

The City of Calgary's Self-guided Municipal Tour

PART I - How local government works



How to use this guide

The content of this guide has been provided for teachers and students as background and support for the self-guided tour of the Municipal Complex.

Part I of our self-guided tour content offers information to help visitors to the Municipal Complex understand how local government works, the roles and responsibilities of our elected officials on City Council and City staff who deliver services, and why it is important for Calgarians to participate.

We recommend this content be reviewed and discussed with your school group prior to an on-site visit so an understanding of how The City of Calgary operates is gained before seeing the buildings where it all happens. Information about structures, meeting rooms and exhibits at the Municipal Complex can be found in **Part II – The Municipal Complex** of our self-guided tour resources on calgary.ca/tours.

Our local government

The City of Calgary provides services that directly impact our daily lives. We want you to understand how the municipality works, how and when decisions are made, and how to have your say to shape our city for the 1.3 million people who live here.

Democracy

Calgary is run by three levels of government working together to support our city. The City of Calgary runs your local, municipal government. The federal (Canada) and provincial (Alberta) governments also have responsibilities related to Calgary.



The Government of Canada is our **federal government**. It makes decisions that affect the entire country. This can include immigration, citizenship, the postal service, defense, travel, justice and the Supreme Court, emergencies and employment insurance.



**Prime Minister
Mark Carney**



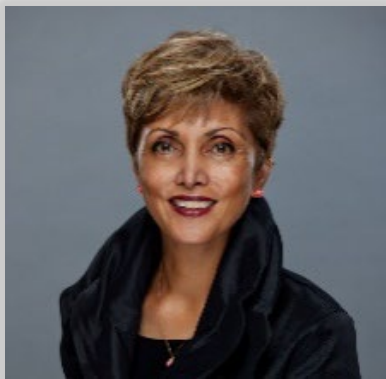
The Government of Alberta is our **provincial government**. It has the authority to make decisions which can impact the entire province. This can include education and training programs, healthcare, housing, agriculture, justice and more.



**Premier
Danielle Smith**






Municipal governments come in many forms. They can be cities, like Calgary, or towns, counties, villages, or summer villages. Local government creates rules, bylaws, and policies for community services. This can include public transportation, safety, social well-being, parks, recreation, development, building, and more.



**Mayor
Jyoti Gondek**

Government responsibilities

		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship • Immigration • Travel and tourism • Airports • Borders • Passports • Income tax • Postal service • National Security and defence • Public pensions • Natural resources • Transport and infrastructure • Culture, history, and sport • International relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and training • Schools • Property tax • Agriculture • Employment services • Safety programs • Fish and wildlife • Hospitals • Highways • Justice • Municipalities • Economic development • Driving safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and building • Property, housing and neighbourhoods • Property tax • Parks and playgrounds • Recreation facilities and programs • Pet ownership • Police services • Fire department • Disaster and emergency preparedness • Transit • Garbage, recycling, and compost • Roads and traffic safety • City planning • Culture and events
SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES		
	Property taxes	
	Social programs and services	
Healthcare, programs and facilities		
Indigenous relations		
Affordable housing		
Climate and environment		

Facts about Municipal Elections

Municipalities in Alberta are empowered by provincial legislation ([the Municipal Government Act](#)) to organize, operate, provide services and make themselves accountable to their communities. Municipalities are governed by elected officials, people in the municipality elected by the voting public into the position they hold.

- ✓ Municipal, or General Elections, are held in Canada for the election of local governments.
- ✓ Electing is to choose by voting for a person to hold a position or membership.
- ✓ An election is how Canadians choose which leaders represent them.
- ✓ Your community is shaped by the outcome of an Election.
- ✓ Most provinces hold all their municipal elections on the same date.
- ✓ Municipalities in Alberta hold elections every four years.
- ✓ Every Canadian citizen has the right to vote.
- ✓ Voting is a responsibility that all Canadians should exercise.
- ✓ When you take part in an election and express your view, you make democracy work.
- ✓ Voting connects Calgarians with the political process and with each other.

Elections Calgary

[Elections Calgary](#) is a City of Calgary division that conducts General Elections, By-elections, Senate elections, petitions, and ward boundary reviews.



The next Municipal Election is Monday, October 20, 2025.

Calgary voters will elect their Mayor, Councillors and School Board Trustees.

About Calgary City Council

- City Council is the decision-making body for Calgary and includes one mayor and 14 councillors.
- Each member of Council has an equal vote in the decision-making process.
- Council ensures Calgarians have the services they need by responding to the community's immediate concerns and suggestions, while planning for Calgary’s long-term growth and development.
- Council represents individual Calgarians as well as the entire city, gathering information and balancing the wants of individual citizens with the needs of the entire community.
- Council participates in policy setting and law making and ensures policy is carried out appropriately through the Council process.

How does City Council work?	What are City Council’s responsibilities?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calgary is divided into 14 geographical areas called wards.• Calgary City Council consists of the mayor and 14 City councillors, one representing each of Calgary’s 14 wards.• Each member of Council has an equal vote in the decision-making process.• The mayor is elected city-wide by all eligible voters, whereas Councillors are elected by people in their individual wards.• Both the mayor and councillors hold office for four-year terms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determining goals and priorities• Developing and approving policies, bylaws and major projects• Planning and providing services and programs• Setting the tax rate and approving the City’s budget• Hiring the Chief Administrative Officer, who, in turn, oversees all City departments, and• Representing the municipality



Chief Administrative Officer and Executive Leadership Team



CAO David Duckworth

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) reports to City Council, leads the Chief Administrator's Office, and all departments of Administration and is responsible for all civic employees. He ensures that The Corporation supports the Mayor and Councillors and delivers on Council's agenda and priorities.

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is the most senior group of administrative officials in the organization. The ELT exists to understand, make decisions about, and co-ordinate the various programs, projects and initiatives at The City with a broad corporate and community scope and influence.

How are decisions made on behalf of Calgarians?

How decisions are made

You see the results of decisions made by The City of Calgary every day – in your safety, roads, drinking water, parks and much more. Participate, get involved, and be part of the decision-making process. Together we can build a better community!



Information

Decision-making requires information such as reports from:

- City staff
- Civic Partners
- Boards, commissions and committees



Meetings

Reports are often reviewed and discussed by a Council committee before going to Council. Members of the public can participate at Standing Policy Committee meetings.



Calgarians

Taking the time to learn about how The City operates and understand how, when and where your input can be submitted, is critical to have your say on how your city is run and managed.



What does public participation look like?

- ✓ Use City programs and services
- ✓ Contact 311 with appreciation, questions or concerns
- ✓ Connect with your ward councillor
- ✓ Join a city board, committee or commission
- ✓ Join a meeting
- ✓ Take a survey or attend an open house
- ✓ Vote in the next municipal election

Decisions

Decisions made by Council can result in:

- Bylaws
- Programs
- Projects
- Services
- Budgets
- Funding, and more

City Council

Members of Council discuss issues, set priorities, establish policy, and make decisions by voting to (1) accept or decline a recommendation and/or (2) making motions. Members of the public can participate in Public Hearing Meetings of Council.



*A separate handout of this infographic is available on calgary.ca/tours.