



What Does a City Councillor Do in Pickering, Ontario?

By Frank McGillan
Columnist

A City Councillor in Pickering is an elected representative whose job is to serve the residents of the city. Councillors are elected to listen to the concerns of the people in their ward, make decisions on behalf of the community, and help guide the future growth and development of Pickering. A councillor's job is much more than attending meetings. They are responsible for representing the interests of residents while working with the Mayor, other councillors, City staff, and the community.

1. Representing Residents
One of the most important responsibilities of a councillor is representing the people who elected them. Residents may contact their councillor about issues such as roads, traffic, development, parks, garbage collection, property concerns, zoning, public safety, or other municipal services. A councillor should listen to these concerns, communicate with City staff when appropriate, and bring important community issues forward to Council.

2. Making Decisions for the City
Pickering City Council makes decisions that affect the entire community. Councillors debate proposals, ask questions, review reports from City staff, and vote on matters before Council. These decisions can involve: City budgets and spending - Property taxes -Roads and transportation - Parks and recreation - Planning and development - Zoning and land use - Community facilities - Environmental issues - Economic development - Municipal services - Long-term plans for the City Councillors have a responsibility to make informed decisions based on the information available to them and the interests of the community.

3. Approving the Municipal Budget
Council is responsible for approving Pickering's municipal budget. This determines how City money is spent and helps establish the level of municipal taxes and services. Councillors must consider whether spending proposals are necessary, affordable, and in the best interests of Pickering taxpayers.

4. Planning and Development
Pickering is a growing community, and Council plays an important role in deciding how the city develops. Councillors deal with matters involving residential development, commercial development, industrial properties, roads, parks, community facilities, and land-use planning. However, councillors do not personally design or approve every development. Much of the technical work is done by professional City staff, planners, engineers, and other experts. Council makes decisions within the authority given to municipalities under Ontario law.

5. Attending Council and Committee Meetings
Councillors are expected to attend City Council meetings and committee meetings, review reports, participate in discussions, ask questions, and vote on matters before Council. They also may serve on committees, boards, or other municipal organizations. Being prepared for meetings is an important part of the job because councillors are making decisions that can have long-term consequences for residents and taxpayers.

6. Working With City Staff
A councillor does not personally run City departments or direct individual employees. Pickering has professional City staff who administer municipal programs and services. The City Manager and department heads are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the municipality. Council's role is primarily to establish policies, approve budgets, provide direction at the Council level, and hold the administration accountable.

7. Looking at the Bigger Picture
A councillor has to balance individual concerns with the needs of the entire community. For example, one resident may want a particular development stopped, while another resident may support it. A councillor must consider the facts, planning rules, City policies, legislation, financial implications, and the broader public interest before voting. A councillor cannot simply vote on every issue according to whichever resident contacts them first.

8. Being Accountable to Taxpayers
Councillors are elected officials and should be accountable to the residents of Pickering. That means residents should expect their councillors to be accessible, transparent, prepared, respectful, and willing to explain the reasons behind their decisions. Councillors should also understand that they are spending public money and making decisions that affect the community for years to come.

What a Councillor Is NOT
It is also important to understand what a councillor's job is not. A councillor is not the mayor, the City Manager, a City employee, a police officer, a building inspector, or a City department manager. A councillor generally cannot personally order City employees to perform work, change a planning decision on their own, waive municipal rules, or spend City money without the proper Council process. Their authority comes from their position as a member of Council and from the powers and responsibilities given to municipalities under Ontario law.

In Simple Terms
The job of a Pickering City Councillor is to represent residents, make responsible decisions, help set municipal policy, approve spending and budgets, participate in planning for the City's future, and hold the municipal administration accountable. The councillor's ultimate responsibility is to the people of Pickering. A good councillor should listen to residents, understand the issues, do their homework, ask difficult questions when necessary, and make decisions based on what is best for the community—not simply what is easiest or most popular at the moment. Being elected to City Council is a public responsibility. It means being entrusted with taxpayers' money, the future development of the community, and decisions that can affect residents and businesses throughout Pickering.

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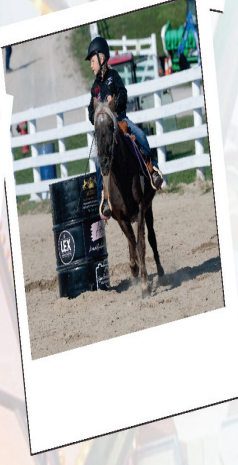
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