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Achieving Balance

As you very well know, running a municipal body is often quite a challenge. On the one hand, you need to meet the immediate expectations of citizens and elected officials. On the other, you need to make sure your community's services, infrastructure, and development remain viable in the long term. How can you find a balance that allows you to breathe while fulfilling your mission?

Your unique role: The guardian of continuity

While municipal councils change every four years, you are a more steady presence. This gives you a unique responsibility to build bridges between election cycles.

As you prepare to welcome a new council in 2025, you have the opportunity to set up an organized, three-part process that aligns current priorities with your longer-term vision.

Understanding your starting point: A solid foundation

Using reliable data (from the MAMH, the Institut de la statistique du Québec, or the Observatoire québécois des inégalités, for example), create an objective snapshot of your municipality, focusing on indicators like demographic growth, property values, economic vitality, and social issues. To that, you can add information gathered during recent consultations with economic, community, and civic stakeholders, as well as a review of your municipal body's internal strengths and weaknesses.

This snapshot will be your best friend when it comes to establishing realistic priorities with your new council. It provides an objective, indisputable foundation and sets the stage for a shared vision that transcends terms of office and ensures continuity.

Chart your course

As soon as the new council takes office, start a discussion to help elected officials contextualize their commitments. The goal is not for them to abandon their promises, but simply to align them with a coherent, feasible vision. Four years go by quickly, and spreading yourselves thin often leads to half-baked results!

In addition, a committed council is not enough, as you well know. Your teams are the ones who bring the vision to life. As priorities become clearer, your teams can draw up realistic plans that align with the strategic choices the council has validated. It's at this point that the balance is struck between elected officials' ambitions and the available resources.

Finally, don't be afraid to ask for support for this process, especially if you are having a planning retreat to bring managers and elected officials together.

Effective follow-up

Experience has shown time and again that the best plans end up falling by the wayside without effective follow-up.

A good strategic management system makes all the difference. It allows everyone—elected officials, citizens, and municipal teams alike—to see and understand your progress. It also provides transparency that keeps everyone motivated and focusing on the priorities, even when day-to-day operations become challenging.

For your teams, the clear structure gives meaning to their everyday tasks. With qualified staff being so rare, offering a workplace with clear objectives where success is recognized is a significant advantage.

Orchestrating the future

As director general, you are both the guardian of the long-term vision and the conductor of day-to-day operations. This dual role is demanding, but it's also what gives your work so much meaning.

By steering the approach that ties the 2026–2029 council's objectives with your community's long-term aspirations, you are laying the groundwork for achieving a balance that so often seems impossible. And in doing so, you are turning what might feel like a hindrance—the election cycle—into an opportunity for renewal and alignment.

