

# A Municipal Comparison of Affordable Housing and Homelessness

Overviews



Canadian Institut  
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Institute Canada

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# Acknowledgments



This Canadian Urban Institute report was commissioned by the City of Calgary in the spring of 2021. It would not have been completed without the hard work of Lead Researcher Melissa Goldstein, student intern Maria Novo Alonso who did much of the comparative analysis, housing expert Joy Connelly, nor without the patient help of Julyata Mekonnen and contributions of Diane Dyson. Both Leanne M. Hall and Elsbeth Mehrer at the City of Calgary provided the vision and guidance need to start and to complete this project. Thanks are also due to the individual staff in each of the selected cities who responded to our inquiries and offered further details and clarification where needed. Any errors in these reports are ours, and not theirs.

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# Introduction

The purpose of these reports is to provide an overview of how Canadian municipalities structure their work around housing and homelessness. It offers a scan of eleven major Canadian municipalities/regions and their approaches to affordable housing and homelessness. Information included in the reports include:

- Population of municipality (census division, following corporate City/Regional boundaries)
- Strategic directions and definitions of “affordability”
- Jurisdictional context and responsibilities
- Budget (operating and capital, with calculation of costs per capita)
- Organizational structure and staffing (lines of responsibility and numbers, where available)
- Grants and incentive programs
- Key affordable housing policies and programs

More detailed information is provided for each jurisdiction in the accompanying Municipalities document. This summary report offers comparisons of the selected municipalities. It also includes two appendices: the first provides budgetary data, as available, and the second provides organizational charts to illustrate the reporting structures of the specific municipal unit and/or Division charged with leading housing and homelessness work.

Because of the variation in jurisdictional responsibilities and relationship to regional and provincial governments, the comparisons are meant to provide some sense of the scope of the work being carried out at the municipal level in Canada in the areas of affordable housing and homelessness, rather than to evaluate municipalities against each other. It is for this reason that the Canadian Urban Institute responded to the call from the City of Calgary to validate an earlier jurisdictional scan and to expand upon it.

# Methodology

This report was developed using basic research methods and a review of publicly available documents and websites (including staff reports, municipal budgets, and housing strategies) to complete a review of eleven municipalities' approaches to affordable housing and homelessness. These reports update and expand upon a similar review undertaken by the City of Calgary in summer 2020. The materials cited here were accessed between April and June 2021.

To validate and clarify the information and insights gleaned from these materials, key informant interviews were conducted with staff from the cities of Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, the City of Toronto, Ville de Montreal, and the Halifax Regional Municipality. Staff at the City of Vancouver, the Region of Peel, and the Ville de Montreal, provided information in response to specific questions via email. Efforts were made to verify and clarify information from the City of Winnipeg and the City of Ottawa, but these efforts were unsuccessful.

Municipalities undertake point-in-time counts of their homeless populations at varying frequencies. The 2018 Point In Time Count was used as the source for this report's homeless population figures, as each municipality undertook a PiT Count that year. Similarly, municipalities update their population data at varying frequencies, so the 2016 Census population data was used to ensure consistency among municipalities. Due to differences and inconsistencies in jurisdictional responsibilities; the way programs, services and capital expenses are funded by upper levels of government; and the way operating and capital budgets are reported by different municipalities; comparing per capita municipal spending on affordable housing and homelessness programs and services is not only difficult, but much like comparing apples and oranges. For these reasons, the budget comparison and per capita spending information should be used cautiously. For the purpose of this report gross (total approved expenses), revenue and net operating budgets have been included where possible. The per capita calculation was completed for both gross and net budgets. Budget figures included spending on grants, incentives, subsidies and rebate programs were included if we were able to locate details of these programs.

# Comparative Findings



## Strategic Priorities

There are both similarities and differences in the priorities that municipalities set in their housing and homelessness plans; the following charts demonstrate the variation in these priorities among municipalities. Refer to the accompanying Municipalities report for further information about the housing and homelessness plans referenced here, the jurisdictional responsibilities of each municipality, and for information about the methods each municipality has implemented to achieve their priorities.

Every municipality we looked at had identified increasing the supply of affordable housing as a key strategic priority, however, municipalities prioritized different approaches to increasing their affordable housing supplies.

## Increasing Affordable Housing Supply

|  | Victoria | Vancouver | Edmonton | Calgary | Saskatoon | Winnipeg | Peel | Toronto | Ottawa | Montreal | Halifax |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|----------|------|---------|--------|----------|---------|
| Increase affordable housing supply                                 | •        | •         | •        | •       | •         | •        | •    | •       | •      | •        | •       |
| Increase rental housing supply                                     | •        | •         |          |         |           |          |      | •       |        | •        |         |
| Facilitate accessory/secondary suites/laneway housing              | •        |           |          |         | •         |          |      |         |        |          | •       |
| Make effective use of municipal lands                              |          |           | •        | •       | •         | •        | •    |         |        | •        |         |
| Build more social housing  |          |           |          | •       |           |          | •    |         |        | •        |         |
| Streamline affordable housing development                          |          | •         |          | •       |           | •        | •    |         |        | •        |         |
| Create more affordable housing within existing stock               |          | •         | •        |         |           |          |      |         | •      | •        |         |
| Provide incentives for new affordable housing                      |          |           | •        | •       | •         | •        | •    |         |        | •        |         |
| Encourage expansion of non-profit sector and/or non-market housing |          |           |          | •       | •         | •        | •    |         |        | •        | •       |
| Promote affordable home ownership                                  |          |           |          | •       | •         |          |      | •       |        |          |         |
| Partner with developers  | •        |           |          |         |           | •        |      |         |        |          |         |
| Partner with nonprofits and co-ops                                 | •        | •         |          |         |           |          |      |         | •      |          |         |
| Increase capacity of nonprofit housing / service providers         | •        |           |          |         |           | •        | •    |         | •      |          |         |
| Strengthen intergovernmental partnerships                          |          | •         |          | •       |           | •        |      | •       | •      |          |         |
| Develop long-term funding strategies for affordable housing        |          |           |          |         |           | •        |      |         | •      |          |         |
| Create more supportive housing                                     |          |           |          |         |           | •        |      | •       | •      |          |         |

Similarly, most municipalities we looked at identified preserving and/or upgrading their existing affordable housing stock as a key strategic priority, however, there was variation in the specific housing types and the preservation approaches that municipalities prioritized:

### Preserving/upgrading existing rental units /stock

|   | Victoria | Vancouver | Edmonton | Calgary | Saskatoon | Winnipeg | Peel | Toronto | Ottawa | Montreal | Halifax |
|---|----------|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|----------|------|---------|--------|----------|---------|
| Preserve/upgrade existing rental stock                            | •        | •         | •        | •       |           |          |      | •       | •      | •        | •       |
| Revitalize social/non-profit housing                              |          |           | •        | •       |           |          |      | •       | •      | •        |         |
| Preserve existing private market affordable housing & its quality | •        | •         | •        |         |           |          |      | •       | •      | •        |         |
| Preserve/offset loss of SROs                                      |          | •         |          |         |           |          |      |         |        |          | •       |
| Improve energy efficiency   |          |           |          |         | •         | •        |      |         |        |          | •       |
| Promote housing stability   | •        | •         | •        | •       |           |          | •    | •       | •      |          | •       |
| Prevent eviction  |          |           |          |         |           |          | •    |         |        |          |         |

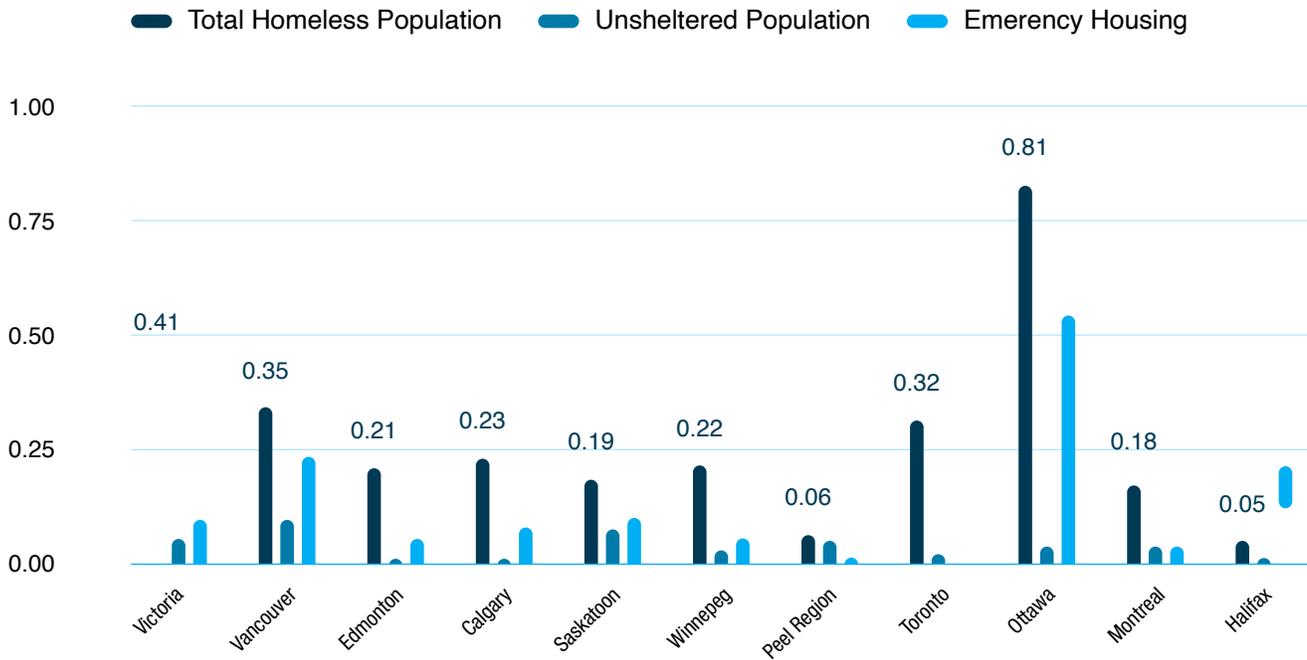
# Homelessness

In most municipalities' housing and homelessness plans, homelessness prevention was the focus of priorities related to homelessness. Only the Region of Peel set “reducing or ending homelessness” as a priority:

## Preventing and Addressing Homelessness

|                                     | Victoria | Vancouver | Edmonton | Calgary | Saskatoon | Winnipeg | Peel | Toronto | Ottawa | Montreal | Halifax |
|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|----------|------|---------|--------|----------|---------|
| Prevent homelessness                |          | ●         | ●        |         |           |          | ●    | ●       | ●      | ●        |         |
| Promote housing stability           | ●        | ●         | ●        | ●       |           |          |      | ●       | ●      |          | ●       |
| Maintain/increase affordable rents  | ●        | ●         |          |         | ●         |          |      | ●       |        |          |         |
| Promote stable tenancies            | ●        | ●         | ●        |         |           |          | ●    | ●       |        |          |         |
| Prevent eviction                    |          |           |          |         |           |          | ●    |         |        |          |         |
| Provide housing allowances          |          |           |          |         |           |          |      | ●       | ●      |          | ●       |
| Reduce or end homelessness          |          |           |          |         |           |          | ●    |         |        |          |         |
| Create supportive housing           |          |           |          |         |           | ●        |      | ●       | ●      | ●        |         |
| Create pathways out of homelessness |          | ●         | ●        |         | ●         |          |      |         |        |          |         |

## Homeless Populations



*Note: All population data is from the 2016 Census. For Victoria's population, the CMA population was used, as it is the equivalent geography to that used for Victoria's PIT Count. In other municipalities the City census subdivision was used, with the exception of the Region of Peel, where the population of the Region was used.*

*Homeless population data is from each municipality's 2018 Point-In-Time (PIT) data.*

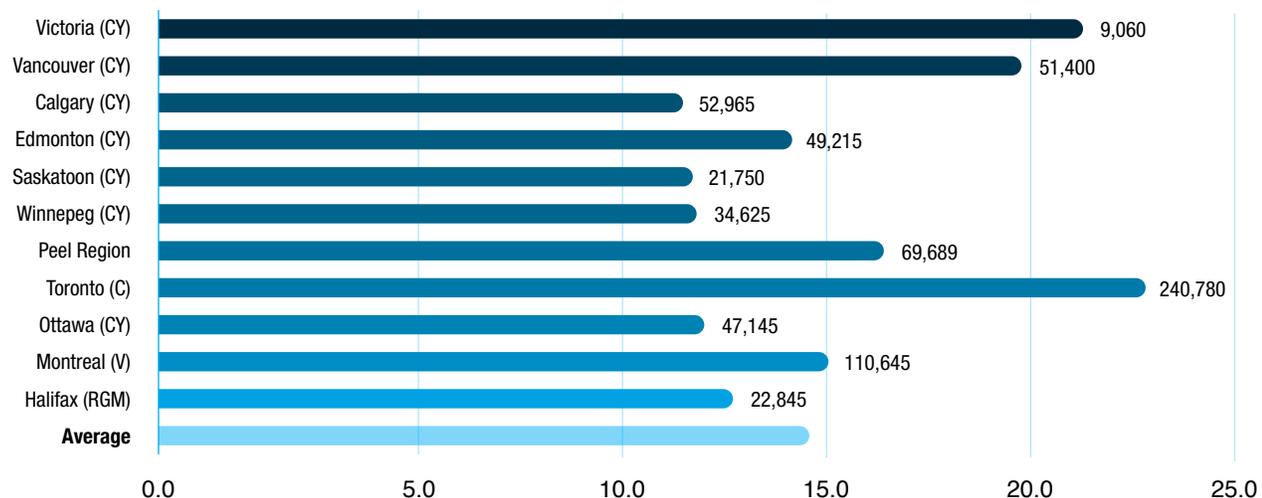
# Core Housing Need

This table indicates the core housing need in each municipality, according to the 2016 Census.

| Municipality   | Total Number of Households | Number of Households in Core Housing Need | Percentage of Households in Core Housing Need | Source                 |
|----------------|----------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| Victoria       | 45,765                     | 26,000                                    | 15.7  | <a href="#">Census</a> |
| Vancouver      | 960,895                    | 166,000                                   | 16.7  | <a href="#">Census</a> |
| Edmonton       | 502,140                    | 56,000                                    | 10.9  | <a href="#">Census</a> |
| Calgary        | 558,915                    | 52,000                                    | 9.0   | <a href="#">Census</a> |
| Saskatoon      | 115,280                    | 19,000                                    | 15.1  | <a href="#">Census</a> |
| Winnipeg       | 281,045                    | 48,000                                    | 14.9  | <a href="#">Census</a> |
| Peel Region    | 430,180                    |   |   | <a href="#">Census</a> |
| Toronto        | 2,135,910                  | 42,000                                    | 18.1  | <a href="#">Census</a> |
| Ottawa         | 373,755                    | 69,000                                    | 12.5  | <a href="#">Census</a> |
| Montreal       | 779,795                    | 198,000                                   | 11.4  | <a href="#">Census</a> |
| Halifax        | 173,335                    | 28,000                                    | 15.0  | <a href="#">Census</a> |
| <b>Average</b> |                            |   | <b>13.9</b>                                   |                        |

## Comparison of Core Housing Need in each municipality

Incidence of Core housing needed (%)



## Appendix A: Municipal budgets, a comparison

This appendix section compares the most current publicly available information from each municipality/region regarding its population size, overall budget, and staffing associated with housing. At the request of the City of Calgary, calculations were also made around per capita spending on affordable housing and homelessness. However these calculations should be used cautiously, as in most municipalities, multiple municipal departments, divisions, and units contribute to affordable housing and homelessness programs, services, and policies as a component of their work, even if it's not the focus of their work, and the resources associated with this work are not reflected in this data or these calculations. In addition, funding is often provided to external organizations to fund services and programs related to affordable housing and homelessness through budget lines that are not explicitly for affordable housing and homelessness, and these amounts are likely missed in the data below. The 2021 budget figures were as available.

## 2021 Approved Operating Budget

| Municipality                | Victoria    | Vancouver | Calgary    | Edmonton   | Saskatoon   | Winnipeg    |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Population                  | 45,765      | 960,895   | 502,140    | 558,915    | 115,280     | 281,045     |
| Operating Budget Housing    | 85,792      | 631,486   | 1,239,220  | 932,546    | 246,376     | 705,244     |
| Cost per capita             | 4413.00     |           | 16.85      | 12.78      | 404.26      |             |
| Net Budget for Housing      | 378,600,000 |           | 13,181,000 | 10,745,000 | 434,300,000 | No response |
| Cost per capita             | 4413.00     |           | 10.64      | 11.52      | 1762.75     |             |
| Capital Commitment          |             |           | 44,682,000 | 44,682,000 | 34,000,000  |             |
| Staffing in Housing         |             |           | -          | 24         | 2.33        | n/a         |
| City's Operating Budget (M) | 156         | 1,597     | 4,807      | 6,283      | 551.7       | 40.2        |
| Cost per capita (G)         | 1818.4      | 2529.0    | 3879.1     | 6737.5     | 2239.3      | 57.0        |
| Capital Budget (M)          | 52.9        | 771       | -          | 1,499.90   | 294.8       | 386.4       |
| Cost per Capita (Capital)   | 616.6       | 1220.9    | -          | 1608.4     | 1196.5      | 547.9       |

| Municipality                | Peel        | Toronto     | Ottawa-Gatineau | Montreal      | Halifax |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|---------|
| Population                  | 430,180     | 2,135,910   | 373,755         | 779,795       | 173,335 |
| Operating Budget Housing    | 1,428,302   | 2,731,571   | 934,243         | 1,704,694     | 403,131 |
| Cost per capita             | 158.11      | 15.14       | 5.06            |               |         |
| Net Budget for Housing      | 135,670,000 | 42,537,000  | 4,380,000       |               |         |
| Cost per capita             | 94.99       | 15.57       | 4.69            |               | n/a     |
| Capital Commitment          | 137,200,000 | 327,900,000 | -               | 140,000,000   |         |
| Staffing in Housing         |             | 28          | 36              | 90 (pre-2021) |         |
| City's Operating Budget (M) | 2,700       | 13,950      | 3,940           | 6,170         | 1,000   |
| Cost per capita (G)         | 1890.4      | 5107.0      | 4217.3          | 3619.4        | 2480.6  |
| Capital Budget (M)          | 1,000       | 2,810       | -               | -             | 177.9   |
| Cost per Capita (Capital)   | 700.1       | 1028.7      | -               | -             | 441.3   |

# Appendix B: Municipal governance structures



Denotes where the primary responsibility for affordable housing lies within the existing municipal organizational structure.

This section includes municipal organizational charts showing the municipal reporting structures, and where available, organizational charts for municipal housing departments.

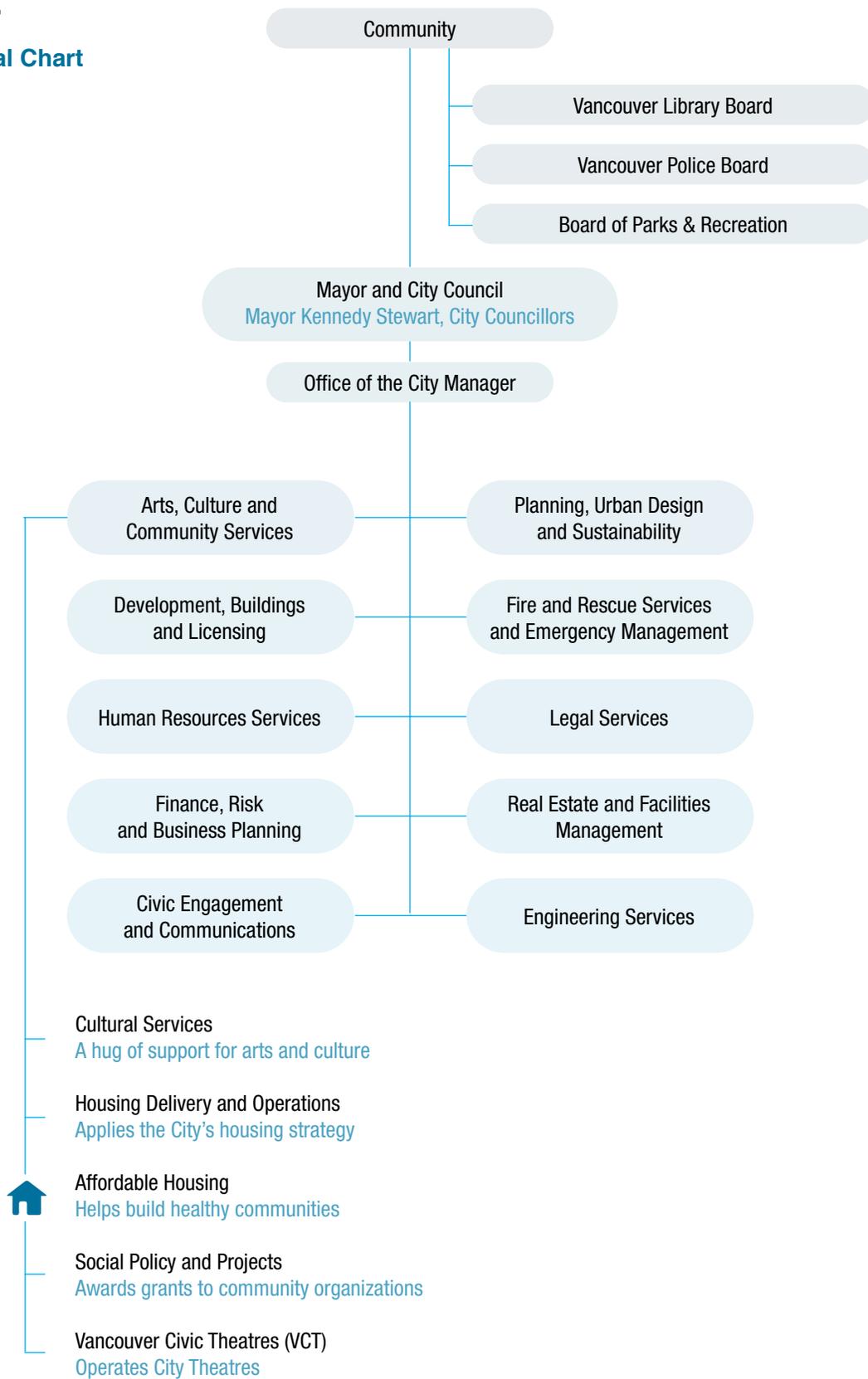
## Victoria

### Organizational Chart



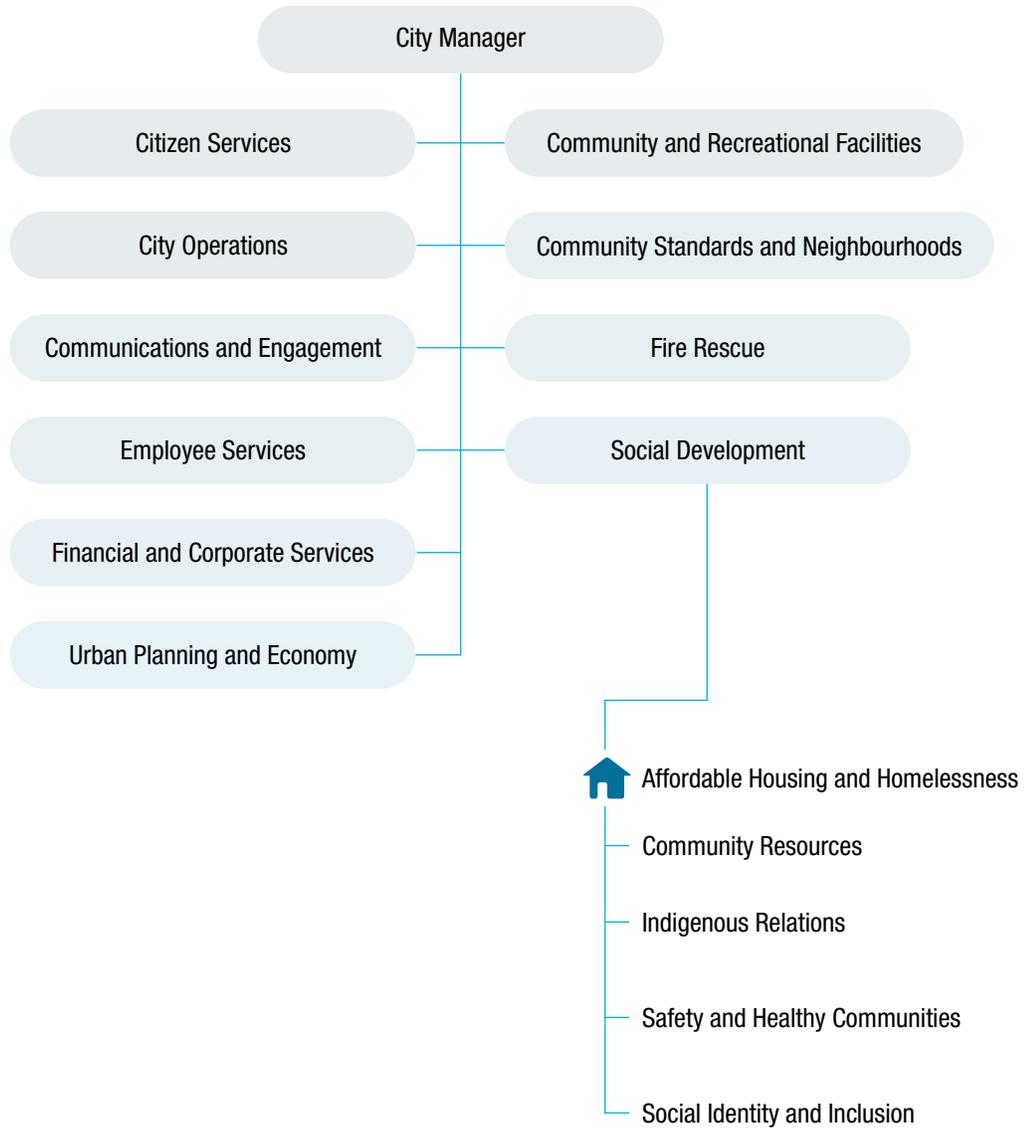
# Vancouver

## Organizational Chart



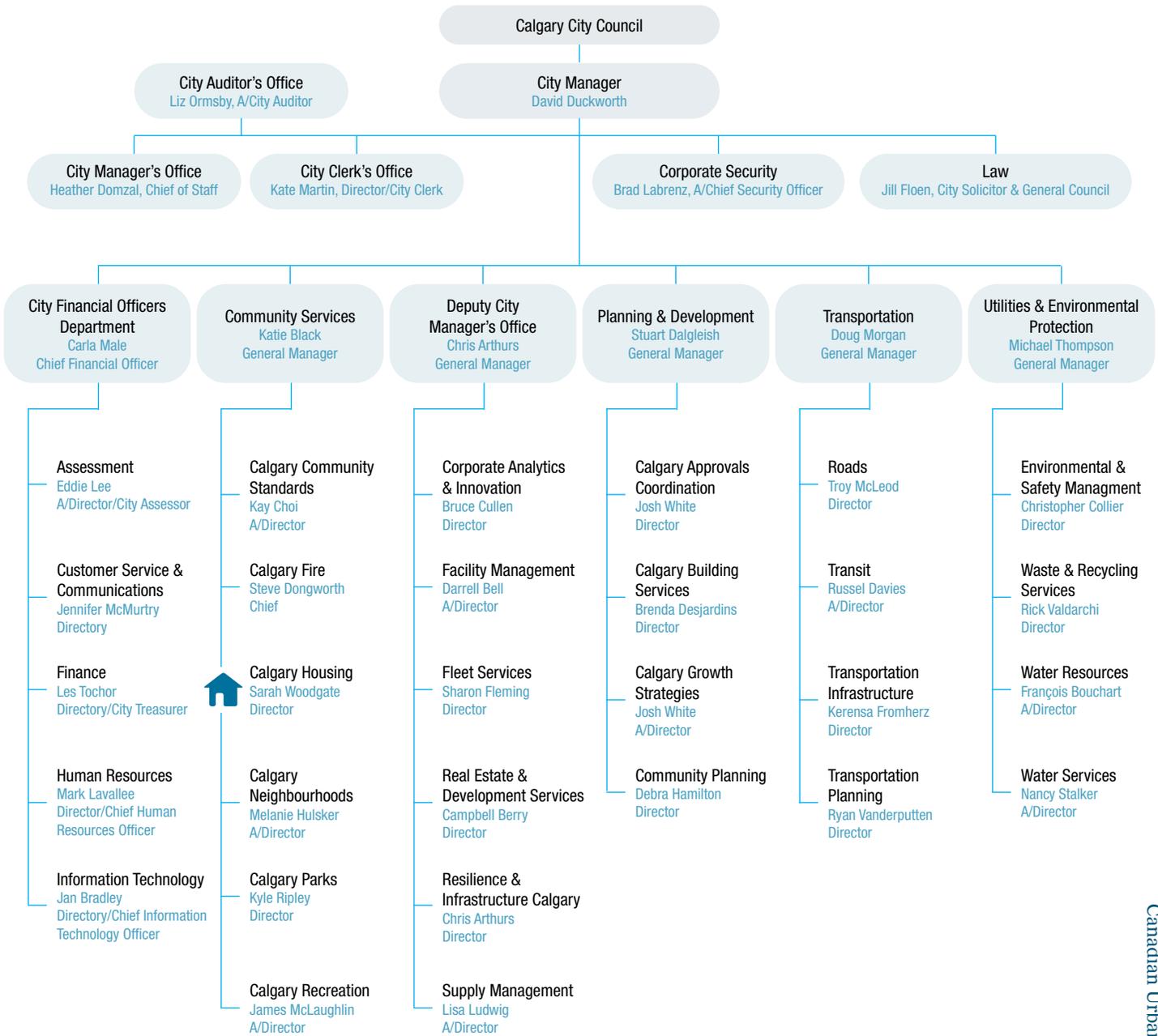
# Edmonton

## Organizational Chart



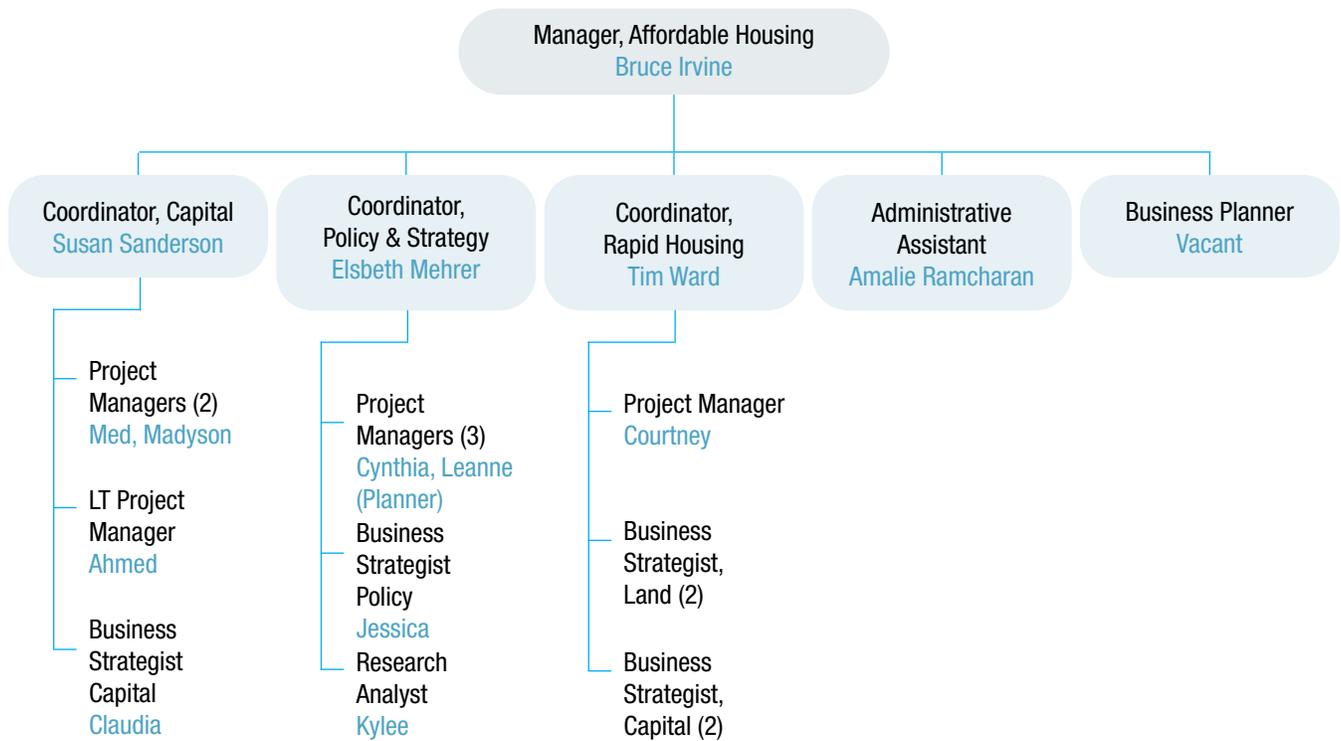
# Calgary

## Organizational Chart



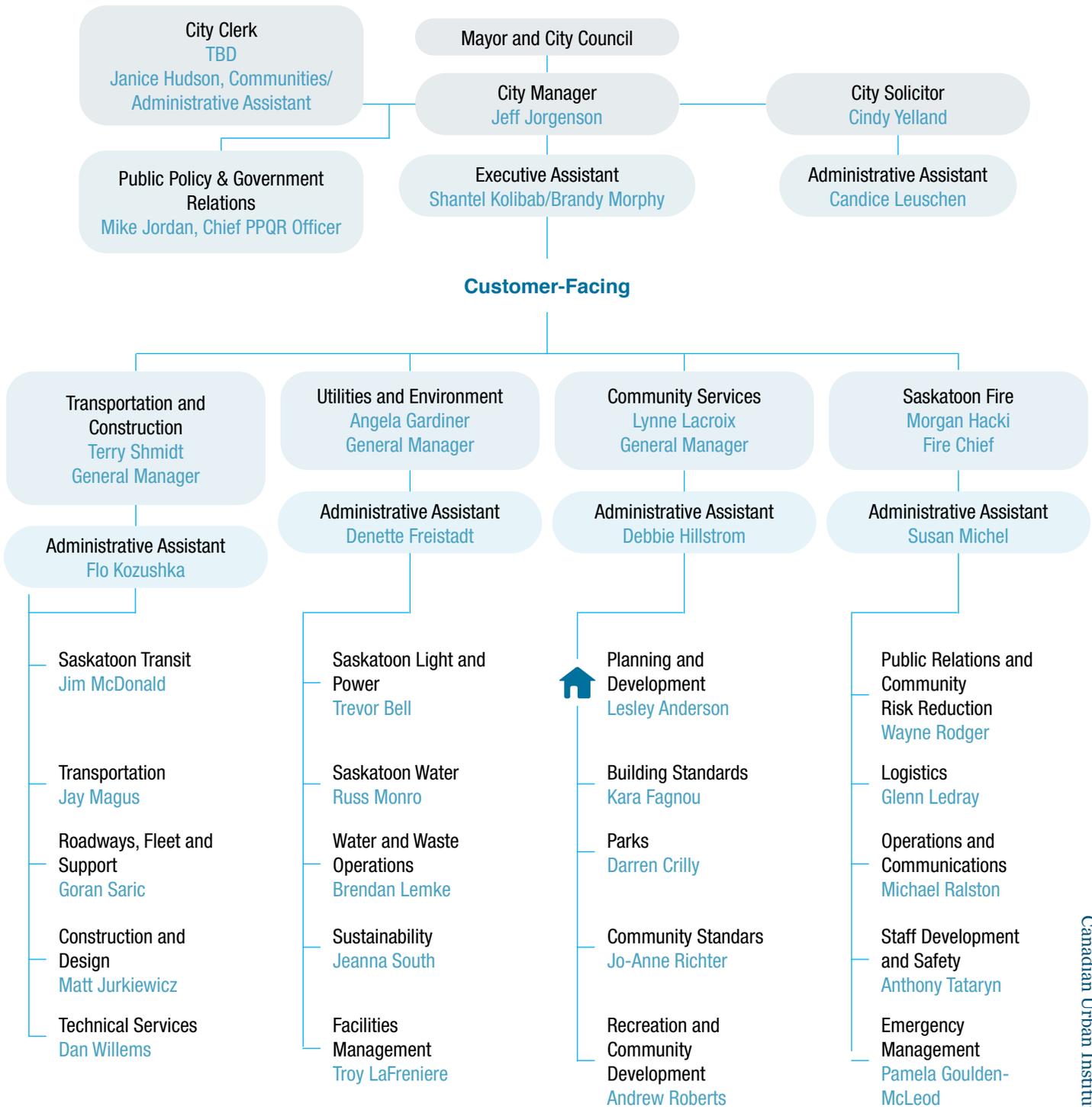
# Calgary

## Affordable Housing



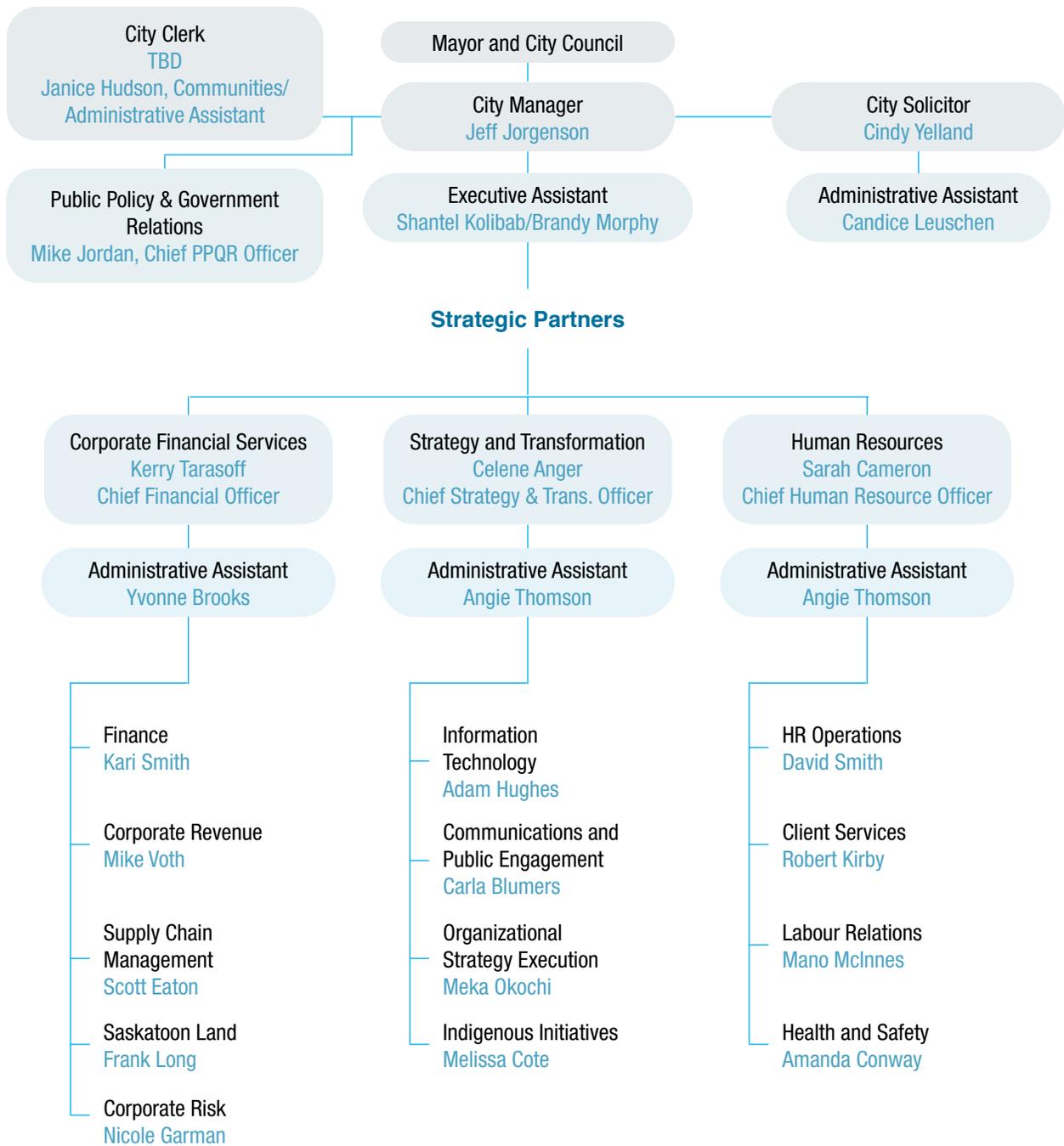
# Saskatoon

## Organizational Chart



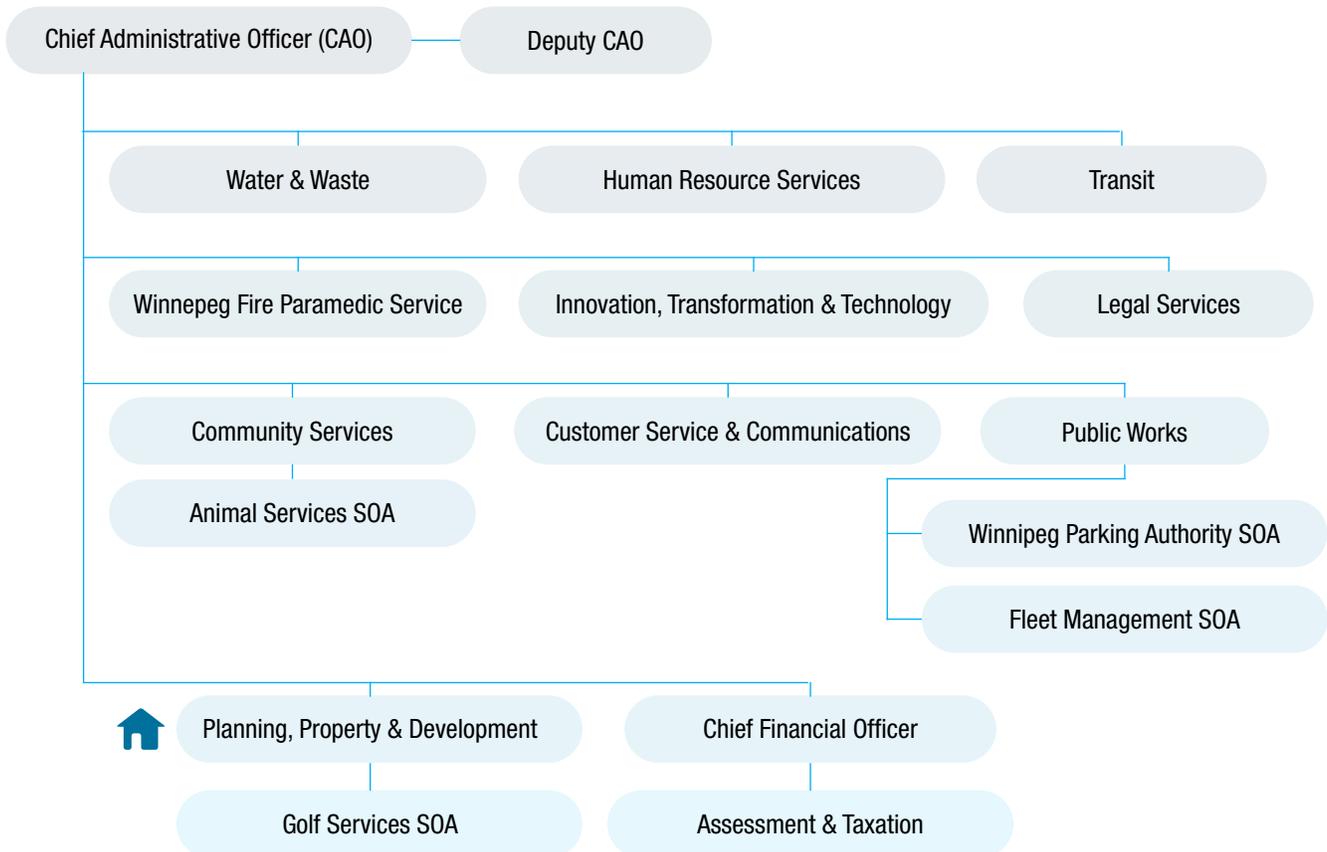
# Saskatoon

## Organizational Chart



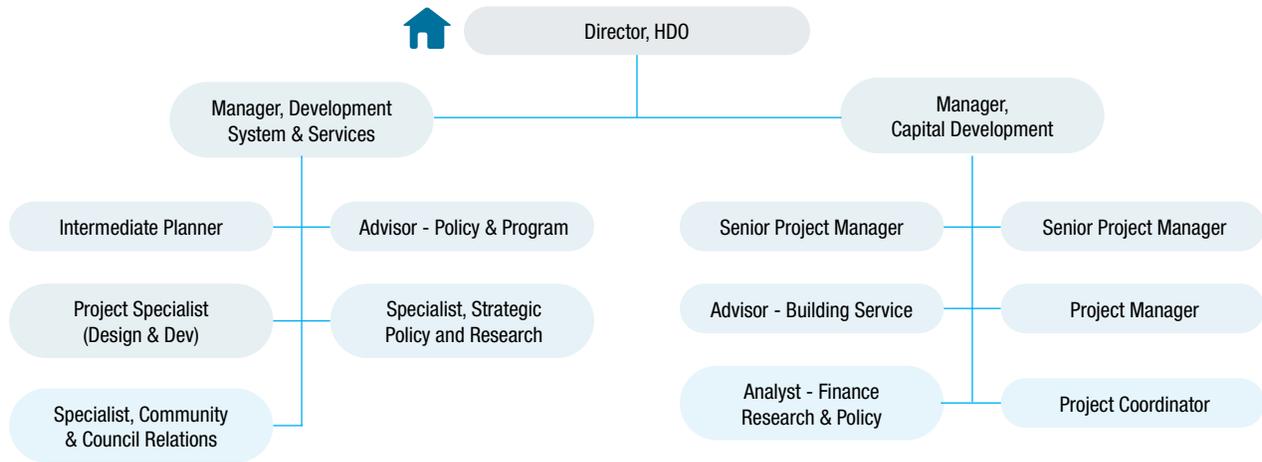
# Winnipeg

## Organizational Chart



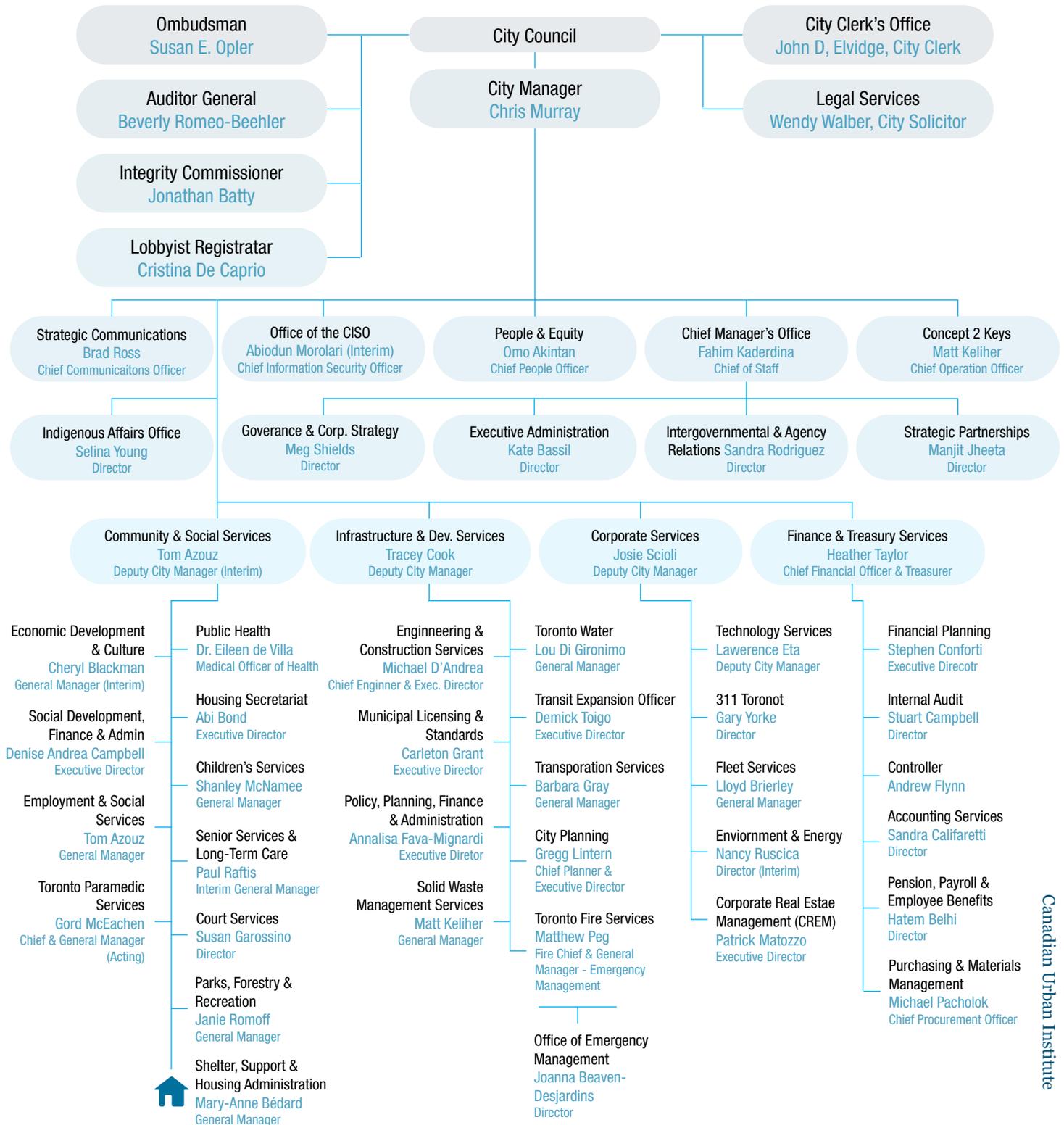
# Region of Peel

## Housing Development Office reporting structure



# Toronto

## Organizational Chart



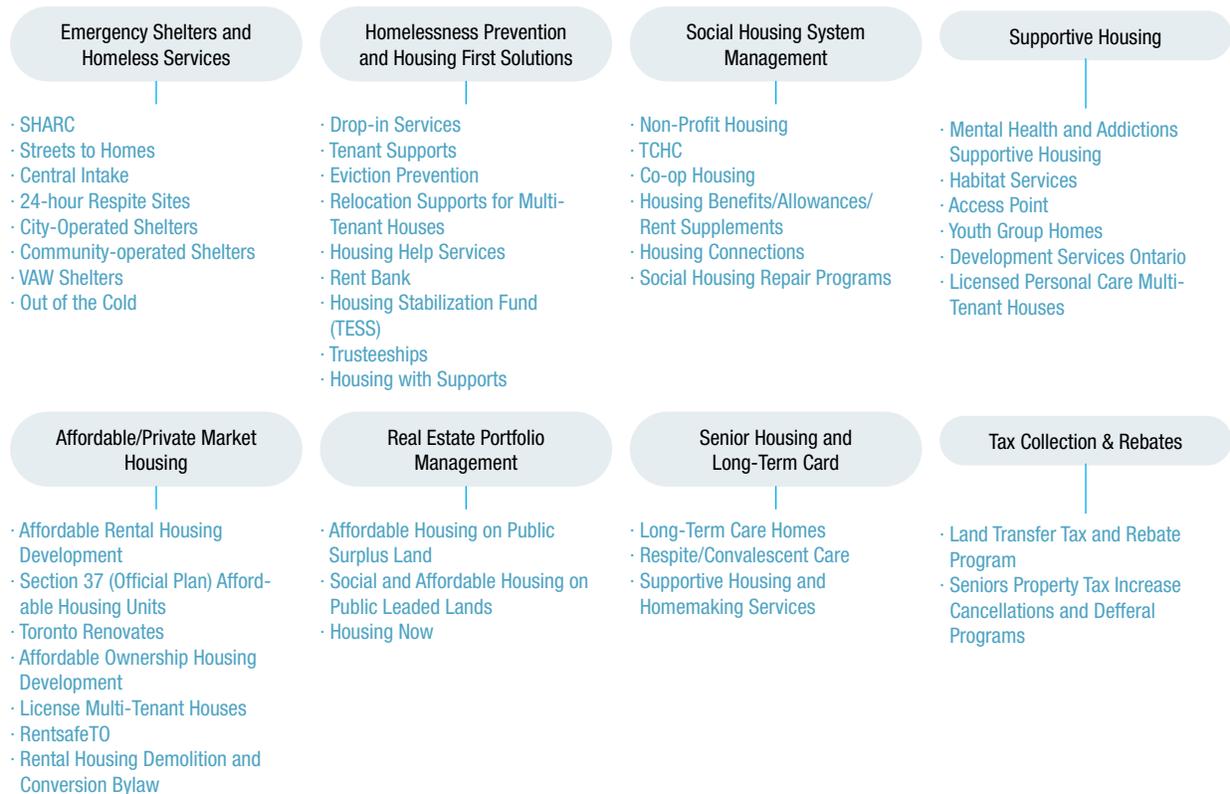
# Toronto

## Overview of the Housing System: City of Toronto Perspective

### Municipal Government

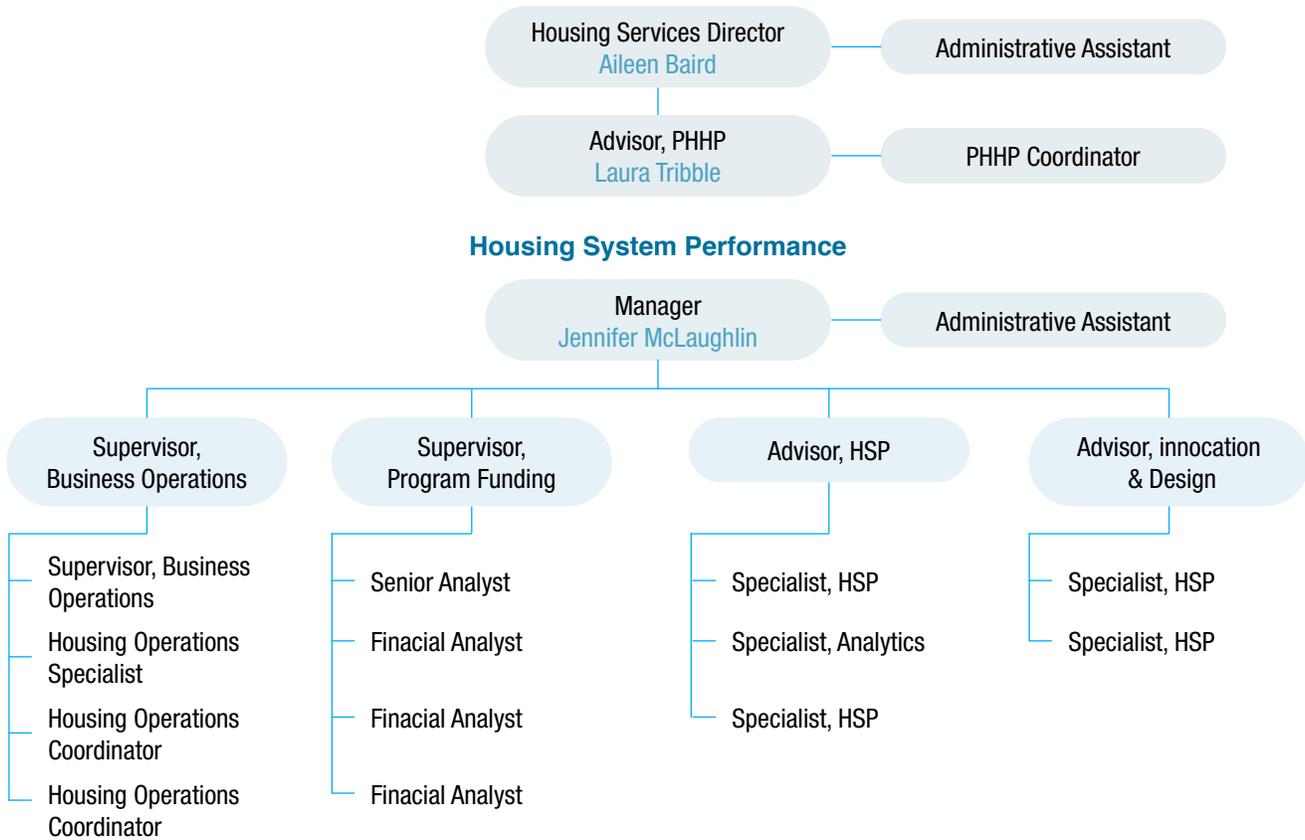


### Housing & Homelessness Service System

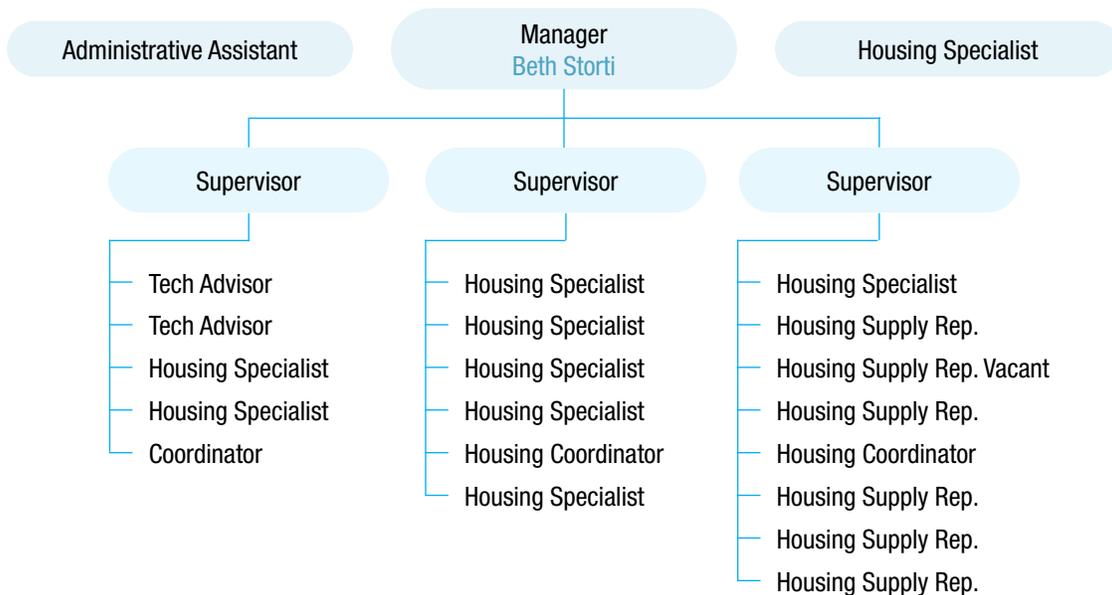


# Toronto

## Housing Services Organization Chart

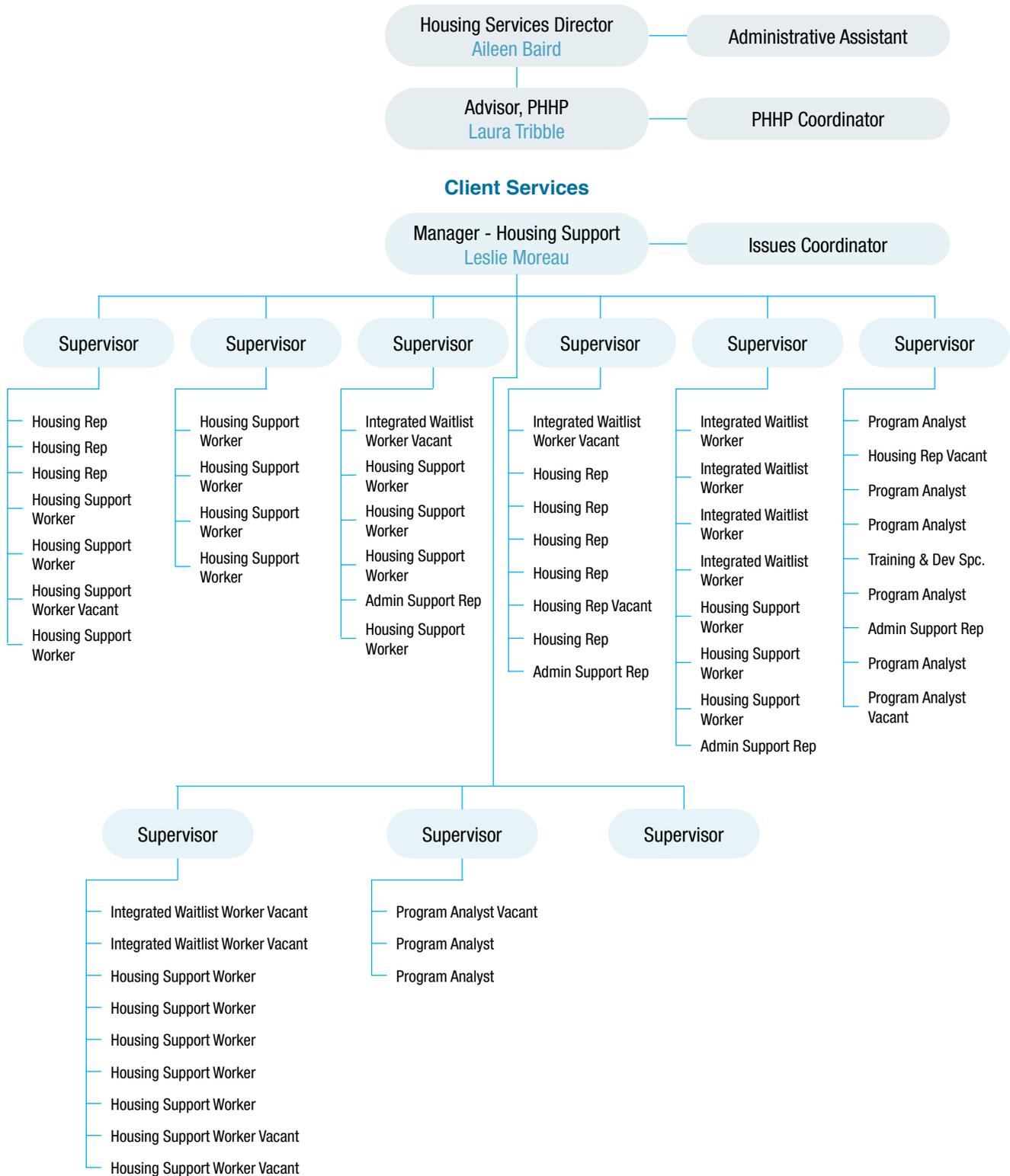


## Housing Supply



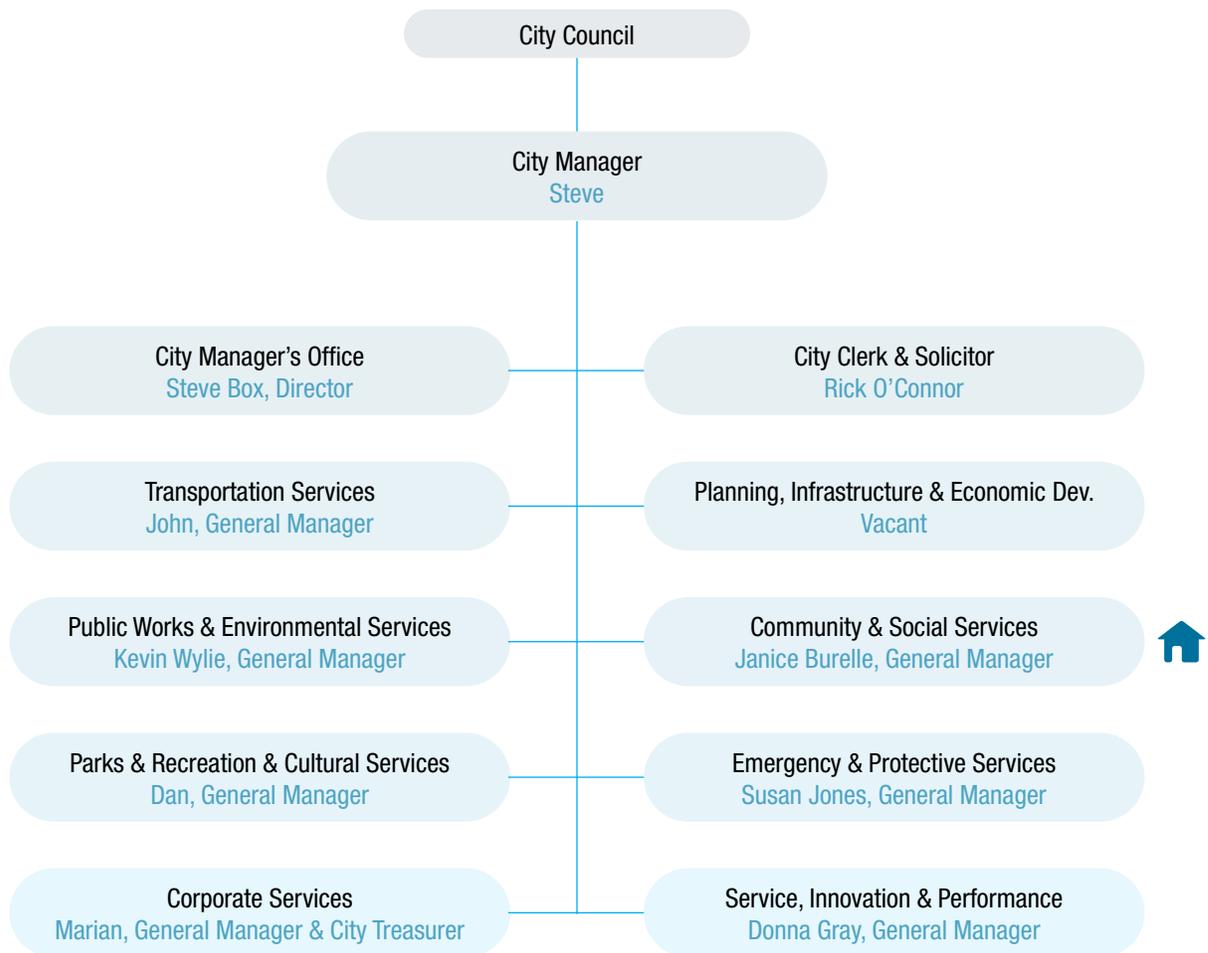
# Toronto

## Housing Services Organization Chart



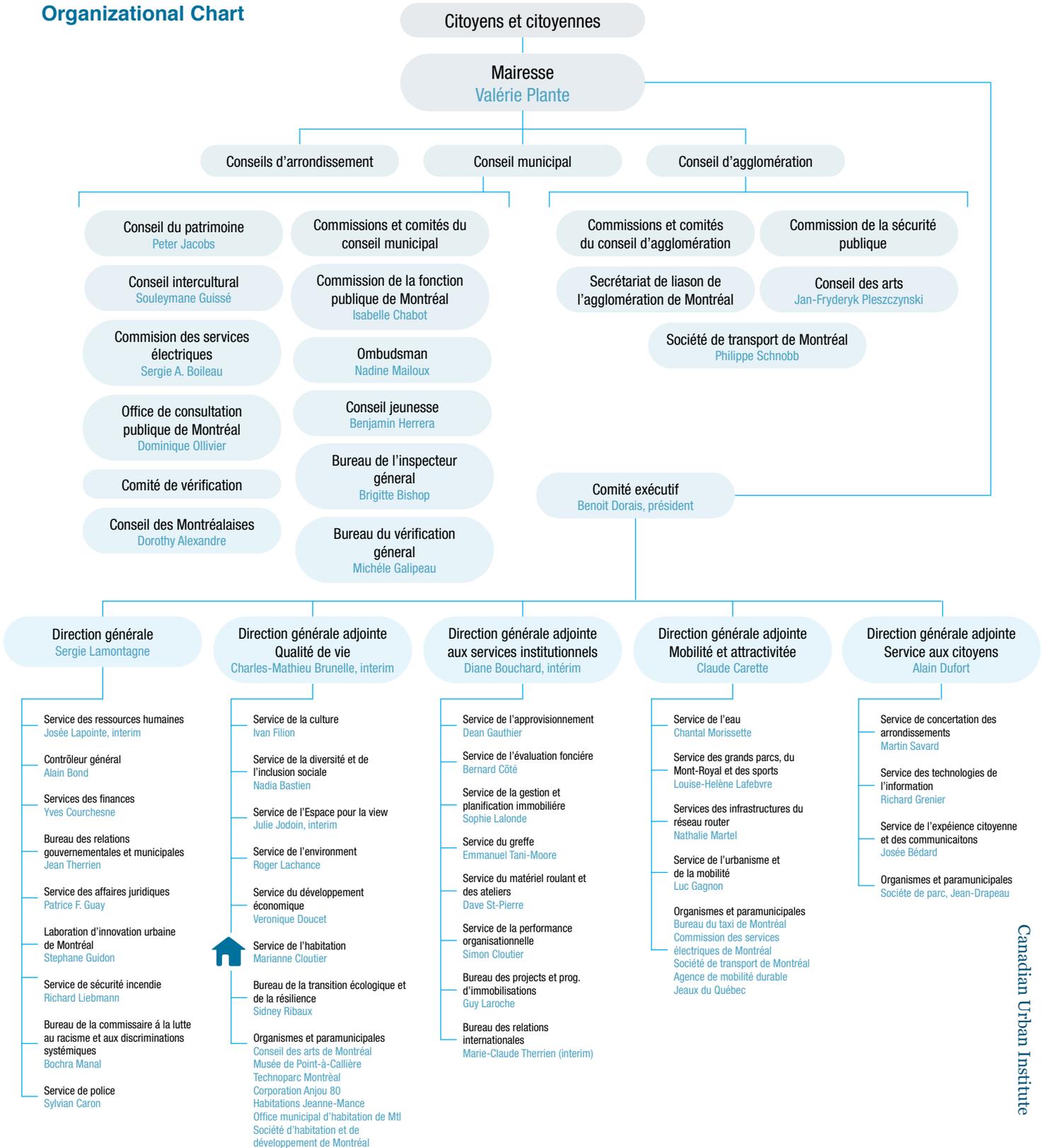
# Ottawa

## Organizational Chart



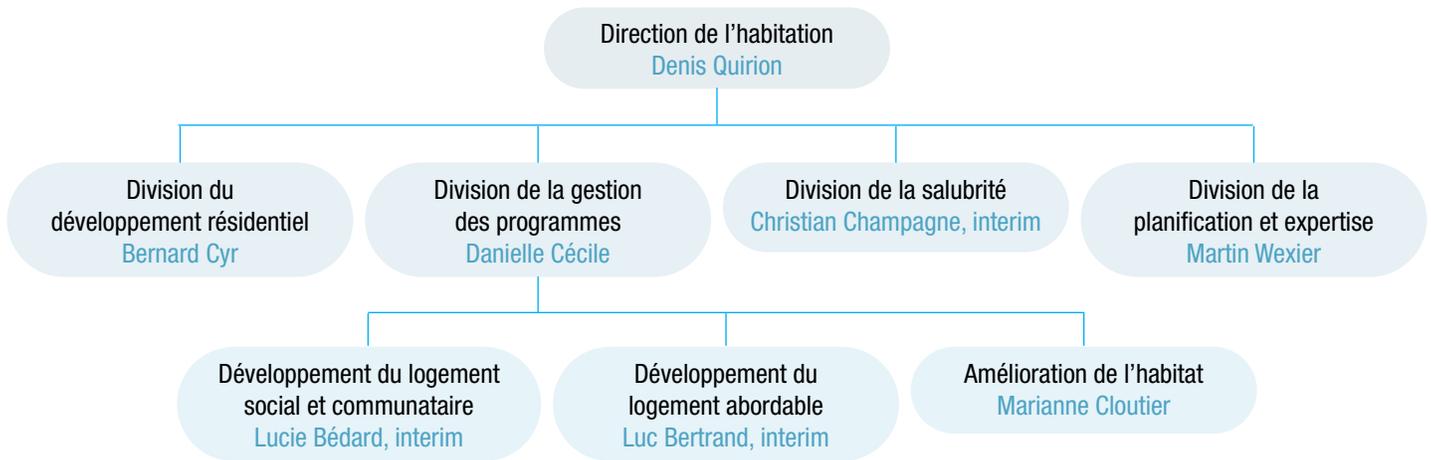
# Montreal

## Organizational Chart



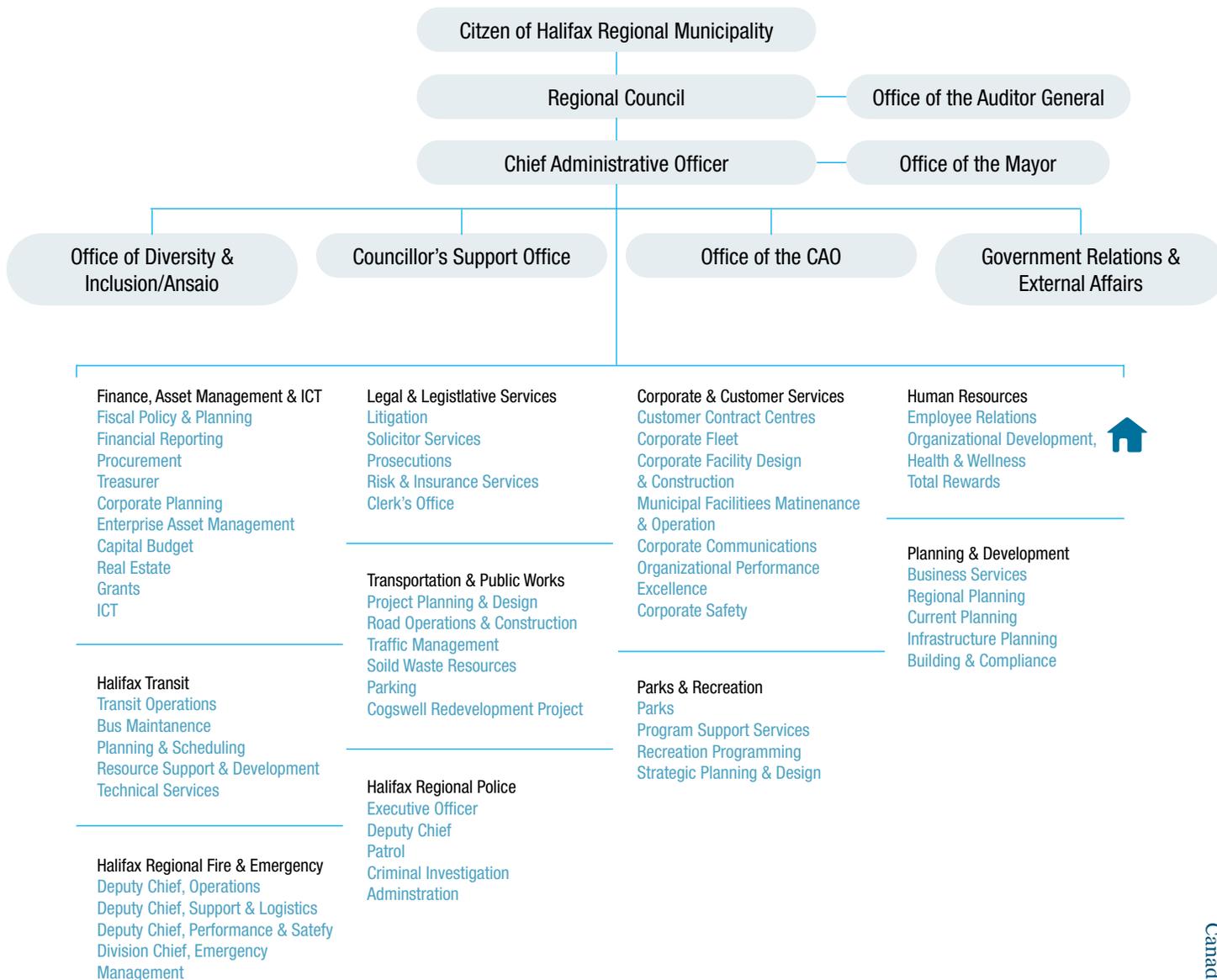
# Montreal

## Montreal Housing Services Department Structure



# Halifax

## Organizational Chart





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Urban Urbain du  
Institute Canada