

So, You Want to Run for Council

Making an Informed Decision!

Nigel Bellchamber 2026

Introducing Nigel Bellchamber

- Municipal Consultant, Recruiter and Trainer
- Former London City Treasurer
- Works exclusively with local governments and local boards
- Former Chair
 - PSAB
 - OMAA
- Amberley Gavel Ltd.
 - Closed Meeting Investigations
 - Integrity Commissioner
- Orientation for new Councils & Heads of Councils since 2002
- Recognition
 - AMO Honour Role 2007
 - OGRA Hon Member 2024

AGENDA for Today...

- **Municipal Government 101**
- **Municipal Powers**
- **Accountability & Transparency**
- **Roles & Responsibilities**
- **Personal Considerations**
- **Code of Conduct**
- **Conflict of Interest**

The Scope of Local Government

- ✓ What does local government do?
- ✓ Let's test your knowledge!

Municipal Powers

- **Powers come from the Province**
- **No inherent jurisdiction or authority**
- **“Creatures of the Province”**
- **Size does not matter**
 - **Types of Municipalities**
- **Section 5 Municipal Act**
 - **Powers shall be exercised by Council**
 - **Exercised by By-law**

Basic Principles

- **Complex, Technical & Multi-faceted**
- **Municipal Powers shall be exercised by Council**
- **Power exercised at duly constituted meeting**
 - ✓ Notice to the public
 - ✓ Open to the public
 - ✓ Quorum
 - ✓ Majority vote
 - ✓ All members vote
 - ✓ Power to delegate may be exercised this way....

Accountable and Transparent Government

➤ **Open meetings**

➤ **Closed meetings**

➤ **Limited ability to hold closed meetings**

➤ **Subject to review by an Investigator**

➤ **Council Policies**

➤ **Notice of meetings**

➤ **Purchasing**

➤ **Disposition of land**

➤ **Hiring of employees**

➤ **Delegation**

➤ **Accountable and
Transparent**

➤ **Harassment**

➤ **Council Member/Staff**

➤ **Pregnancy & parental
leave**

Roles & Responsibilities

- **Set by Provincial Statute**
 - **Council**
 - **Head of Council**
 - **Strong Mayor Powers(SMP)**
- **Staff**

Council

- **Exercises corporate powers**
- **Represents the public**
- **Consider the well-being & interests of the municipality**
- **Acts collectively, publicly & with notice**
- **No management role for Council or Members of Council(SMP excepted)**

Head of Council

- **Mayor, Reeve, Warden, Chair...or**
- **Presides over council meetings**
- **Provides leadership to council**
- **Speaks on behalf of municipality**
- **Provides information & recommendations to council on:**
 - **administrative & controllership policies**
 - **accountability & transparency**

Head of Council

- ✓ **Acts as Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**
- ✓ **Responsibilities detailed in Municipal Act**
- ✓ **CEO is not the CAO**
- ✓ **No day-to-day management duties**
- ✓ **Role as champion/cheerleader**
- ✓ **Except.....**

Head of Council as Strong Mayor

- ✓ **May choose to hire/fire CAO and Division Heads except Statutory Officers**
- ✓ **May direct research and present Bylaws needing less than a majority support in regulated areas**
- ✓ **Shall present annual budget and ultimately super majority may be needed to amend**
- ✓ **In all local municipalities >6 members of Council**

Municipal Staff

- **Undertake research & provide advice to council**
- **Implement council's decisions**
- **Establish administrative practices & procedures to carry out council's decisions**

Council should steer the boat rather than row it

- Council should decide what services and programs the municipality will offer and leave to staff the “how to”
- Osborne and Gaebler (*Reinventing Government*)

Municipal Governance

- **Key supports for Council decisions:**
 - **Staff**
 - **Committees**
 - **The Public**
 - **Local Boards**
 - **Meetings, meetings, meetings...**
 - **Procedure By-law**

Personal Considerations...

- ✓ How will your life change the day you are elected?
- ✓ How will people treat you? Relatives, friends, others?
- 24/7
- Requires total commitment
- It will consume you
- Multiple seats-two tier, local committees, Special Purpose Bodies.....

Family

- ✓ Talk to your significant other, children, parents, co-workers
- ✓ Calls
- ✓ Social media
- ✓ Interacting with public
- ✓ At the grocery store...
- ✓ Meetings
- ✓ Prep time... reading

Things to Consider...

- **Micromanaging**
- **Incivility**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Personal Responsibilities**

Council Code of Conduct

- **Members of Council, local boards & committees**
- **Codes & Integrity Commissioners are mandatory**
- **Integrity Commissioners will**
 - **Investigate alleged breaches**
 - **Educate council & the public**
 - **Provide written opinions to members**

Municipal Conflict of Interest Act

- **Member's personal obligation**
- **Pecuniary Interest**
 - **Direct & Indirect**
- **Declaration**
 - **Verbal and in writing**
 - **May not participate, influence or vote**
 - **Before, during or after.**

Municipal Conflict of Interest Act

- **Complaint to IC who advises council**
- **IC may apply to Court**
- **An elector may bring application to Court**
- **Impact**
 - **Number of complaints is up**
 - **Costs are borne by the municipality**

Confidentiality

- ✓ **Obligation to maintain confidentiality**
- ✓ **Written and verbal information**
- ✓ **Code of Conduct is required to deal with confidentiality**
- ✓ **Beware the coffee shop & the internet**
- ✓ **You don't speak for the municipality**

Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002

- **Response to Walkerton**
- **January 2003**
 - **Personal liability on members of council**
 - **Need for detailed training**
 - **Substantial penalties**
 - **Matter of health and safety**

Summing Up

- **Municipal government is multi-faceted, complex and highly regulated**
- **Municipal Powers rest with Council***
- **Understand the role you are elected to fulfill**
- **Understand your personal obligations**
- **Talk to your family**