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1. Role of council, councillor and staff

After a few months in office, you may feel overwhelmed by the variety of matters demanding your attention. You may be challenged by complex issues, faced with controversial policies, or receive questions from constituents. Understanding your role as a municipal councillor, as well as the role of council and staff, will help you address these situations. In general, council and staff work together towards the common goal of serving the needs of those who live in the municipality.

One of the first things you could do, if you have not already done so, is develop a general understanding of the *Municipal Act, 2001* (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/01m25>) (referred to throughout this section as the Act), which is the primary piece of legislation applicable to municipalities. The Act is a legislative framework for municipalities that recognizes municipalities as responsible local governments with a broad range of powers. The Act balances increased local autonomy and flexibility with requirements for improved accountability and transparency of municipal operations.

Councillors may also be required to complete mandatory training as set out in other provincial legislation, including the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>) and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01>).

Role of council

In Ontario, a council is required to have a minimum of five members, one of whom is the head of council. The role of council is outlined in [section 24](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/01m25#BK279) (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/01m25#BK279>):

224. It is the role of council,

- 1 a. to represent the public and to consider the well-being and interests of the municipality;
- b. to develop and evaluate the policies and programs of the municipality;
- c. to determine which services the municipality provides;
- d. to ensure that administrative policies, practices and procedures and controllership policies, practices and procedures are in place to implement the decisions of council;