIP is anchored by themes which emerged throughout the project and are deemed necessary to include in order to best inform potential candidates.

1. **Time Commitment and Flexibility:** Emphasizes the time required for both Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional for the council role and the need for candidates to have flexible employment arrangements, if employed.
2. **Evolving Nature of the Councillor Role:** Highlights the increasing focus on advocacy, strategic leadership, and the role councillors play in regional and provincial representation.
3. **Preparation and Learning Curve:** Points out the extensive preparation required, especially for new councillors, and the benefit of a thorough onboarding process.
4. **Balance Between Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional Activities:** Differentiates between official responsibilities and community engagement activities, setting clear expectations for both.

5. **Role of Boards and Committees:** Outlines the value of external board participation and measured through the need for alignment with Airdrie's strategic priorities.
6. **Councillor Compensation and Financial Realities:** Acknowledges the financial compensation of council compensation and the importance of transparent communication around remuneration.
7. **Soft Skills and Personal Attributes:** Stresses the necessity of interpersonal skills, self-awareness, and resilience for effective council performance.
8. **Support for Councillors:** Emphasizes the support provided by the Airdrie, including orientation, ongoing training, and professional development resources.
9. **Quantification of Professional Development:** Calls for specific details on the training and professional development opportunities available to councillors.

### Introducing the Updated Candidate Information Package

The in-scope section of the CIP has been thoughtfully redesigned to offer a more logical flow for readers. This updated format, as reflected through "The Councillor Role" insert, not only enhances readability but also provides a modern, professional look that reinforces the City of Airdrie's commitment to transparency and comprehensive governance. By integrating references to the MGA seamlessly, the CIP also ensures legal requirements are clear and accessible, supporting informed decision-making from the start.

However, what the CIP and Councillor Role insert does not do is replace the candidate's responsibility to conduct sufficient research and due diligence to become fully informed. Prospective candidates must take proactive steps to deepen their understanding of the role, the MGA, and the broader context of municipal governance. This means going beyond the CIP by engaging with additional resources, seeking clarification when needed, and gaining insights into the challenges and expectations of the position to ensure they are fully prepared for the responsibilities ahead.

### A Multi-Purpose Tool for Public Awareness and Transparency

The updated CIP, The Councillor Role serves a dual purpose. It not only informs prospective candidates about the expectations of the councillor role but also acts as a valuable communication tool with the public. By outlining councillor duties, time commitments, and community engagement activities, the CIP helps demystify the role of a councillor for residents. This transparency fosters a deeper understanding of the workload and commitment required, reinforcing trust and encouraging community engagement with their elected representatives.

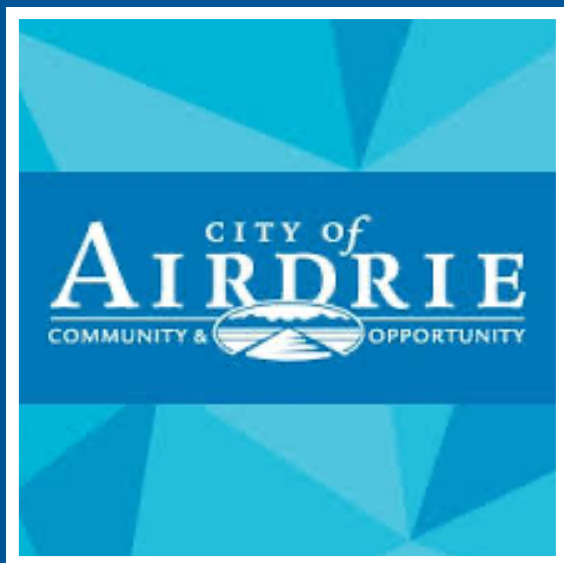
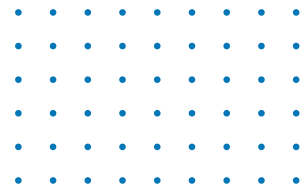
# Candidate Information Package

2025 - 2029



## The Councillor Role

# The Councillor Role



## A Serious Responsibility

The Municipal Government Act RSA 2000, c M-26 (The Act) provides an outline of duties for members of Council. The Act does not, however, indicate the minimum number of hours per week that councillors should spend in performing their duties or how to perform them.

In 2024 an Independent Study was completed, including a survey and interviews that were conducted with the City of Airdrie councillors, asking a series of questions including those informing "How many hours does an individual need to commit as a councillor?"

[Review The Act](#)

For ease of understanding, the terms Mandatory Council Duties and Discretionary / Optional Activities are used to categorize the range of responsibilities undertaken by councillors:

- **Mandatory Council Duties:** These refer to tasks and responsibilities directly tied to legislated official council functions and governance. Examples include attending council meetings, committee sessions, strategy sessions, and participating in council-directed initiatives, such as budget reviews, legal consultations, and policy development.
- **Discretionary / Optional Activities:** These activities are those not formally directed by council but are undertaken by councillors as part of their community engagement, advocacy, or professional development. They include attending community events, engaging with residents, external board participation, networking with other levels of government, and public advocacy efforts. The amount of time spent on discretionary activities as an elected official is left to the discretion of each councillor.

# Time Commitment

As a councillor there will be significant demands on your time. There will be council meetings, council committees, and various other meetings to attend. To participate effectively in all of these meetings, councillors should review meeting materials and become familiar with the issues that will be discussed. Conferences and workshops sponsored by your municipal association or educational institutions will help provide you with the tools to be an effective elected official. If you choose to attend, these will also help you to understand the wider picture on issues affecting the whole province or other municipalities. Telephone calls, visits from your electors, and community events are all important components of the job. Managing time to adequately attend to both personal and public demands is an important part of becoming an effective councillor.



Practically, the councillor role continues to evolve, including both the mandatory council duties and the discretionary / optional activities associated with the role. In totality, performing the role requires a significant amount of time. Given this, it is necessary that candidates have flexible work arrangements, if they are employed elsewhere, as council work cannot be easily managed in parallel with a strict full-time employment schedule.



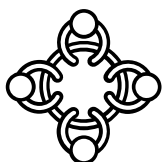
## Mandatory Council Duties

**Mandatory Council Duties** include council meetings, strategy sessions, and committee meetings – standing committees, quasi-judicial boards, advisory committee, ad-hoc committees, budget consultation sessions, strategic planning sessions, and external boards/committees. The 2024 Independent Study identified the average time spent participating in official council duties is approximately 32 hours per month. Councillors invest significant hours preparing for meetings and sessions in order to be effective participants in decision-making.

Currently, the average amount of time allocated by councillors towards preparation for official duties, including council meetings, strategy and legal sessions, and standing committees is 19 hours per month with the reported range being wide, 5 to 49 hours per month. The average amount of time dedicated by councillors towards preparation for external boards and committees is indicated on the following page.

Council Meetings take place on 'Council Tuesdays', every second Tuesday. Committee meetings and other official meetings take place on the alternate Tuesdays. Candidates need to be prepared for the schedule to alter, given the evolving governance demands.

### Mandatory Council Duties - Core Elements



**Council Meetings**



**Strategy Sessions**



**Committee Meetings**

## Boards & Committees

The various boards and committees that councillors participate in, by virtue of their councillor role or as an appointee/alternate, are:

Committee/ Board	Type of Committee / Board	Number of Councillors Appointed	Meeting Frequency/ Time
Community and Corporate Services (CCS)	Standing Committee of Council	3 councillors, 1 alternate	Fourth Tuesday of the month, 9 am to 12 pm
Community Safety and Social Services (CSSS)	Standing Committee of Council	3 councillors, 1 alternate	Second Tuesday of the month, 9 am to 12 pm
Community Infrastructure and Strategic Growth (CISG)	Standing Committee of Council	3 councillors, 1 alternate	Second and fourth Tuesday of the month, 1 pm to 4 pm
Airdrie Board of Youth Affairs	Advisory Committee	1 councillor	Once per month
Subdivision and Development Appeal Board / General Appeal Board	Quasi-Judicial Board	1 councillor	When called
Airdrie Mainstreet Square Real Estate Inc. (AMSQ)	Municipal owned corporation	3 councillors	Every 2nd month, plus 2 annual meetings (average 1-1.5 hour)
Airdrie Housing Limited	External Committee / Board	2 councillors	First Wednesday of each month
Calgary Metropolitan Region Board	External Committee / Board	1 councillor, 2 alternates	Four times per year and as required
Inter-City Social Policy Forum	External Committee / Board	1 councillor	Quarterly
Joint-Use Agreement Committee	External Committee / Board	2 councillors	As required
Rocky View/Airdrie Intermunicipal Committee	External Committee / Board	2 councillors, 1 alternate	When called
Rocky View Foundation	External Committee / Board	1 councillor, 1 alternate	Fourth Wednesday of each month

The approximate time to be dedicated to attending meetings for standing committees, and external boards and committees, by appointed Councillors ranges between 3 to 5 hours per month. The 2024 Independent Study identified that the average time Councillors have dedicated to preparing for these meetings is 7 hours per month, with a range that varies greatly (from 0.5 to 27 hours per month), dependent upon the experience and preferences of individual councillors.

## Discretionary / Optional Activities

These activities are those not formally directed by council, but are traditionally undertaken by councillors as part of their community engagement, advocacy, or professional development. In the 2024 Independent Study, the following activities were ranked as most impactful/impactful by the majority of councillors, demonstrating central role these activities play in both fulfilling councillor duties and serving the community.

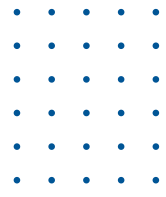
- Engaging with local businesses and organizations
- Engaging with not-for-profit organizations
- Researching policy and community issues
- Participating in community events and ceremonies
- Volunteering in the community
- Engaging in community outreach or education (school visits, seniors' home visits)
- Creating social media content/engagement

Based on the 2024 Independent Study councillors recommended the following discretionary / optional activities for future Council members to consider participating in to enhance their effectiveness as a councillor:

The 2024 Independent Study identified the average amount of time allocated by councillors to discretionary / optional activities was 73 hours per month, ranging between 30 to 125 hours per month. The average preparation time for discretionary activities was approximately 13 hours per month, with a range of 8 to 26 hours per month.



- Join committees and organizations that allow you to connect with other levels of government.
- Attend the Council Meet and Greets with regional partners.
- Attend conferences, networking and Chamber of Commerce events.
- Speak with social agencies informally over coffee to be able to advocate on their behalf.
- Attend basic municipal government training and land use/legal training.
- Attend fundraising events, school visits and seniors' home visits.
- Talk to a professional counselor for well-being.
- Attend community events, based on your interest and support level.
- Take courses related to topics of passion that would assist in their role, such as the science literacy course and commission of oaths course.



### Onboarding and Orientation

For first term councillors, during orientation, a series of presentations and training courses are administered by the legislative team to assist in a smooth transition into the councillor role. There are two elements of the onboarding:

- 1) the mandatory aspects covered in the Municipal Government Act, and
- 2) the functional aspects of the City of Airdrie municipal operations.

Learning opportunities, to enhance and support your personal growth, will be provided as part of the orientation and throughout your term on Council.

### First Term Councillors

First-term councillors often experience a steep learning curve, particularly in their first year, as they acclimate to the demands of the role. The time investment is higher due to several factors: understanding the complexities of governance structures, mastering procedural rules, and grasping the nuances of legislative and committee responsibilities. New councillors also dedicate significant time to learning the specific issues affecting their community, which involves extensive reading, attending briefings, and engaging with constituents.

Additionally, preparation for meetings can be particularly time-intensive for first-time councillors, as they familiarize themselves with processes, policy frameworks, and relevant documentation. They often spend considerable time outside formal sessions, preparing to make informed decisions and understanding the strategic implications of council decisions. This preparatory work, while demanding, builds a solid foundation, allowing councillors to contribute effectively and confidently to discussions and decision-making as they move further into their term.

Overall, this intensive initial period of adjustment reflects the commitment required to serve effectively, with the time spent on orientation and preparation, ultimately contributing to more knowledgeable and effective governance.

## Ongoing Professional Development



Councillors are encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities. The 2024 Independent Study identified that participating in professional development courses enhanced their performance in official council duties and discretionary / optional activities. The variety of professional development opportunities recommended are listed below, and reflect the diverse range of skills required to effectively execute the councillor role.

- **Indigenous Canada** and **Elected Officials Education Program (EOEP)** training courses focus on regional collaboration, service delivery, and public engagement, have significantly contributed to councillor effectiveness.
- **How To Speak With Media** and **Media Relations** courses emphasize the importance of communication skills within the councillor role.
- Courses such as **Emergency/Disaster Preparedness** and **Social Media Dos and Don'ts** reflect the importance of managing community crisis and digital engagement within the councillor role.
- **Strong Women Building Safe Communities** and **Closing the Loop on Waste** courses focus on specific social and environmental initiatives, demonstrating councillors' commitment to specialized areas of public service.

You are encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities that focus on the essential soft skills required for the role, as strong interpersonal skills, self-awareness, and emotional resilience are critical for the success of a councillor. Other soft skills critical for the role, include communication skills, conflict resolution, and emotional resilience.



## Team Approach

Working as a team with the rest of council and administration will contribute to making your time on council a success. It isn't always going to be easy. Your influence as a council member rests on your ability to persuade other members of council to consider your point of view. When an issue is being studied, be sure to express your views as part of the debate.

Disagreements among council members on specific issues are common and healthy. The respectful exchange of ideas and opinions will lead to good decisions. While working through these debates, keep in mind that you all share the same desire for your municipality to be strong, safe, and viable. You may have different views about how to get there, but you do share broader common goals.

Most votes on a council resolution do not require a consensus of all councillors. As a result, there will be many occasions where a decision is made that you did not support with your vote. However, once the resolution has been passed, it becomes the official direction of the municipality. The health and ongoing success of a municipality is largely dependent upon the ability of councillors to respect and support the decisions of council in principle, despite their personal views during the debate.



## Understanding the Councillor Role

Although the details shared in this document provide an overview of the Councillor role and its time requirements, candidates are encouraged to perform a high degree of due diligence and research in order to arrive at an informed decision, including connecting with the 2021-2024 term councillors to gain insights into the realities of the position.

## Bettering the Community We Serve

Candidates are encouraged to reflect on their personal motivations for wanting to become a councillor, as the role demands a genuine commitment to governance, advocacy, and service to the community. While a competitive compensation package is provided, the primary motivation for seeking this role should be intrinsic, coming from a commitment and desire to support the City of Airdrie and its residents. This is a unique opportunity to serve as a compassionate leader, acting in the best interest of the community and contributing to the city's future.



**(Placeholder for MGA Updates)**

This page has been included as a placeholder for MGA updates related to the contents of this document - “The Councillor Role” section of the Candidate Information Package.



## Contact Legislative Services:



Phone Number  
**403-948-8816**



Email Address  
**[legislative.services@airdrie.ca](mailto:legislative.services@airdrie.ca)**



Office Address  
**400 Main St S, Airdrie, AB T4B 3C3**



## COMPENSATION REVIEW

In recent years, the City of Airdrie has experienced rapid population growth and economic expansion, intensifying the demand on its municipal leaders to provide responsive governance and community representation. As part of ensuring that Airdrie's council compensation aligns with the evolving responsibilities and commitments required of elected officials, the City of Airdrie initiated this compensation comparator research. The goal was to assess how Airdrie's current councillor remuneration compares to municipalities of similar size, governance structure, and characteristics across Canada.

### Select Results

Airdrie Annual Salary		Group Median	Group Average
<b>In Comparison to Group 1: Peer Cities</b>			
Mayor:	\$127,194	\$147,710 (+4%)	\$158,119 (+20%)
Councillor:	\$59,781	\$64,221 (+7%)	\$70,742 (+15%)
<b>In Comparison to Group 2: Cities Closely Comparable to Airdrie</b>			
Mayor:	\$127,194	\$135,204 (+6%)	\$128,466 (+1%)
Councillor:	\$59,781	\$49,943 (-20%)	\$49,943 (-20%)
<b>In Comparison to Group 3: Alberta Peer Group</b>			
Mayor:	\$127,194	\$126,678 (-)	\$135,184 (+6%)
Councillor:	\$59,781	\$67,245 (+11%)	\$68,585 (+13%)

## Compensation Comparator Research Methodology and Approach

Our approach was rooted in standard human resources compensation practices to ensure the relevance and accuracy of insights provided.

Key steps included:

1. **Selection of Relevant Comparator Municipalities:** Municipalities were selected based on population of 100,000 or greater, according to the 2021 Statistics Canada Census with a governance structure consisting of an elected at-large Mayor and elected at-large councillor positions or councillor positions elected by ward.
2. **Data Collection:** Data collection efforts primarily involved desk research, accessing compensation data from municipal records, councillor compensation reports, and other credible municipal sources. In cases where data was not readily available, we sought assistance from the municipal Clerk departments to supplement our findings. The team reached out to twenty municipalities.
3. **Analysis:** In addition to base compensation, we examined benefits packages, expense allowances, and resource provisions available to councillors. This included analysis of travel allowances, per diem provisions, and supplementary benefits.

## Presentation of Compensation Research Data

To create a meaningful and targeted representation of the compensation research, we developed a grouped approach by segmenting the entire data set as follows:

### Group 1 – Peer Cities

This broad category aligns with the scope of work and provides a national context for comparing Airdrie's compensation, excluding Quebec for alignment with provincial governance variances.

- Total number = 46
- This group includes a selection of Cities (City, Town, Regional, District and Specialized Municipality) identified as relevant comparators for the City of Airdrie based on population size equal to or greater than 100,000.
- Geographic areas classified as a "City" may have a Single Tier, Lower Tier or Higher Tier municipality.
- This group excludes cities within the province of Quebec.

### Group 2 – Cities Closely Comparable to Airdrie

This group narrows the focus to cities with comparable population and higher population growth rates, excluding Quebec for alignment with provincial governance variances.

- Total number = 6

- This group includes municipalities with a 2021 population similar to the City of Airdrie.
- A population growth rate exceeding 10% from 2016 to 2021.
- A Single-Tier Municipal structure.
- This group excludes cities within the province of Quebec.

### Group 3 – Alberta Peer Group

This group includes specific Alberta municipalities that Airdrie has historically used for comparison, selected for their relevance beyond population size or growth rates.

- Total number = 5
- This group consists of municipalities within Alberta that the City of Airdrie has historically used as for comparative analysis.

### National Compensation Trends and Best Practices

While compensation varies across municipalities, several patterns emerged that can provide Airdrie with valuable context for considering adjustments:

1. **Independent Compensation Reviews:** Many municipalities establish independent committees to assess and recommend appropriate compensation for council members. For example, the City of Edmonton convenes an Independent Council Compensation Committee every two council terms to review and suggest remuneration adjustments, ensuring decisions are impartial and reflective of current economic conditions. [https://www.edmonton.ca/city\\_government/city\\_organization/council-compensation](https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/city_organization/council-compensation)
2. **Alignment with Median Incomes:** Some municipalities tie councillor remuneration to local economic indicators. The City of Victoria, for instance, sets councillor salaries in relation to the median full-time earnings within the city, adjusting annually based on the Consumer Price Index. This approach ensures that compensation remains fair and responsive to economic changes. Each municipality, however, applies this alignment in a way that reflects its unique priorities and assumptions, which may result in varying percentage adjustments and criteria across municipalities. <https://www.marggardiner.ca/what-remuneration-should-your-city-councillors-receive>
3. **Comprehensive Benefits Packages:** Beyond salaries, municipalities often provide extensive benefits to support councillors' well-being and professional development. The City of Edmonton offers health benefits, a vehicle allowance, retirement options, and a transition allowance upon conclusion of service. Such packages can enhance the attractiveness of council positions and support councillors in fulfilling their duties effectively. [https://www.edmonton.ca/city\\_government/city\\_organization/council-compensation](https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/city_organization/council-compensation)
4. **Regular Compensation Adjustments:** To maintain competitiveness and fairness, municipalities periodically adjust councillor compensation. For example, the City of Calgary applies an annual adjustment based on the Average Weekly Earnings index, ensuring that remuneration keeps pace with broader economic trends. [https://www.edmonton.ca/city\\_government/city\\_organization/council-compensation](https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/city_organization/council-compensation)
5. **Transparent Expense Policies:** Clear and transparent policies regarding expenses and allowances are crucial. The City of Oakville provides detailed guidelines on remuneration, allowances, benefits, and

expenses, promoting accountability and public trust.

[https://www.edmonton.ca/city\\_government/city\\_organization/council-compensation](https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/city_organization/council-compensation)

6. **Trend Toward Full-Time Compensation in Growing Municipalities:** Municipalities experiencing rapid population and service growth, similar to Airdrie, tend to re-evaluate councillor compensation toward full-time models. For instance, in June 2023, St. Albert, Alberta, approved a significant change to its council structure. Starting after the October 2025 municipal election, councillors will transition to full-time positions with an increased salary of \$86,000, up from the previous \$58,587. The mayor's \$149,675 salary remained unchanged. Similarly, in June 2024, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo voted for councillors to become full-time. <https://www.stalbertgazette.com/local-news/council-approves-pay-hike-of-nearly-30000-7112932>, <https://www.fortmcmurraytoday.com/news/rmwb-councillors-vote-to-become-full-time-after-heated-debate-of-surprise-motion>

## Challenges & Opportunities in Council Remuneration

Setting fair compensation for elected officials involves more than determining a specific salary or stipend. The core challenge is to establish a framework that supports transparency, fairness, and public trust, ensuring that qualified community members are encouraged to serve. Effective compensation should minimize financial barriers, allowing a diverse pool of capable individuals to consider council roles and bring broader representation to municipal governance. Citizens entrust councillors and mayors with the responsibility not only to act on their behalf but to make informed, impactful decisions that shape the community.

Compensation for councillors goes beyond financial support, it includes necessary expenses and resources to fully execute their responsibilities. Unlike typical public sector roles, remuneration for elected officials is subject to continuous public oversight, with each election cycle effectively acting as a form of accountability and performance review.

Determining this compensation is inherently challenging. It requires thoughtful, often difficult decisions that weigh the needs of public service against responsible use of taxpayer funds. Those who step into elected roles do so to serve the community rather than for personal financial gain, making the topic of their own remuneration particularly sensitive and nuanced.

## Quebec as an Outlier in Municipal Governance Comparisons

In Quebec, the municipal governance structure is distinct from other provinces, making it an outlier in comparisons of municipal government systems across Canada. This difference stems from its multi-layered framework, which includes unique entities like Regional County Municipalities, agglomerations, and boroughs, along with metropolitan communities, special-status cities, and borough councils within larger cities.

Excluding Quebec from our comparisons is appropriate because the province's municipal governance structure is significantly different from that in other provinces, which affects compensation and the responsibilities of municipal officials.

In Quebec, larger cities may belong to agglomerations or metropolitan communities that provide shared services across suburban and urban areas, such as policing, public transit, and regional planning. Additionally, boroughs within major cities like Montreal and Quebec City have their own local councils and mayors, further decentralizing administrative duties. This unique structure impacts governance practices and fiscal policies, resulting in different budgeting, service delivery, and compensation practices that aren't directly comparable to other Canadian municipalities operating under a more unified governance system.

For a focused and relevant analysis, it's essential to use comparators with similar governance and role structures to ensure that compensation comparisons accurately reflect the scope and scale of responsibilities held by Airdrie's elected officials.

## QUEBEC'S MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Below is an overview of Quebec's municipal governance structure, highlighting the unique layers and roles within local, regional, and metropolitan governance across the province.

### Summary of Quebec's Municipal Governance Structure:

1. **Local Municipalities** (cities, towns, etc.)
2. **Regional County Municipalities (RCMs/MRCs)** – Regional level governance, responsible for multiple municipalities.
3. **Agglomerations** – Service-sharing arrangements between cities and suburbs.
4. **Metropolitan Communities** – For larger metropolitan areas like Montreal and Quebec City.
5. **Special Status Cities** – Large cities with unique governing powers.
6. **Boroughs** (within some larger cities).

### Local Municipalities

- **Local municipalities** are the basic units of governance in Quebec and include cities, towns, townships, and parishes. Sherbrooke, for example, is a local municipality (city).
- Local municipalities have their own elected municipal councils responsible for local governance, including services like water, roads, fire protection, waste management, and urban planning.
- **Types of Local Municipalities:**
  - **Cities** (ex: Montreal, Sherbrooke, Quebec City)
  - **Towns**
  - **Townships**
  - **Villages**
  - **Parishes**

### Regional County Municipalities (RCMs) / MRCs (Municipalités régionales de comté)

- **RCMs** are a higher-tier level of regional governance responsible for more overarching planning and services, especially for rural areas and smaller municipalities that don't have the capacity to manage certain services independently.
- They cover multiple local municipalities and are responsible for regional land use planning, waste management, and managing local roads, among other things.
- Not all municipalities are part of RCMs. Larger cities like Montreal, Quebec City, Laval, and Gatineau have a special status and are not part of an RCM.

### Agglomerations

- **Agglomerations** are groupings of municipalities where larger central cities provide services to surrounding suburban municipalities. For example, the City of Montreal is part of the **Montreal Agglomeration** which governs the island and provides services like transportation and policing to surrounding municipalities.

### Metropolitan Communities

- **Metropolitan communities** are large regional governance bodies responsible for planning in the largest metropolitan areas. These include:
  - **Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM)**

- **Communauté métropolitaine de Québec (CMQ)**
- These metropolitan communities focus on regional development, transportation, and the environment.

### **Special Status Cities**

- Cities like Montreal, Quebec City, Gatineau, and Sherbrooke have **special status** under Quebec law, giving them more authority in areas like policing, public transit, and urban planning, compared to smaller municipalities.

### **Boroughs**

- Large cities like Montreal and Quebec City are divided into **boroughs** (arrondissements), which have their own local councils and mayors. These borough councils manage more localized services within their areas, such as parks and recreation, local roads, and permits.

## REPORT LIMITATIONS

Why the report includes limitations?

- **Transparency:** Including limitations improves the transparency of the report by acknowledging the constraints that could affect the data and conclusions. This helps stakeholders understand the boundaries of the analysis.
- **Setting Realistic Expectations:** It manages expectations for decision-makers, letting them know the potential areas where further investigation or refinement may be necessary.
- **Mitigating Overconfidence in Results:** It tempers the impact of the results, ensuring that decision-makers do not overly rely on conclusions that may be affected by data limitations.

**Verification of Information in Sensitive Contexts:** In projects of this nature, where sensitive topics intersect with governance and role expectations, the reliance on information provided by participants without further independent verification requires careful consideration. This approach raises important questions about the balance between respecting the perspectives shared and ensuring the factual accuracy and objectivity of the findings.

The consultants in this case have taken the information shared by councillors, particularly around their time commitments and roles, at face value without further corroboration. While this aligns with standard qualitative research practices that prioritize participant voices, it also introduces challenges, particularly when the data points present extraordinary findings, such as the wide range of reported hours. These findings could be interpreted in various ways, including as potential outliers or anomalies that may not fully represent the broader picture.

**Data Collection and Sample Size:** Despite efforts to gather comprehensive input through surveys and interviews, participation was not universal. Interview data was partially incomplete as Councillor Spearman did not complete the quantitative questions and Councillor Chapman did not answer to long form questions.

**Limited Scope of Professional Development Feedback:** The report reflects limited feedback on professional development programs, as only one councillor provided input on that specific section of the survey. Consequently, insights into the effectiveness of training programs are based on a small sample size and may not fully represent the overall councillor population.

**Variability in Role Interpretation:** Councillors may interpret the responsibilities of their roles differently, leading to variations in the data reported on time spent on activities. This variability makes it challenging to standardize results across all respondents.

**External Factors Influencing Time Commitments:** The councillors' time commitments to both Mandatory Work and Discretionary / Optional activities are subject to external factors such as political events, community crises, and intergovernmental relations, which may not be reflected in a static survey or interview process. This limits the ability to generalize results over an extended period.

**Survey / Interview Timing and Context:** The timing of data collection, such as conducting surveys during a busy / summer period, may influence councillor responses. This could introduce seasonal bias, affecting the accuracy of workload estimates based on the specific time period when the data was collected.

### **Asking Open-Ended Interview Questions**

When conducting the interviews, though the exact same core questions were asked of every councillor to respond, the way in which each councillor interpreted the question and how they chose to respond differed. In some instances, if a response better aligned with another question, the response was moved to the appropriate question for the purpose of analysis. This means that some question responses would then appear blank, even though every councillor responded to every question in the interview.





# BLUE MONARCH MANAGEMENT

**We will master change to create  
ripples around the world.**

## **Blue Monarch Management**

Suite 1901, 500 - 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW  
Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2V6  
[www.bluemonarch.ca](http://www.bluemonarch.ca)

## **Kathleen Thibault**

Administration  
+1 (403) 613-5458  
[admin@bluemonarch.ca](mailto:admin@bluemonarch.ca)