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New Training Requirements for Elected Municipal Officials

Elected officials' training has been an ongoing concern since the *Municipal Ethics and Good Conduct Act (MEGCA)* was adopted.

The pressure was further heightened when Bill 57¹ came into force on June 6, 2024, bringing with it a new training requirement. More specifically, the bill amended section 8 of the *Act respecting the Ministère des Affaires municipales, des Régions et de l'Occupation du territoire*,² allowing the Minister to prescribe, by regulation, the training that new and returning members of municipal councils must take on their role and on the municipal system. In fact, a regulation to that effect came into force on June 12, 2025.

As such, elected municipal officials are now required to take this training in addition to that required by the MEGCA.

Training required by the Minister of Municipal Affairs

The regulation dictates the content and conditions of the training. In particular, it states that the training must cover the roles and responsibilities of elected municipal officials; municipal administration; the functioning of the local and regional municipality and the municipal council; relations between the political and administrative actors in the municipality; municipal budget management, finances, and taxation; and land use planning and development.

Following the 2025 elections, Schedule I of the regulation states that the training must last 7.5 hours for all elected officials.

For subsequent elections, officials who have been re-elected and who have already taken the training in Schedule I must take a different, shorter training, outlined in Schedule II. That training must last at least 2 hours and cover the relations between the political and administrative authorities in the municipality, as well as new legislative, regulatory, and case law developments relevant to the position of elected municipal official.

Returning officials will also need to take another 60 minutes of training on a subject relevant to the exercise of the function of elected municipal official.

The Minister will approve the content of the training on the basis of its quality and adequacy.

Officials must take the training within 9 months of the start of their term, regardless of whether it is their first term or not.

Training under the MEGCA

Section 15 of the MEGCA requires all municipal council members to take training on municipal ethics and good conduct, as well as the roles and responsibilities of elected municipal officials, at the start of their term. The content of the training is set by the Commission municipale du Québec, and the official must take it within 6 months of the start of their first term or 9 months of the start of a subsequent term. Council members who employ cabinet staff must ensure that their employees take the mandatory training within the required time limit as well.

According to the MEGCA, the Commission is responsible for setting the mandatory minimum content of the training and authorizing the trainers according to the criteria it sets. That authorization is granted by a committee that reviews the content of the proposed training.

The Commission has set two types of ethics and conduct training. The first is for newly elected officials and the second is for those who have been re-elected and who took the first training during their previous term.

Officials who have been re-elected will be able to take the latter training as of November 2025. However, they may choose to take the same training as a newly elected officer instead.

¹ *Act to enact the Act to protect elected municipal officers and to facilitate the unhindered exercise of their functions and to amend various legislative provisions concerning municipal affairs* (SQ 2024, c. 24)

² CQLR, c. M-22.1.

Obligations of the municipality and its officers

Within 30 days of taking the mandatory ethics training or the training decreed by the MAMH, all elected municipal officials must report their participation to the municipal clerk(-treasurer), who in turn will report it to the council.

If an official fails to take the training on time, the clerk(-treasurer) must inform the Commission in writing of this fact 30 days after the deadline for the training.

The municipality must keep an up-to-date list on its website of the elected officials who have taken both courses.

Failure to take mandatory training

If an elected official fails to take the mandatory ethics and conduct training within 6 months of the start of their first term (or 9 months of the start of a subsequent term), section 31.1 of the MEGCA states that the Commission may suspend them without remuneration, allowances, or other benefits until they fulfill their training obligation.

Similarly, an elected official who fails to take the mandatory training on municipal administration within 9 months of the start of their term may be suspended without remuneration or benefits until they take the training.

Conclusion

The clerk(-treasurer) plays an important role in the process, as they must declare the training by the deadlines established in the law and regulation. They are also required to inform the Commission if an elected official fails to take either of the mandatory training courses.

Finally, it's worth noting that elected officials are chosen by their fellow citizens and have real power and influence over their communities. Every elected municipal official in Québec, whether they are a mayor or a councillor, must take pride in ensuring their behaviour meets the highest ethical standards, which includes taking all the mandatory training.

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