

Investing in your Municipality

Each year, property owners are sent a tax bill from the rural municipality or town the property is located in. Depending on the value of that property, the bill can range anywhere from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

In our day-to-day lives, we spend money every day. Smaller amounts require little consideration. For larger purchases, however, there is more thought and consideration given. With most homeowners paying over \$1,000 in municipal taxes and some paying multiple thousands, and having to pay this every year, this becomes a significant investment. So, with this large an investment, let's look closer at how this amount is determined and how involved you can become.

Decisions on spending in towns and rural municipalities are made by a council. Council is a group of residents and/or property owners elected by all residents and/or property owners, or at least those who take the time to vote. The decisions of council determine the services that will be provided, and the quality of that service, which determines cost. Services include protection, public works, recreation and others.

On October 24, 2018, municipalities (urban and rural) will hold elections for councils to look after the investments of residents for the next four years. For every resident and/or property owner, involvement should at least include voting for those who you believe will make the best decisions on your investment. For others, there may be interest in becoming involved in making ongoing decisions, in running for council.

Running for Council

The process for running for council has already begun. In Manitoba, prior to campaigning for any position on council, a person must register. For the head of council position, that started May 1. Those running for a councillor position may start registering on June 30 (a Saturday this year), or the next day the municipal office is open.

This election, nomination papers are accepted September 12, 13, 14, 17 and 18 at the municipal office during regular office hours.

All forms are available at the municipal office.

Here are a few items for information.

The Province has created the 2018 Candidates Guidebook, which outlines the important details a person needs to know if considering running. This guidebook is available either on the Province's website or through the municipal office.

Where the municipality has wards (this is only in rural municipalities), you don't have to live in or own land in the ward in which you choose to run. As long as you live in or own land in the municipality for a minimum 6 months prior to election day, and meet the other requirements such as being at least 18, a Canadian citizen, etc., you are eligible to run in whichever ward you wish to run.

The time commitment for members of council is well beyond just the one or two council meetings per month. The Municipal office staff can provide information on how many hours a person might spend per week as a council member.

Most municipalities have a budget in the millions, and assets in the tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars. As a member of council, you would be responsible for overseeing the operations of the municipality. Beyond that, there are always items which the council must consider, such as adding new services or reducing existing services, which require a good public input program to ensure it is what the greater community wants to see.

People who make the best council members are those who care about their community and want to make it a better place. They are individuals who are willing to not only invest in their community financially through annual taxes, they wish to give back to their community by investing their time and energy as well.

If you are interested in running or would like to discuss this potential more, contact your municipal office.

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