

City Government and Public Involvement

City Government

Vancouver's city government is made up of the Vancouver City Council and the Vancouver Park Board. City Council is made up of the Mayor and ten Councillors who are elected at large for a three-year term. The Mayor is the Chair of City Council.

People in Vancouver vote every three years to choose the Mayor, ten City Councillors and seven Park Board

Commissioners. The Vancouver School Board, which is under provincial government jurisdiction, is also elected at the same time. Each year Council chooses various people to be on civic boards, commissions and committees, including the Vancouver Public Library Board, and the Greater Vancouver Regional District Board (GVRD).

The City of Vancouver government has many functions and powers. It can:

- pass by-laws regulating businesses and buildings
- buy and sell property
- collect property taxes and other taxes
- approve major spending for all parts of the City government
- take on debt
- allocate funds for special activities such as arts and community services
- set up departments and offices for City services
- hire staff for City departments and offices.



City Hall, the heart of the City of Vancouver's government, is located at 453 West 12th Avenue. City Hall is where the Mayor's Office (Tel: 604-873-7621) is located, where the City Council meets and where the main offices for many City departments are located. The City Manager's Office (Tel: 604-873-7625) in City Hall oversees the day-to-day administration of the City's affairs. The City Manager carries out the Council's decisions and supervises the work of City

departments and programs. Staff work in City departments and programs all over the City, following the direction of the elected representatives. Mayor and Council appoint senior staff, including the City Manager. All other staff are selected through a City hiring system, based upon their education, skills and experience.

City Council and the Park Board discuss and make decisions about issues regarding the governing of the City at Council and Park Board meetings. Decisions are made based on open votes in Council and Park Board meetings, and any person can go to regular Council and Park Board meetings, as well as to meetings of different city committees.

You can get information about decisions to be made at Council's meeting from the City Clerk's Office (Tel: 604-873-7276) or for Park Board issues, from the Park Board Office (Tel: 604-257-8400). You can also find more information on the City website www.city.vancouver.bc.ca and the Park Board website: www.parks.vancouver.bc.ca

Anyone may request to speak to a report on a City Council agenda. To do so, it is necessary to pre-register, either in writing or by telephone, to the City Clerk Office (Tel: 604-873-7276). The same process applies for Park Board Meetings (Tel: 604-257-8400).

Other Levels of Government & Jurisdictions

The City government works with other levels of government and jurisdictions in providing services to the people of the city. Contact the following governments/jurisdictions if you wish more information about their services and programs:

A. Provincial and Federal Government

The Provincial and Federal Government have a lot of functions that are important to Vancouver. Each has laws and regulations, provides many services, develops lands and operates departments, ministries and crown corporations. You can find out more through their websites:

- 1) Provincial Government: www.gov.bc.ca
(Enquiry BC - Tel: 604-660-2421)
- 2) Federal Government: www.canada.gc.ca
(Tel: 1-800-622-6232)

B. Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD)

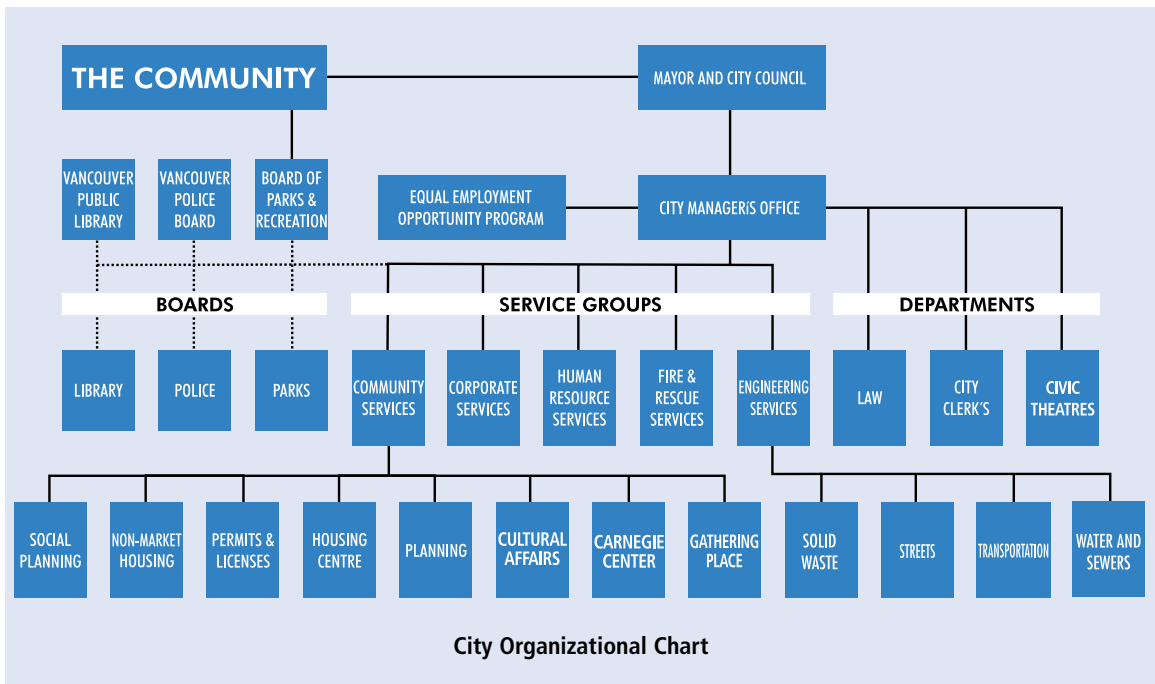
The City of Vancouver is also represented on the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), which brings together the 21 municipalities and one electoral area in Greater Vancouver to make decisions about common issues such as water, sewers, garbage, recycling, air quality, transportation, labour relations, and parks. Website: www.gvrd.bc.ca (Tel: 604-432-6200)

C. TransLink is the body responsible for transit services. Website: www.translink.bc.ca (Tel: 604-453-4500). For Bus/Seabus/Skytrain information, call 604-521-0400 (Also see Part 3: Getting Around).

D. Vancouver Coastal Health Authority is responsible for health services. Website: www.vancoastalhealth.ca (Tel: 604-736-2033, also see Part 3: Health Services)

E. Vancouver School Board looks after schools and education in the city. Website: www.vsb.bc.ca Tel: 604-713-5000 (Also see Part 3: Schools & Education)





City Departments and Service Groups

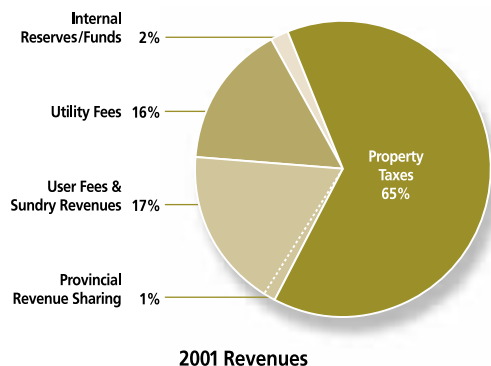
City services, under the direction of Council and Park Board, are delivered by more than 8,000 staff working in various locations throughout the city. You may call the City of Vancouver Switchboard at 604-873-7011 if you require assistance locating a particular service or staff person. The chart above gives an overview of various departments and service groups in the civic structure.

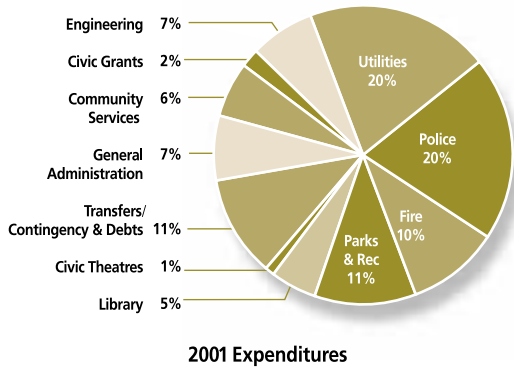
Revenues and Expenditures

The City of Vancouver's main way of raising revenue to pay for services is through property taxes, which are collected from homeowners and other property owners based on how much their property would cost to buy that year. Renters pay their part of property taxes through the rent that they pay to landlords. About half the property tax revenue, collected by the City on behalf of the Province, goes to support Vancouver schools.

Other City revenue comes from permits and licenses, and property revenues such as parking tickets and rent. The other levels of government also provide support to various City initiatives or programs.

The following charts show revenues and expenditures of the City in 2001.





Civic Elections and Voting

Elections are held every three years on the third Saturday in November. In advance of election day, the City Clerk's office sends city residents information about who is running for election and about how they can vote. The City of Vancouver opens an Elections Office several months before an election.

Who can vote

You can vote in a municipal election in Vancouver if you:

- are a Canadian citizen
- are 18 years or older on voting day
- have lived in BC for six months before voting day
- and have lived in Vancouver for 30 days before voting day.

All Vancouver residents who meet the above requirements can vote. It does not matter where you live in Vancouver or whether you rent or own your home. If you own property in Vancouver but live somewhere else in BC, you can still vote in Vancouver elections.



Boards, Commissions, and Committees

The City's business requires the input and active participation of many citizens. City Council regularly appoints individuals from the community to sit on City boards, commissions and committees to advise Council on specific matters or make decisions on special issues. Some of these groups are:

- **Vancouver Police Board**
- **Vancouver Planning Commission**
- **Vancouver Public Library Board**
- **Civic Theatres Board**
- **Vancouver Economic Development Commission**
- **Special Advisory Committee on Seniors**
- **Special Advisory Committee on Cultural Communities.**

Voter registration

You must register to vote. The City of Vancouver uses the BC voters' list to determine who is eligible to vote in Vancouver. This list is at the voting place on election day. Your name will be crossed off the list when you vote to show that you have completed voting for this election.

If you are not on the BC voters' list, you can still get on the Vancouver list. You must show two pieces of identification. One must have your signature; for example, it can be a credit card, passport, or BC identification card. The other must have your address; for example, it can be a driver's licence, car insurance certificate, a hydro bill or a credit card bill.





Civic Participation and Involvement

Thanks for taking the time to read this Guide and to find out more about Vancouver.

In the months and years to come, as you get to know your neighbours and your neighbourhood, as you explore the many different parts of the city, you'll get to know the little things that make Vancouver unique. Its parks. Its rich mix of people from around the world. And its endless opportunities for taking part in community groups and activities.

You can register with these two pieces of identification before the election or on the day of the election at the voting place.

How to vote

You can vote at any time between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election at the voting place for your neighbourhood. You will be provided with information, advertisements, etc. about where to vote. You can also call the City's Elections Office at 604-873-7681 to inquire about voting locations.

At the voting place you will be asked to show your voter registration or two pieces of identification. You will be given a ballot with the candidates' names and directed to a booth where you will choose who you want to vote for. You can ask for help to get to the voting place, to read the names and to fill in the ballots. Call the City Clerk's Elections Office for more information.

If you know you will not be able to vote on the day of the election, you can ask to vote before that day at certain designated advance polls. Call the Election Office for more information. If you can't get to any voting place because you are in hospital, the Elections Office can provide assistance.

An important reason Vancouver is consistently ranked as one of the best places in the world to live, is that Vancouver residents care about this city. Vancouverites have a long tradition of participating in city government and community affairs. Some participate at a local level by volunteering at community centres or neighbourhood organizations. Others get involved by addressing issues that affect their neighbourhoods or the whole city. As you deepen your involvement in the life of the city, you'll appreciate how many different kinds of people work together to create the outstanding quality of life we all enjoy and cherish!

To find out more about public participation, get a copy of the City's *How To Participate In City Processes Guide* by calling the Planning Department at 604-873-7344. Another useful publication is *The Citizen's Handbook: A Guide To Building Community in Vancouver*, also available from the Planning Department.