






MUNICIPAL CANDIDATE ORIENTATION 2025

*Thank you for stepping forward to
serve your community.*

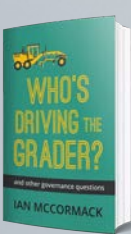
1

“ Timely as community leaders turned off by party politics and polarization turn to their county and town hall to try to make life better close to home.

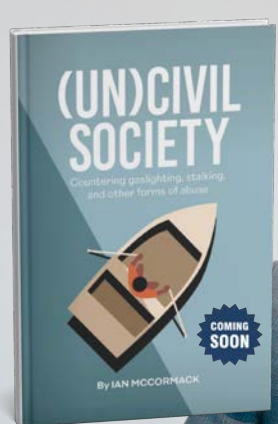



Don Iveson
(Former Mayor of the City of Edmonton)

Books Available Online



“ At a time when governments are being elected on populist platforms that are remarkably unencumbered by any vision, local governments in Canada still provide those essential services that people need and want.

Ian McCormack, CMC
President, Author, Speaker


Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.
(c) 2025

3

Key Highlights




Overview of municipal government structures



Roles and responsibilities of elected officials



Key dates and campaign guidelines



Ethics, integrity and public service



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc., (c) 2025

5



Legislation



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc., (c) 2025

7

Relevant Legislation

Canadian Constitution

- Municipalities are the responsibilities of provinces/territories

Municipal Government Act (MGA)

- Establishes municipalities, councils, provides meeting rules, decision-making authority

Local Authorities Elections Act (LAEA)

- Sets provincial rules for local elections, including eligibility to run

Protection of Privacy Act (PPA)

- Governs the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information by public bodies in Alberta.

Access to Information Act (ATIA)

- Outlines the rights of individuals to access information held by public bodies and sets rules for how that information must be handled.



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

8

Municipal Purposes

From Section 3 of the MGA



1

Provide Good Government

- ✓ Well-being of the environment
- ✓ Economic development

3

Develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

2

Provide services, facilities necessary or desirable for all or a part of the municipality.

4

Work collaboratively with neighbouring municipalities to plan, deliver and fund intermunicipal services.

Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

9

Council's Levers

Local Tools for Governance

Bylaws

- Strongest tool
- Legislative authority

Policy

- Predictability
- Avoids repeated questions

Budget

- Priorities get funded

Legislative Paramountcy

- If local rules conflict with higher order ones, the local is null and void, but only to the extent of the conflict



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

10

Key Bylaws

Local Tools for Governance

Meeting Procedure

- How meetings of council and committees are run
- Know this well if you want to have efficient meetings and get business done
- Public meetings are not 'public participation'

Code of Conduct (note: Bill 50 repealed these)

- What 'good' conduct looks like (and not)
- Informal and formal complaints
- Types of sanctions available that only Council can apply

Consultation

- When you 'have to' consult and how



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

11



Governance and Administration




Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc., (c) 2025

12

Why Are You Here?

Public Service	Attribute	Self Service
The expertise is in the room	Motivation	I know best. Others should listen.
What is best for the broader community.	Vision	My way or the highway
Subjugated to public good	Role of Ego	Primary driver
Key to accomplishment	Teamwork	Zero-sum
Listen broadly	Consultation	No need to consult
Shared, Based on collective expertise	Results	Delivered because of strong will and focus



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc., (c) 2025

13

Leadership Boards

Governance vs Working Boards

- Focus of Council is on governance responsibilities rather than on operational matters.
- Focus of Council is on results (outputs and outcomes)

ASPECT	WORKING	GOVERNANCE
PRIMARY FOCUS	DOING: events, fundraising, managing	GUIDING: vision, mission, policy
LEADERSHIP	Staff led	Council led
PLANNING	Staff provides strategic direction, board often does much of the work	Council provides strategic direction. Staff provide operational effort
RECRUITMENT	Board actively involved in recruitments	Council is responsible for one employee



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

14

Role Clarity

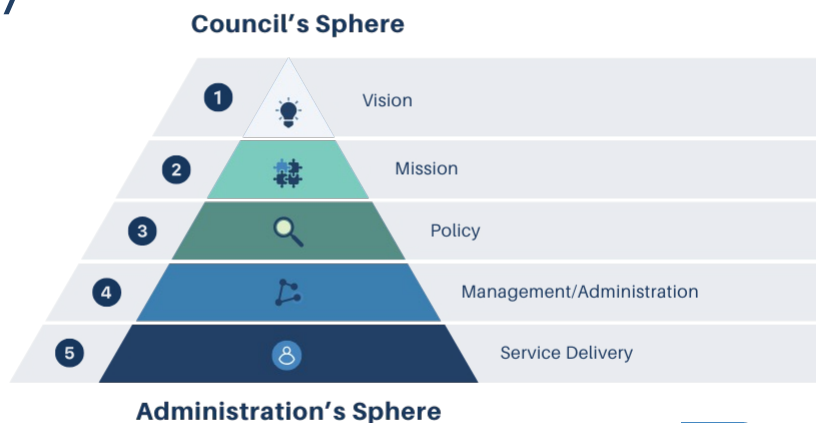
Steering vs Rowing

Council Governs – 'what'

- Strategic plan
- Vision, mission, values
- Governance policy development

Administration Delivers – 'how'

- Implement policy
- Manage the municipality
- Delivery programs, services, facilities, amenities



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

15

Council's Job – Four Buckets



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

16

Council's Role

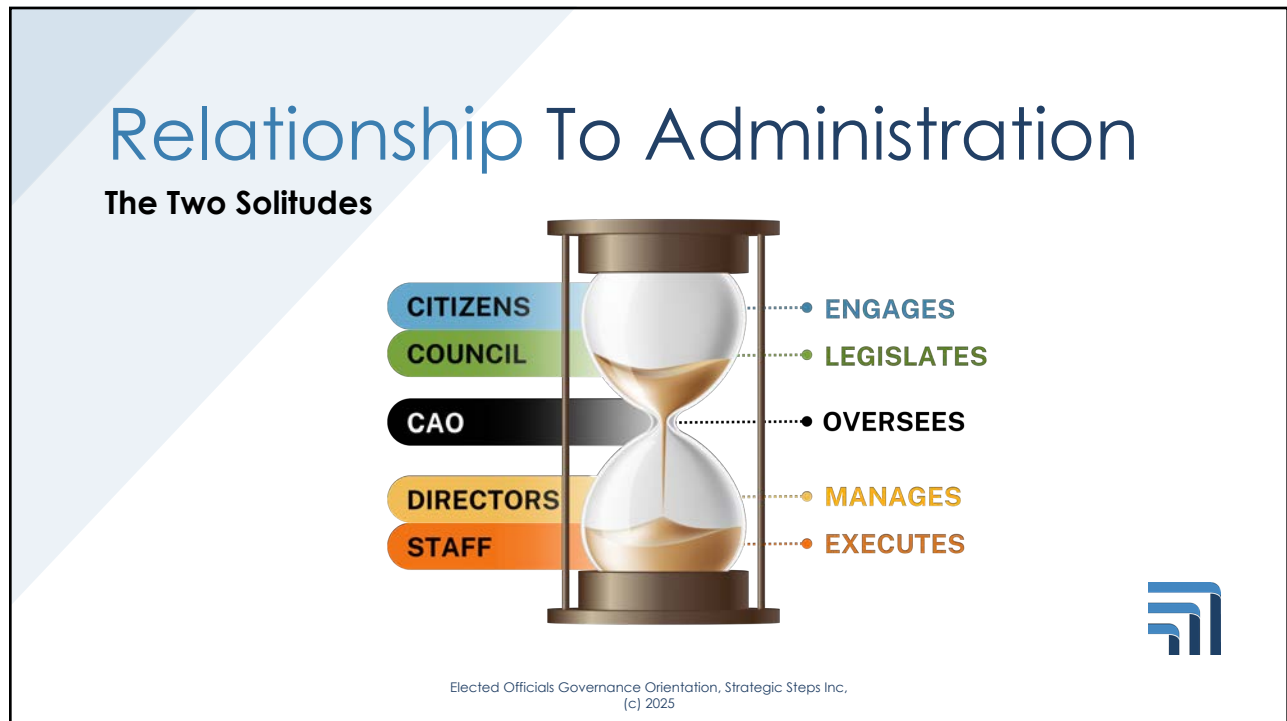
- Look after interests of entire municipality
- Avoid conflict of interest (pecuniary interest)
- Attend Council/Committee meetings
- Represent the community
- Professional development
- Avoid focus on a single issue
- Be strategic, not operational

Avoid informal council meetings: meetings of a majority of members to discuss business that are not duly called public meetings. This is a contravention of statute.

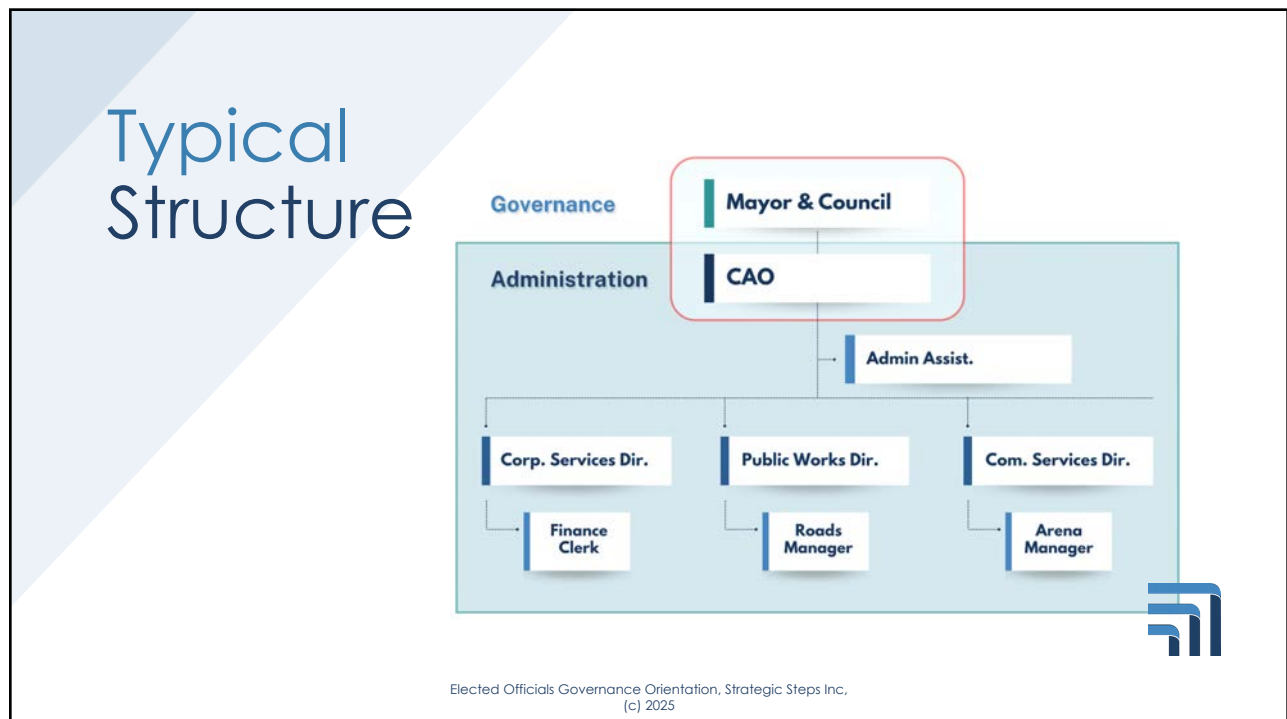


Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

17



18



19

Straying into the Wrong Lane

Common Hazards

Potential

- Individual council members direct CAO
- Council directs staff other than CAO
- CAO is not aware of council members' actions
- Staff are caught in the middle, with two bosses

Mitigation

- Administration acts on Council policy
- Council must act by resolution
- Council holds each other in check
- Council permits respectful challenge from CAO



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

20



GOVERNANCE Expectations

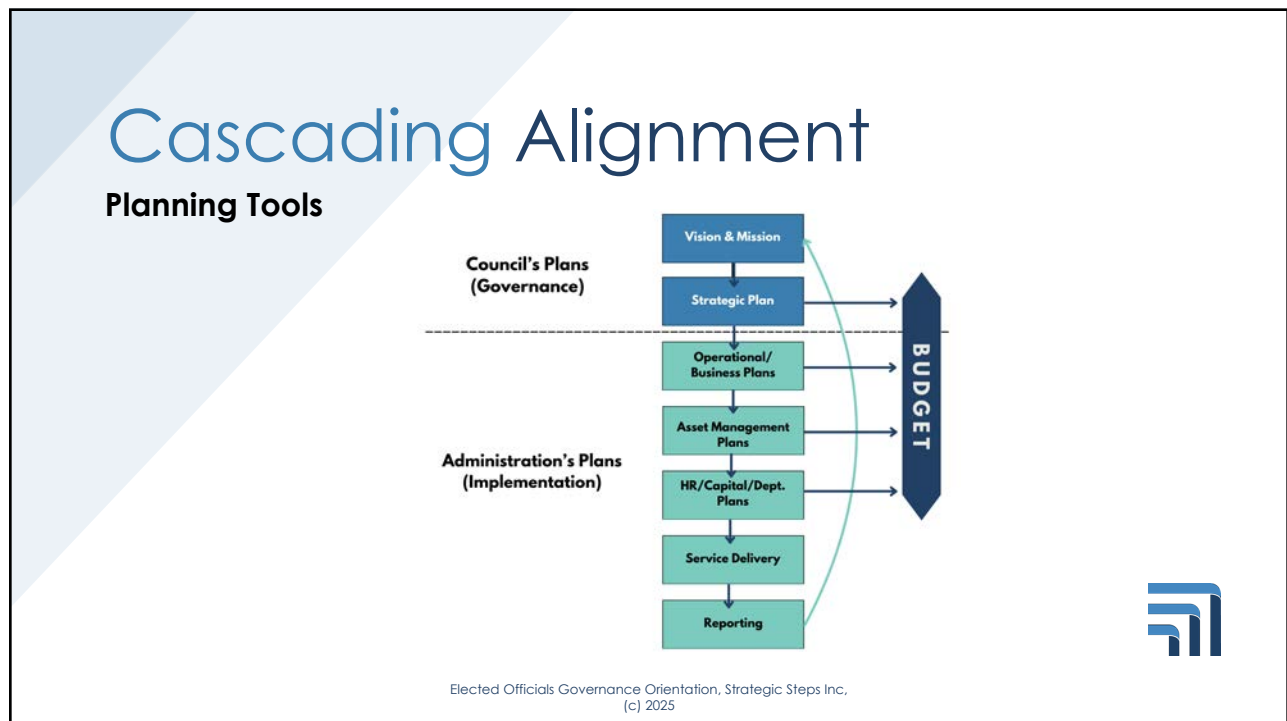
Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025



21



22



23

Successful Term of Office

Be **visionary**: reach for a higher plain, stay out of the mud

Policy, Policy, Policy: ask lots of questions, examine alternatives, think about the whole

Be a **team player**: identify and build on each other's strengths

Communicate internally and externally

Build bridges and partnerships - repair problems

Remember, the **buck stops with council**



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

24


The Hats Councillors Wear

The Hat	What it Means
Community Leader	Historic moral authority
Direction Setter	Vision for the community's long-term success
Meeting Participant	Transacting business in council and committees
Member of a Council	The community's 'first team'
Regional Representative	Contributing and learning broadly



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

25



Councillor and Candidate Pitfalls



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc., (c) 2025

26

Role Clarity

Can you do what you want to?

Is it your issue?

- You can't change federal or provincial legislation or requirements
- Have you identified the issue, or just a symptom?

The one issue candidate, or "I'm mad about something"

- Issue gets resolved in six months; then what?

Building a team

- Mayor or reeve has the same voting power as anyone else
- Know each other as people, community members

Respecting roles

- Municipal staff are acting within their own legislative framework



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc., (c) 2025

27

Land Mines

- Overreacting to issues
- Managing, not leading
- Dysfunctional council/CAO relationship
- Lack of consensus building
- Confusion with role of boards/committees
- Misuse of confidentiality
- Misuse of position
- Favoritism with public or staff
- Family ties and influences



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.
(c) 2025

28

Where We Look First

Sanctity of the Council Table

- What is supposed to be confidential needs to stay that way
- Closed Session (*in camera*)
 - No notes, no recordings, almost no motions
 - Exceptions to disclosure
 - Principles of openness and transparency
- Councillors know more about the community than anyone, including their spouses



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.
(c) 2025

31

Disqualification

Abiding by the rules

Common reasons for disqualification (MGA s 174):

- Not eligible to be elected, or cease to be eligible while elected
- Absent for eight consecutive weeks' worth of meetings
- Conviction of five or more years
- Not voting when there was no reason not to
- Pecuniary interest
- Financial liability to the municipality
- Votes for inappropriate expenditures

Only a judge can remove a sitting council member who won't resign



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

32

Avoiding The Pitfalls

- Encourage a virtuous cycle, break a vicious cycle
- Know that council is each other's 'first team'
- Culture in a particular municipality
- Personal values and ethics are important:
 - 'Good' is not just an absence of bad
 - Do as I say, not as I do
 - Just because you can, or it's legal, doesn't mean you should



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

33

Starting With Me



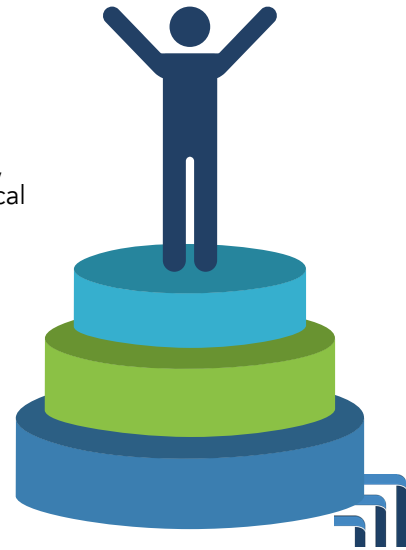
Have supports in place - family, friends, colleagues, administrators, professional coaches, previous ethical elected officials.



Principle – keep local government business public unless there is a reason not to.
Don't only release what must be released.



Follow the spirit of the law, not just the letter.



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.
(c) 2025

34



Workload and Expectations

Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.



35

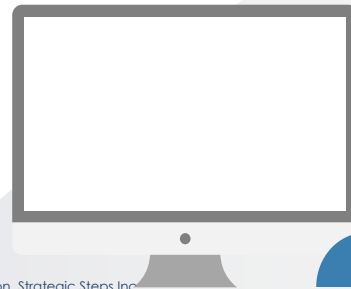
Workload Is What You Make It

Minimum expectations based on legislation

- Attend council and committee meetings

Additional roles not outlined in legislation

- Attend community events
- Engage with community groups
- Put out newsletters, blogs, social media posts
- Take training



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.
(c) 2025

36

How's Your Family?

Do they know and support what you want to do?

Lots of hours of reading and meeting prep.

Irregular schedule.

Often evening and weekends.

A potential for lots of travel.



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.
(c) 2025

37

What You Can Expect

First 30 Days

- Onboarding
- Meet managers, staff, key community leaders
- Orientation (may be ongoing)
- Understand meeting types and processes
- Begin meeting cycle
- Organizational meeting
 - Board and committee appointments



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

38

What You Can Expect

First Quarter

- ABMunis/RMA conference
- Review and approve budgets
 - Some municipalities use interim budgets
 - 2026 tax rate discussion
- Quarterly financial review
- Start on strategic plan
 - Set priorities for the following year
- Meet regional partners



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

39

What You Can Expect

First Year

- One full cycle of everything
- CAO review – mandatory
 - Set goals and expectations
- Professional development
 - Best practice comes from looking outwards
- Constant learning
- Look back on year one of strategic plan
 - Set priorities for year two
- Annual financial review
- Reporting to the community



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

40

Legislation

Provincial and Municipal

Provincial

- Municipal Government Act:
<https://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/m26.pdf>
- Local Authorities Elections Act:
<https://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/L21.pdf>
- Protection of Privacy Act:
<https://www.alberta.ca/protection-of-privacy-act>
- Access to Information Act:
<https://www.alberta.ca/access-to-information-act>

Local (check municipal website)

- Procedure Bylaw
- Public Participation Bylaw
- Elections Bylaw / Signage Bylaw
- Strategic Plan
- Budget / Audited Financial Statement



Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

45

Organizations

- Alberta Municipal Affairs (AMA): <https://www.alberta.ca/municipal-affairs.aspx>
- Candidate's Handbook: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/78017d07-a64c-4df2-9c68-96f0c672860a/resource/8332b79c-57a4-4c74-ad01-a04f3da09feb/download/ma-candidates-guide-running-for-municipal-office-in-alberta-2020.pdf>
- Alberta Municipalities (ABMunis): <https://www.abmunis.ca/>
- Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA): <https://rmalberta.com/>
- Local Government Administration Association (LGAA): <https://lgaa.ab.ca/>
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM): <https://fcm.ca/en>
- Elected Officials Education Program (EOEP): <https://eoep.ca/>



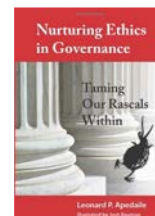
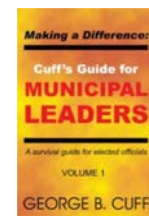
Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.
(c) 2025

46

Additional Reading

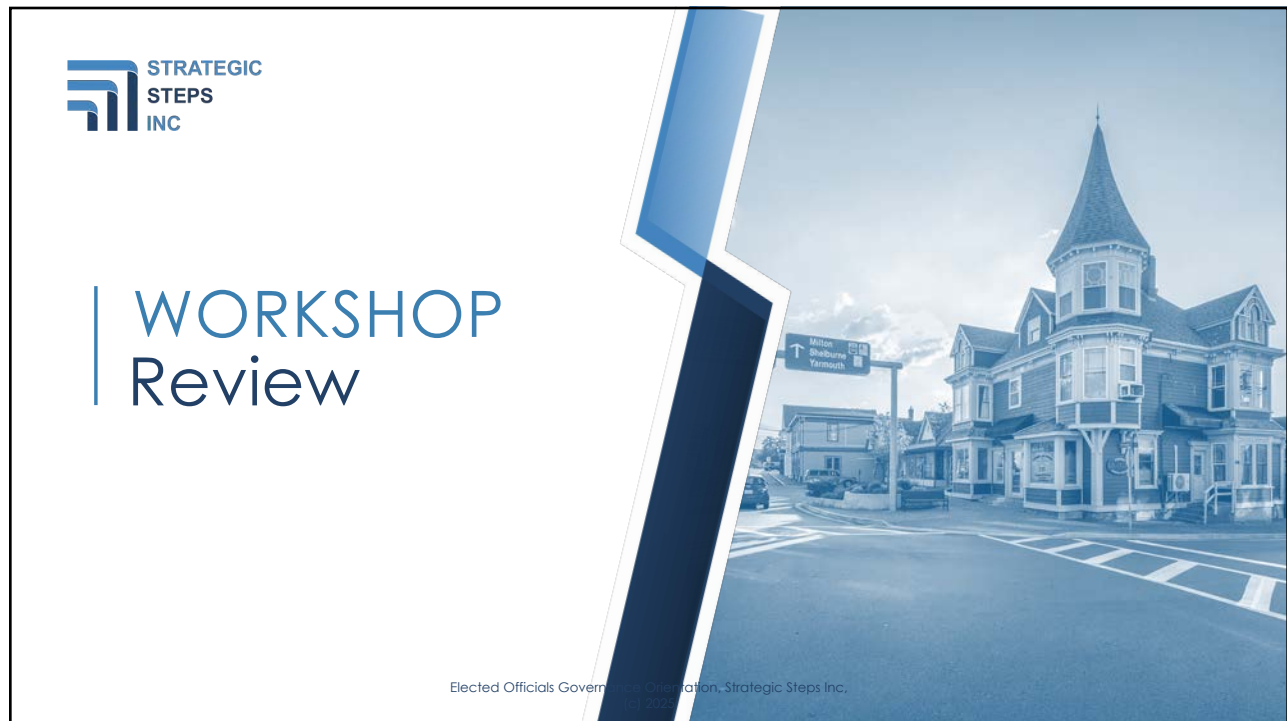
Books and Magazines

- Apedaile, Leonard, *Nurturing Ethics in Governance, Taming our Rascals Within*, 2019
- Carver, John, *Boards that Make a Difference*, 1990
- Cuff, George, *Executive Policy Governance*, 2014
 - See also Cuff's guides for municipal leaders
- **Municipal World Magazine**
- Slayton, Philip, *Mayors Gone Bad*, 2015




Elected Officials Governance Orientation, Strategic Steps Inc.
(c) 2025

47



48

What We Talked About



- ✓ Legislation
- ✓ Governance and Administration
- ✓ Governance Expectations
- ✓ Common Pitfalls
- ✓ Workload and Expectations



Strategic Steps Inc. © 2025

Municipal Candidate Orientation

49

49



Wishing you well on
your journey of public
service

www.strategicsteps.ca
info@strategicsteps.ca
780-416-9255

Strategic Steps Inc., © 2025

Elected Officials Office of the Clerk of the Council of the City of Edmonton
Strategic Steps Inc.,
(c) 2025

53