A Kid's Guide to Local Government

A Resource for Educators and Municipal Professionals

For Elementary School Students

The Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario

AMCTO
THE MUNICIPAL EXPERTS

Fourth Edition 2010
PREAMBLE

Local governments are the closest level of government to our communities.

Two Local Government Teacher Guides have been developed by AMCTO in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, one for elementary and one for secondary school aged students, to help them learn about local government and its impact on their daily lives.

While the Guides were generally designed for Grade 5 students learning about social studies and Grade 10 students learning about civics and history, teachers from other subject areas and age-groups will also find information and exercises applicable to developing knowledge and skills for students in a range of subject areas such as math, economics, geography, business, science, writing, information technology, careers and general research. All teachers are encouraged to explore the Guides and take advantage of the many cross-curricular resources and activities they offer.

Lessons about local government will open the doors to a wealth of learning opportunities related to real life community circumstances.

Science and Environmental Studies

- Sustainability and Environmental Studies – Consider a tour of a recycling or waste management plant, or learn how municipalities manage hazardous wastes
- Fluids – Organize a visit to a fire hall to learn how pumps and hydrants work, or the pressure and volume of fluid in the trucks, and tour the fire trucks to learn how they operate
- Motion – Invite a speaker on Municipal Traffic Management
- Structures and Stability – Learn what is involved with road maintenance or Building Code structural considerations

Math

- Financial management – Learn from the Municipal Treasurer about budgeting, or dealing with unplanned expenses (i.e. removing more snow in one year than was originally planned and budgeted)
- Cost Benefit Analysis – Have a class referendum to discuss and debate the cost/benefits of building a new school playground versus upgrading the gymnasium, etc. and the financial implications of each.
Business Studies

- Economic Development – Invite a municipal treasurer, economic development officer, or clerk to talk about economic development in the municipality
- Marketing – Have students identify the unique selling features of the municipality and then develop a brand for the municipality, or an ad campaign to attract investment or tourism to the municipality

English

- Letter Writing – Have students write thank you letters after a visit to the municipality
- Report Writing – Have students write a class report to the Mayor on the top three issues they think should be addressed by the council and why
- Questions and Answers – Invite a municipal leader, Councillor or department head to visit the school/class and have students prepare and ask questions (teachers can emphasize how to listen, how to ask proper questions, etc.)
- Essay Writing – Have students write an essay about what and why they love their municipality, or what they would like to see changed in their municipality and why

Art

- Commercial Design – Encourage students to design posters to promote the benefits of their municipality

Civics

- Careers – Have students research the range of careers available in municipal governments
- Exercising Responsible Democratic Rights – Hold a mock municipal election in your school/class for Mayor or Reeve and have volunteer candidates explain what they would do and why if elected

By contacting local municipal offices for information and support, teachers can personalize the local government learning experience for their classes. Contact the Municipal Clerks Office and explain what you are looking to do. They will put you in touch with the right person/s.
We welcome your questions and comments on these two Teacher Guides. Please contact: Craig Wellington, Director of Corporate Services, Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) at: cwellington@amcto.com.

Additional copies of the Local Government Teacher Guides, as well as a host of other resources and activity ideas will be available on-line on the Local Government web pages of AMCTO’s site at: www.amcto.com.

Visit the above site to also learn about Local Government Week which is an opportunity to launch the engagement of students in activities promoting public service and community citizenship and stewardship. We encourage all schools to participate in this week, and also to use these resources or undertake activities throughout the year in your classrooms when teaching related curriculum. Schools and municipalities are also encouraged to sign-up on-line to let us know what activities you are planning or have completed. Certificates for participating students can be downloaded from this site. Refer to the Teaching Notes section at the end of this Guide for more information on Local Government Week.

Please note that for photocopying purposes, all the activities in this Guide have been duplicated at the back of the Guide in black and white for ease of printing and use in class. If Word versions of the pages and activities in this Guide are desired for adapting or editing, they can be found at www.amcto.com under the Local Government Week pages.
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I. Introduction

A Story to Read

Once there was a King who lived in a palace next to a country road. All day long, he would watch from his window as people walked past his house on their way to the nearby village. Day after day, he would hear the people complaining about the way things were. Eventually, he got tired of listening to them complain. He felt discouraged that everyone was happy to complain, but no one was willing to contribute to make things better. So one day, he had an idea.

“I wonder if every single person complains,” he thought. “I think I’ll come up with a plan to see if I can find someone who is not afraid to contribute and do their part.”

So, he went into the countryside and found a very large stone. With great difficulty, he moved the stone and placed it in the middle of the road in front of his palace. Then, he sat down near his window again and watched as people approached.

The first person who went by was a man carrying his corn to the mill to be ground. When he saw the stone in the middle of the road, he began to grumble to himself. “Why should that great stone block the way?” he said. “If I were as rich as the King, I would pay someone else to move it!” And, he walked on by.

A little while later, a woman taking her cow to sell at the market approached the stone. “Why should that great big stone be in the middle of the road for good people like me to trip over?” she said. “The King should have someone move it out of the way!” And, she walked on by.

All day long, people traveling along the road came to the stone and grumbled about its being in the way. But no one moved it. They simply complained and moved on.
Toward the end of the afternoon, the miller’s son came whistling along the road. He had had a long day and he was very tired. He came to the stone and stopped. He looked at the stone and was upset to see it in the middle of the road. “It will soon be dark,” he thought to himself. “Someone is sure to fall over this stone and get hurt. I should move it before it gets any darker!”

He took hold of the stone with both hands. He pushed with all of his might but could only move it a little bit at a time. But he persevered. He tugged and pulled until the last part of the stone was off the road. When he was finished, he stood up with satisfaction and said, “There! Now, the stone can do no harm to anyone!”

The young man put his hands in his pockets and was just about to continue on his way home when he looked down at the place where the stone had been. There in the dirt, there was a big pot. It had been hidden under the stone.

A little confused, the boy lifted the cover of the pot. When he looked inside, his eyes grew large. The pot was filled with shining gold pieces! There was something written on the inside of the pot lid. The boy looked at it closely and read, “This pot and gold inside it belong to the one who takes the stone out of the middle of the road.”

“Why,” said the boy, “that surely must mean me!”

And he carefully filled the hole with soil and went off, dragging the heavy pot behind him, thinking how happy and surprised his family at home would be over his good fortune.

And the King, watching from his window, was happy too. At last he had found someone willing to contribute to the greater good.
Something to Discuss

1. Citizenship can be viewed as a balance sheet between rights and responsibilities. What are some rights you have as a citizen? What responsibilities do you have as a citizen?

2. How are rights and responsibilities related?

3. What does it mean to be a good citizen?

4. Create a concept map (a table, a chart, a diagram, or the like) outlining what it means to be a good citizen in today’s society. Include elements of good citizenship in your family, school, extra-curricular clubs, local community, nation, and world.

5. What does the story say to you about the nature of leadership?

6. As a class, create a list of people you think are ‘good citizens’. Why do you think these people are good citizens? Do these people have qualities in common?

7. What kind of things could you personally do to be respectful of your rights and responsibilities as a good citizen?
Not a Good Start to the Day!

You wake up early, more than an hour before the alarm is set to ring. You go to the bathroom for a drink of water, but nothing comes out of the tap. When you turn on the light switch, no light comes on. More puzzled than alarmed, you wander into the living room and look out the window. The streetlamp in front of your house is also out. In the early morning light, you can see that the road on which your house is located is gone. The park and playground opposite your house have disappeared – as has the school building down on the corner. When you call the police department, there is no answer. Nor is there any response from the fire department.

Not to worry. You are not having a nightmare. This scene is simply a way of showing you what a difference it would make to your life if there were not any local governments. That’s right! While they receive far less attention than the provincial and federal governments, it is local governments that provide most of the day-to-day services that we enjoy.

In addition to the services described in the scene above, local governments can be responsible for a wide range of social programs, everything from day care facilities, homes for the aged, affordable housing, fire protection, police, and ambulances. Many of the services provided by local government – such as roads and bridges, water supply and sewage treatment plants make up the basic infrastructure\(^1\) that is needed for a

\(^1\) The meaning of terms that are bold-faced are provided in the Glossary section at the end of this Guide.
community to grow and develop. In today’s **global economy** (a concept discussed later in this Guide), it is Canada’s large urban municipalities that are viewed as the key to our ability to compete with other countries. The ability of these cities to have a strong economy depends on the services that local governments provide.

Most Canadians, and especially young people, are increasingly concerned about the environment and, here again, local governments have a very important role to play. They are directly responsible, for example, for providing safe drinking water, effective treatment of sewage, and garbage collection and disposal. They also operate recycling programs.

Local governments can also help to protect the environment by controlling the way that land is developed. When development creates **sprawl** out into the countryside, we risk losing good farm land and people have to rely on cars (a major cause of air pollution) to get everywhere. When too many buildings are constructed on the shores of our lakes, the water can become polluted and fish can die. When very large farming operations (so-called factory farms) develop, the waste created can pollute the **groundwater** that is the source of water for rural wells. As we will discuss, local governments have powers to plan and control land use that can be used to respond to these environmental concerns.

Even this brief introduction should be enough to show how important local governments are.

- They provide the services that we rely upon every day (without which we would wake up with the unpleasant shock described at the start of this section).

- They provide the services needed for land to be developed and for our municipalities to be strong to
compete with other large cities from around the world.

- They provide services and have powers that can help to protect the environment.

Yet not much attention is paid to this level of government. When it is thought about at all, it is usually dismissed as the least important of our many levels of government in Canada, concerned only with minor matters of little significance. By the end of this Guide, we hope that you will have a different – much more positive – view of our local governments.

### Something to Do

1. What does the term ‘**Democracy**’ mean?

2. What does the term ‘**Representative Government**’ mean?

3. Make a list of the important things you need to live safely and healthily in your municipality. Which of these does your local government take care of?

4. What are ‘Environmental Concerns’? Why are they important?
II What Are Local Governments?

While Canada has one national government, ten provincial governments, and three territorial governments, it has thousands of local governments. Perhaps the best known are municipal governments or municipalities. There are also many other governing bodies – known as agencies, boards, and commissions, or ABCs – that exist at the municipal level.

You may have heard about some of these ABCs:

- School Boards
- Library Boards
- Police Services Boards
- Arena or Community Centre Boards
- Public Health Units
- Transit Commissions

Ontario Municipalities

Both the oldest and the newest governments in Canada are municipalities! The earliest municipalities in Ontario were set up 200 years ago, but it was not until Confederation in 1867 that the national or federal government came into existence, along with the original

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2 See Ministry of Health and Long Term Care for more information on Public Health Units at ontario.ca/health
provinces of Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick.

More recently, hundreds of new municipalities have been created in Ontario as a result of amalgamations or mergers of two or more former municipalities. The City of Chatham-Kent, for example, was created on January 1st, 1998, as a result of the amalgamation of all of the municipalities within the former County of Kent, including the former City of Chatham.

Today, there are 444 municipalities in Ontario, ranging in size from large urban centres like the City of Toronto and surrounding municipalities with its 2.5 million people, to rural townships - some with fewer than 100 people. Whatever its size, each municipal government acts like a company with the power to make certain decisions for the people within its own geographic area. However, the decisions made by municipal governments must also follow the rules set for them by the Ontario government. This is because it is provincial governments, under Canada’s constitution, that have the authority to create municipalities and to determine what they can do.

Along with its defined geographic area and the powers assigned by the Ontario government, municipalities have two other key features – the power to tax and an elected council. Both of these features will be discussed later.

Types of Municipalities

City is probably the most familiar term used in the name of municipalities in Ontario, but there are several other terms. The main ones – village, town and township – are described in this section. These terms are no longer "official". The Municipal Act, which governs Ontario municipalities, recognizes three “official” types of municipality – upper tier,
lower tier, and single tier – which we will explain as we go along.

Even though they are no longer “official”, terms like village, town, city and township continue to be used in the formal names of municipalities. The City of Ottawa, for example, used to be classified as a city and is now classified as an upper-tier municipality – but it still uses the term city in its formal name. Kenora was classified as a town and it is now classified as a single-tier municipality, but it is still named The Town of Kenora. You may be wondering why one municipality is called a city, while another is called a town. We will explain how these terms come about before getting to the three new categories of upper, lower, and single tier.

**Urban Municipalities**

Villages, towns and cities used to be the three types of urban municipalities. A village was the smallest. It used to be that when a village reached a population of 2,000, it could apply to become a town, and when a town reached a population of 15,000, it could apply to become a city. However, municipalities did not have to change their status just because their population increased. As a result, the municipality called The Town of Oakville, for example, has a population of 150,000.³

³ See Section 2 of The Municipal Councillors Guide on the Ministry for Municipal Affairs and Housing’s website at ontario.ca/mah for information on different municipal structures in Ontario.
Rural Municipalities

There was also a rural category of municipality known as the township. Townships were originally created as geographic areas that were divided into farm-sized lots for the growing population of the colony of Canada. These early municipalities are about 16 kilometers across, supposedly representing a one hour ride on horseback.

While townships in some areas of Ontario remain quite rural, many townships (especially those next to large cities) have become increasingly urban in nature. They have often been merged with cities as a result of municipal amalgamations. The former Kingston Township, for example, had a population of over 40,000 (much of it urban) before becoming part of the new City of Kingston, created by amalgamation in January 1998.

County Municipalities

Another category of municipality is the county, found throughout much of Southern Ontario. Counties are upper-tier municipalities in a two-tier (or two-level) system of municipal government. Townships, villages, and towns – but not cities, usually – make up the lower tier within this two-tier system.

The map on page 2.9 shows the County of Simcoe at the top of the page. Its lower tier is made up of 16 municipalities: seven of them are named as towns.
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(Collingwood, Midland, Penetanguishene, Wasaga Beach, Innisfil, Bradford-West Gwillimbury and New Tecumseth) and nine are named as townships (Adjala-Tosorontio, Clearview, Essa, Oro-Medonte, Ramara, Severn, Springwater, Tay and Tiny). As a result of amalgamations, there are no villages left in the County. Note that the City of Barrie and the City of Orillia are located within the geographic area of the County of Simcoe, but they are separated, single-tier municipalities. They are not part of the county system and do not send representatives to the county council.

As you can see on the map, counties cover quite large geographic areas. They exist to provide services that are more easily and effectively provided over a larger area. For example, county roads run across the entire county (and often beyond) and the portion of such a road within any one lower-tier municipality is used by many people who do not live in that municipality. So, all people within a county share in paying for these county roads.

The result of these arrangements is that those who live within a county system receive municipal services from two levels of municipal government. They get many of their services directly from their lower-tier or local municipality – their town, village, or township – and they get the rest of their municipal services from their upper-tier municipality. As an example, Wellington County has seven local or lower-tier municipalities, consisting of two named as towns (Erin and Minto) and five named as townships (Guelph/Eramosa, Mapleton, Puslinch and Wellington North). Those living within the towns or townships receive services from the local municipality and the county. The City of
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Guelph is also located geographically within Wellington County, but it is not part of the county system. Like Orillia and Barrie in the County of Simcoe, Guelph is a stand-alone or **single-tier municipality**.

**Regional Municipalities**

In addition to counties, Ontario has another type of upper-tier municipality known as a region. These regional governments were created almost 40 years ago as a kind of modified county system. A key difference is that cities are included as lower-tier municipalities within regional government systems, whereas they usually remain as separate, single-tier municipalities in those parts of Ontario with county systems.

Another difference is that regional municipalities exercise more power than county municipalities – largely because the regions are found in urban and rapidly growing areas. As a result, these upper-tier governments are usually responsible for such services as major water supply and sewage disposal facilities. Most upper-tier governments called counties do not have piped water and sewer responsibilities because their scattered and mostly rural populations are largely served by wells and septic tanks (which homeowners look after on their properties) rather than by piped water.

**Did You Know?**

Regional governments are two-tier systems similar to counties, but their lower-tier municipalities include cities. Regions exercise more powers than counties.
In the early 1970s, by the time the regional government systems were all established, they covered most of the heavily urbanized areas of Ontario and contained over one-third of the province’s population. In recent years, a number of the largest regional systems have been abolished. Their upper-tier and lower-tier municipalities have been merged together to create one larger municipality covering the entire area that had been under regional jurisdiction. For example, in 1998, the upper-tier municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (Metro) and the six lower-tier municipalities that were part of Metro were all combined to create the new City of Toronto – or the “megacity” as it was known for awhile. The new City of Toronto is shown on the map on page 2.9. The urban municipalities of Ottawa, Hamilton, and Greater Sudbury were created in a similar way.

There are now eight regional government systems in the province. Four of them (Peel, Halton, York, and Durham) are clustered around the City of Toronto. The other four are Niagara, Waterloo, Oxford, and Muskoka. The map on page 2.9 shows the Region of York, which has seven local or lower-tier municipalities: one is named a city (Vaughan), six are named as towns (Aurora, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Whitchurch-Stouffville, East Gwillimbury, and Georgina) and one is named as a township (King).

**Municipalities in Northern Ontario**

While 90% of Ontario’s land area is in Northern Ontario, it only contains 7% of the province’s population. The North is divided into 10 large districts, but they are not upper-tier municipalities like the counties and regions of the South. There are no two-tier municipal systems in Northern Ontario. All northern
municipalities – whether they are named as cities, towns, villages, or townships – are single-tier municipalities.

The map on page 2.10 shows the municipalities in the southern part of the District of Sudbury. They are all single-tier municipalities, although one is named as a city (Greater Sudbury), one is named as a town (Espanola), three are named as townships (Baldwin, Nairn and Hyman, and Sables-Spanish Rivers) and four are simply called municipalities (French River, Killarney, Markstay-Warren and St. Charles).

Notice that much of the land area on the map is not included in any municipality; it is said to be “unorganized territory”. The population of these remote areas is not big enough to support a municipality, but people living there may still require some basic services, like road maintenance or water systems. In response, Ontario government legislation allows special local government bodies such as local roads boards and local services boards, which are governed by trustees elected annually and may deliver basic services such as road maintenance, water supply and sewage treatment.
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Concluding Comments

It is the Ontario government that decides what types of municipalities there will be. The main provincial law governing municipalities, the *Municipal Act*, now recognizes only three “official” categories of municipality – upper tier, lower tier, and single tier.

Do Not Shed a Tear over the Tiers

All of this may seem confusing because the three “official” classes of municipalities are never used in the names of Ontario municipalities.

Some facts are:

- Counties and regions are generally upper-tier municipalities.
- Municipalities found within regions are lower-tier municipalities.
- Municipalities found within county areas are lower-tier municipalities, with the exception of some single-tier municipalities.
- All municipalities in Northern Ontario are single-tier municipalities, whatever they are called.

Something to Do

1. What is the name of the municipality in which you live?

2. What is the type or classification of your municipality? Is it a lower-tier or a single-tier municipality?

3. If you live in a lower-tier municipality, what is the name of the upper tier to which your municipality belongs?
III Municipal Functions

When most of Ontario’s municipalities were set up as early as the 1840s, they were needed for specific functions. The big issues that faced them back then were disorderly behavior, profanity, noises and nuisances, cattle and poultry running in public places, traveling salesmen, and repair of roads.4

The few services provided in the 1840s, such as roads and fire protection, were services to property and people paid for these services by paying tax on their property. The property tax is still the main source of municipal revenue today, but the services now provided and service delivery expectations have increased greatly. As a result, municipalities are faced with the pressure of raising the money to pay for these added services. The purpose of this section is to highlight the growing range of municipal responsibilities.

Urbanization and Service Demands

The population increased rapidly in the urban areas of Canada in the early 1900s, largely because of immigration.5 The result was an increased demand for municipal services. For example, population growth overburdened the water and sewer systems, resulting in water pollution and caused illnesses that claimed more lives than World War One. In response, the public health movement developed. It focused on keeping people from getting sick by improving sanitation, sewage, and the treatment of drinking water – all municipal responsibilities. Public Health Units are still with us today;

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they were one of the examples of local ABCs listed in Section II.

The growing urban population of the early 1900s also needed improved transportation. Municipal governments spent more money on roads and sidewalks and streetcar systems were established in many cities. For the past 100 years, municipalities have continued to expand their roads to meet the demands of a population devoted to the automobile. Many cities have also struggled to operate public transit (mostly bus) systems to offer some alternative to automobile travel – but transit is costly to operate. Too few have created a network of bicycle paths that would provide another alternative form of transportation, and one much friendlier to the environment.

The years following World War Two brought another round of rapid urbanization in Canada, not only as a result of immigration but also because of the many “baby boomers” born in this period. A growing population needs basic infrastructure – such as roads, bridges and water supply and sewage treatment facilities. Municipal responsibilities grew in response, as did municipal spending. The examples in the next few subsections show how important these responsibilities are.6

Some Things Never Change

Growth of cities after World War Two brought the need for more services.

Planning and Balanced Growth

One of the important responsibilities municipalities have is for **land use planning**. People have an opportunity to decide how they would like to see their community develop over the years ahead. The municipality can place controls on land use that help to shape that development. Effective planning can help to protect the environment by trying, for example, to avoid:

- sprawling development that uses up good farm land;
- lake development that may harm the water; and
- development that increases traffic congestion and air pollution.

Most municipalities need, and want, some growth. New housing is needed if more people are to move to the municipality. Factories and businesses are needed if more jobs are to be created locally, so that young people can find work in the area. Growth increases the amount of money a municipality gets from taxes. However, too much growth, or the wrong kind of growth, can bring problems and costs. Striking a balance is an ongoing challenge.

The challenge is deciding on how much growth, of what kind, where, and with what local impact.
Municipalities exercise their land use planning powers in two main ways:

- They can adopt an **official plan**. This is an important document that sets out the long term land use planning goals for the municipality. It also provides policies on how the municipality will handle various land use questions that come up.

- They can pass a **zoning by-law**. This spells out specifically how land may be developed within various areas (zones) of the municipality. By controlling the use of land, the zoning by-law helps a municipality to Guide development in ways that support the goals that it has in its official plan. People feel a strong attachment to their land (as in the old saying that “a man’s” home is his castle). So local citizens are often unhappy with the restrictions imposed by zoning – until those restrictions help to protect them from an undesirable land use next door.
Something to Do

Take a walk around your school’s neighbourhood, preferably together as a class.

- What do you see?
- How tall are the buildings?
- What condition are the buildings in?
- How much space is there between buildings?
- Are there any parks or other green spaces (besides what is found on school property)?
- Is the school in the community or the rural countryside?
- Do most people have to drive to get to the school?
- Is it on good agricultural land or near a river or forest?
- What different land uses can you find within your school neighbourhood?
- How much of it is residential (housing)?
- What about commercial uses, such as shops or corner stores?
- Are there any industrial uses, such as plants or factories?
- What about the traffic? Does it move along well, move too fast, or get slowed down and backed up?

After your walk, discuss together what you saw. Does it look like your neighbourhood was well planned and why or why not?
Protecting the Environment

We need clean drinking water to live and municipalities are responsible for providing it. Municipalities also protect the water supply by disposing of waste safely. They do this by operating sewage treatment plants and maintaining sewer lines that carry the waste to these plants. Municipalities are also involved, along with other public bodies such as public health units and conservation authorities, in protecting ground water, the source of supply for those who rely on wells for water, as well as for some larger municipal water systems.

Another environmental challenge concerns how to dispose of the amount of garbage that we generate today. Many landfills are almost full and obtaining approval to open a new landfill site is a very lengthy and expensive process. Those who live near a proposed new site usually object very strongly. Alternatives to landfills, such as incineration (burning), may give rise to their own problems – in this case to the risk of air pollution. Municipalities that actively promote the three Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle) can help to address the garbage disposal issue.

Some municipalities have shown their concern for the environment by banning the use of pesticides on lawns. Many municipalities have also passed non-smoking by-laws. There are now provincial laws that control smoking in public places and the use of pesticides.

We have already noted that municipalities can also help the environment by trying to reduce urban sprawl and other types of development that take over good farm land or increase...
air, water, and waste pollution.

**Securing Safe Neighbourhoods**

Statistics show that there has been a steady decline in crime over a number of years. However, many Canadians are worried about safety and security in their homes and neighbourhoods. Some believe that what is needed is more police and tougher penalties for those who are convicted. Others support community policing efforts that focus on why people commit crimes in the first place so that these crimes can be prevented. Whatever approaches are taken, police are central to the issue. Municipalities are responsible for the policing within their boundaries, whether provided by a local police force or contracted with the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), which is especially the case in rural Ontario.

Municipalities can help to provide safer neighbourhoods in other ways than policing – ways that try to prevent crime from occurring in the first place. The design and layout of streets and the amount of street lighting are important factors in reducing crime. We now understand that providing community supports, including adequate recreational facilities and programs for youth, can reduce crime. This approach is similar to the emphasis on community policing. Results have been very positive when police establish a recreation centre and spend time with young people in the
neighbourhood.

**Improving the Quality of Life**

Municipalities are very involved in many of the social programs that improve the quality of life of local citizens. **Public housing** and community shelters become increasingly important as the homeless population grows. Municipalities also deliver Affordable Housing through programs that help people and families with the costs of living in housing. Public health programs help the entire population with the work they do on disease prevention. These programs are run by local health groups who are governed by people who work for the municipal government. The municipal government provides the money needed for these programs. Municipalities also promote healthy communities by planning for growth in ways that do not harm the environment. For example, many municipalities are now encouraging new development to maintain a lot of the forested areas, reduce the lot sizes for houses to make more efficient use of the land, and to include bike and walking trails so people can become more physically fit, as well as commute to work by bike. More municipalities are permitting buildings to have “green roofs” with natural plant material and solar panels to improve the air quality and reduce the amount of fuel needed to heat the buildings.

It is not just social programs that support quality of life but also recreational programs, cultural programs, and the arts. We now understand that in today’s economy businesses are attracted to areas that have a supply of talented workers. Such workers, in
turn, are attracted to areas that have lively neighbourhoods and lots of recreational and cultural facilities. All of these features contribute to a rich quality of life. Municipal involvement in such programs used to be regarded as a “frill” that could be cut back as part of efforts to reduce spending, but we now recognize that taking actions to improve the quality of life help to support economic growth.

The Impact of Global Realities

The role of municipal governments has become more important as a result of the globalization of the economy. Everyone uses the term globalization or global economy, but what does it mean? One key feature is that we now live in a “wired world” because of computer technology and the Internet. This allows us to send information (and money) around the world as quickly as we can enter a few keystrokes.

Free trade is another feature of the global economy. By this we mean that goods and services can be bought and sold around the world with very few limits or restrictions. Free trade is supported by international agreements and organizations. For example, Canada is part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The global economy is often called a knowledge-based economy. This simply means that, unlike in the past, much of its activity is no longer based on mining and manufacturing, but rather is based on

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7 These new economic realities have been well documented by Professor Richard Florida, whose publications include The Rise of the Creative Class, New York, Basic Books, 2002.
information and technology. As a result, the global economy requires highly educated workers.

As a result of these developments, a country’s ability to compete in the global economy depends on its cities and city regions. This is because it is these large urban centres that best provide the excitement and variety, the cultural activities, the distinct neighbourhoods, and the high quality public services that attract and retain talented workers.

This global reality is a major challenge for Canada’s urban centres – and for all the other areas outside these centres. For the cities, the challenge is finding the money to provide the infrastructure (basic services) needed to keep them growing and attractive. It is not just traditional infrastructure that must be provided – such as roads, bridges, water and sewer systems. It is also spending on the arts, on recreational programs, and on the other features and facilities that provide a quality of life that will appeal to talented workers. For the more rural areas, the challenge may be even more difficult. How are they to grow and prosper if global pressures mean that almost all future economic activity will be concentrated in large cities and city regions?

Whether they are urban or rural, a key question for all municipalities is how to pay for the responsibilities that they have.
Local Government Class Project

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to understand the distribution of responsibilities among Canada's 3 levels of government and to gain a greater appreciation for the municipal role in that framework.

Description

Students examine details about the work of their local government councils and relate these to community participation. The activities are planned to answer the following questions:

- What does local government do?
- How does local government help the local community?
- How can people join in the work of local government?

Materials

Local newspapers, information from the local government representatives and Associations, library books, paper, pens, three paper circles (as described below), and materials for posters.

Procedure

Setting the scene: Before class begins make three paper circles: a large one with 'Federal Government' on it, a medium one with 'Ontario Government' on it, and a smaller one with 'Local Government' and the name of your local municipality on it.
Introduce this discussion by writing the words **GARBAGE COLLECTION** on the board. Read the word, then ask students what happens to the garbage at home and at school. Lead a discussion which focuses on who collects the garbage and who is in charge of organizing the collection. When the local municipality is identified, put up the circle with Local Government written on it.

Add the circles for Provincial Government and Federal Government. Read the labels on each circle. Tell the students that these are names of three spheres of government. Ask the students why they are different sizes. Ask them to think about why the provincial or federal government is not in charge of local garbage collection. Guide a general discussion to highlight some of the major activities that are taken care of by the municipal level of government.

1) **Clarifying details**

Write the heading ‘**Things My Municipality Does**’ on the board. Have the students identify those things in their local community that the municipal government is doing to look after people or the environment.

Ask the class whether they know of any people or groups in their community who join in to help the municipality with its work (for example, volunteer firefighters, local historical societies, community groups like Lions, Rotary). Write these names or groups on the board.
2) **Organizing work groups and collecting information**

Tell the students that they will work in small groups to find out more about one of the groups or services on the board. Explain that they will choose one of these and get information about it from their local area. Organize the students into work groups and have each group choose one of the groups or services on the board.

Have students collect information about their topic by contacting the local municipal office or the municipal website, by searching their school or local libraries for municipal publications, local newspapers and information from local community groups. Have them focus on finding out answers to the questions listed below. Provide an appropriate span of time for the groups to collect details on their topic area.

3) **Presenting findings**

After the groups have completed their research, have a class discussion about the ways students can present their information. Have students choose the best option for their group. Remind the students that all the presentations have to give details to answer the following questions:

a) What is the name of the service or group?

b) What activities do they carry out to help people or the environment?

c) Who joins in to do the work?
Something to Do

1. What services are provided by your municipality?

2. If you live in a lower-tier municipality, what other services are provided by the upper-tier (county or regional) government?

3. How does local government help the people in the community?

4. Using the Internet, or choose a student from the class to phone your municipal government offices (clerk’s office) and ask if your municipality has an official plan. Find out what it says about future growth, e.g. what is the future population expected to be and where will any new development likely go?

5. What about the ABCs described in Section II? Using the Internet, or choose a student from the class to phone your Library Board or Public Health Unit and ask what services these ABCs provide.
Something to Discuss

1. What community or municipal issues are important to you?

2. What are some other community or municipal issues you know about?

3. What are some other points of view about some of these issues?

4. Who is responsible for resolving these issues?

Something to Do

In-Class Fun

a) On a large piece of poster paper, draw an outline of your municipality. Fill this outline with pictures of how you would like the municipality to be. These pictures can be drawn or cut out of magazines and newspapers, or even printed from websites.

b) Draw an arrow to each of your pictures and explain what it means to you.

c) Post all of the collages around the room and discuss what they have in common, as well as how they are different, and how your municipal government could help make this happen.
Take Home Activity #1

Select three of the items listed below. Use resources such as parents, other adults, telephone directories, websites, or community directories to find out the appropriate person, department or ABC to contact if you find yourself in any of the situations described:

a) You want general information about your community
b) Your bike is stolen
c) You observe a raccoon behaving strangely in a ravine near your house
d) The street light in front of your house is burnt out
e) You want to know about volleyball, soccer, or other sports teams in your community
f) You see a grass fire on an empty lot
g) You want your library to carry a few books in another language
h) The water main breaks in front of your house
i) You want to take a babysitting course in your community
j) You find graffiti at your local park

Take Home Activity #2

Prepare a list of questions about what municipal functions and services people consider important and why that students can take home and use for interviewing a family member/guardian, or can use for asking a guest speaker from a municipality. Ask each student to write down their parents' response and bring the report in on the next day for a class discussion. If the questions are given to a municipal guest, have the class create a report (in groups) that outlines the answers they heard.
IV Local Government Finances

When you buy a bottle of pop or a bag of chips, you pay the cashier in the corner store, or you put your loonies or toonies in the vending machine. When you have a meal in a restaurant, you pay the bill brought to you by the waiter. We expect to pay for the private goods and services that we receive.

The services provided by government are no different. We must also pay for public goods and services. In some cases, we pay directly to receive a particular service. For example, those who drive a car pay a fee for a driver’s licence and also pay regularly to renew the stickers for the licence plates on their cars. Those who go to Provincial and Federal public parks usually pay an entrance fee and/or an overnight camping fee. Those who travel abroad pay a fee to obtain a passport. In all these cases, there is a direct link between the payment made and the service received – just as there is when we purchase private goods.

In most cases, however, there is a much less direct link between what we pay and what we receive from government. That is because the main way we pay for government services is through taxes – particularly income and corporate (business) taxes in the case of the provincial and federal governments. There is no direct link between the amount of taxes we pay and the extent of government services we receive in a given year. For example, more and more of the taxes we pay go for health care – especially the
costs of hospitals, doctors, and drugs. Our taxes go to support these services even though we hope to remain healthy and not need them.

Paying for Local Government Services

Local government provides a number of different services. The money we pay in taxes pays for some of these services. Some other services are paid for by the people who use the services.

The Property Tax

Local government services are mainly paid through the property tax. The property tax is not based on the income of individuals or corporations; instead, it is a tax that is based on the value of “real property” owned by individuals or corporations. We know that municipalities have a defined geographical area. All the land in this defined area can be divided into different properties such as houses, apartment buildings, condominiums, stores, malls, schools, hospitals, prisons, factories, farms, parks, and vacant lots.

Some of these properties (for example, schools, hospitals, and prisons) do not have to pay tax. The rest are ‘taxable properties’. These form the tax base of the municipality. A dollar value (usually referred to as the assessed value) is placed on all property. The basic objective is to assess property at its current value or market value. What is your house worth if you sold it today? That is the market value of your house and something very close to that amount should also be its assessed value.
Let’s work through a calculation for determining property taxes. Say a municipality has decided it needs to raise $1000 dollars in taxes to pay for all the services it will provide in the next year. Now, let’s pretend that a homeowner has a house worth $20 dollars (has an assessed value of $20 dollars) and that all of the properties in the municipality has an assessed value of $20,000 dollars. (In reality, the value of houses and the assessed value of properties in a municipality are much higher.) That $20,000 dollars is called the tax base of the municipality. It is used to calculate the tax rate. (The tax rate is, in turn, used in a formula that calculates the money each property owner must pay in taxes to the municipality.)

In this pretend example, the formula for calculating how much this homeowner must pay in taxes to the municipality is as follows:

a. $1,000 (the money needed to be raised by the municipality)

b. divided by

c. $20,000 (the total assessed value of all properties in the municipality)

d. = 0.05. (This means the tax rate in the municipality is 0.05.)

\[
\frac{1,000}{20,000} = 0.05
\]

This homeowner would then pay $20 dollars (the assessed value of the house) multiplied by 0.05 (the tax rate) = $1 dollar in taxes for the year.

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$20.00 \text{ multiplied by } 0.05 = 1.00
\]

If the homeowner owned a more expensive house, say one worth $40.00 dollars, he or she would owe more taxes – in this case $40 dollars (the assessed value of the house) multiplied by 0.05 (the tax rate) = $2 dollars in taxes for the year.
Since it is not based on income, the property tax can be financially challenging for some people. A new shopping mall nearby could make houses in your area more valuable. Your assessed value is supposed to reflect actual value, so it will go up. That means that your taxes may go up too, even if your income has not increased at all, nor the services that you receive.

Municipal governments are faced with pressure from citizens and local businesses to keep taxes low even as their municipal costs go up every year. Just think of the way gasoline prices have increased in recent years. That means higher costs for a municipality every time it runs one of its vehicles or pieces of equipment. Faced with this financial squeeze, you can see why municipalities have to explore a range of options to raise revenues, including trying to attract new growth and development to their communities. It is one of the only ways that they can increase their assessment and, therefore, their tax base.

**Municipal User Charges**

A user charge is a fee charged for the use of a particular municipal service. Municipalities raise revenues from user charges even more than the provincial and federal levels do. In fact, because local citizens (and councillors) are so concerned about any increase in property tax, user charges are being used more and more as a source of municipal revenues. Some of these charges bring an added benefit in promoting conservation or other desirable behavior.

For example:
Increasing **tipping fees** at landfill sites and introducing “bag tags” for garbage bags encourages people to practice the three Rs – reuse, reduce, and recycle.

Installing meters in homes to measure (and charge for) the amount of water being used encourages people to be less wasteful with this scarce and absolutely essential resource.

There are many other local user charges that you will recognize, including:

- **Bus and subway fares** for the use of the municipal transit system.
- **Charges for ice rental at the arena or for the use of ball diamonds or soccer fields.**
- **Fees for various recreational programs** offered by the municipality, including swimming lessons and fitness activities.
- **Fees for the use of a municipal golf course or marina.**

**Other Miscellaneous Local Revenues**

Municipalities also get money from **licencing fees** and permit fees. They can require licences for allowing people to carry out a wide range of activities, mostly business-related. Familiar examples are licences for operating taxi-cabs or “chip wagons.” The main purpose of licensing is to control the activities involved, and there are limits on the amount of fee that can be charged.
Building permits are used to regulate building activity and to ensure that construction meets certain standards. The permit fees can generate a fair bit of revenue if there is a great deal of construction activity in the municipality, but again there are limits on the fees that can be charged.

Municipalities can also set development charges that apply to developers who are going to build new development. The purpose of these development charges is to raise money from the developer of the new development (for example, a new residential subdivision area or an office building) that can be used to cover some of the capital expenditures for providing services to the new development. This money might be used, for example, to improve access roads to the new development or to extend water or sewer lines to service new houses. Here again, quite a bit of money can be raised from development charges if there is lots of growth in the municipality.

Government Grants

Another important source of money for municipalities is government grants, mainly from the provincial government. Over the years, these grants have been used to help pay for our roads and other services. Many of these grants were given with the condition that they could only be used for specific purposes. Municipalities now receive fewer grants than they did in the past. As a result, municipal governments have to be creative when finding this much needed money.
Federal and provincial grants provided 55% of revenues for Canada’s municipalities in 1980.⁸ As of 2004, these grants provided only 19% of the revenues for Ontario’s municipalities.⁹ There has, however, been some improvement in grant support recently, mostly in relation to federal and provincial money for infrastructure and affordable housing. The provincial and federal governments are exploring different ways to financially support some services that could benefit municipalities. For example, there is now money in place for broadband Internet access in rural areas and improved public transit in urban areas. And, the Ontario government has reached, for example, an agreement to pay social assistance benefit programs as well as some other locally delivered services. The agreement is detailed in the Report of the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, Facing the Future Together, a consensus report of Ontario, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the City of Toronto. (The report, a video and other resources can be found at www.mah.gov.on.ca).

Municipalities continue to ask for more financial help for the very expensive services such as infrastructure (in the form of roads, bridges, and water supply and sewage treatment plants, for example) needed to support local populations and growth and development. It is the provinces that are responsible for municipal governments under the Canadian constitution. Therefore there are ongoing discussions between municipalities and the Ontario provincial government about roles and responsibilities and who should deliver or pay for

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certain services.

As well, there are ongoing discussions between the provinces and the federal government about how the federal government could assist. This is because the vast majority of Canadians now live in cities and city-regions. We have discussed the fact that these large urban areas are considered the key to Canada’s ability to compete in the global economy. In other words, whether Toronto – or Windsor, or London, or any other large city – can afford to pay for all of its municipal services is not just a municipal concern, or even a provincial concern. It is also a national concern, according to those who believe that the health and strength of our cities will determine how well we compete and survive as a nation.

**Something to Do**

1. What percentage of municipal revenues (income) comes from the property tax, from grants, and from miscellaneous local revenue sources such as user charges and licensing fees? (This information should be available at the web site of your municipality and/or on the flyer that is sent out to homeowners with the annual tax bills.)

2. What are some examples of user fees charged by your municipality? Why do you think they are charged?

3. What other user fees could the municipality set to create more revenue?

4. What information does the municipality provide to local taxpayers (usually when the tax bill is mailed out) and how well does this information explain where the municipal money comes from and where it goes?

5. How do you think you could improve the process of informing residents about how municipal money is spent?
V Municipal Governing Structures

Officially, municipalities are governed by their elected councils, with the valuable assistance of the staff employed by the municipality. This section examines these key players and some of the more common municipal structures in which they operate. It is important to be aware, however, that there are many other important players who are also influential in the governing of the municipality and the decisions that are made. You will find out more about them in the last section (VI) of this document.

The Municipal Council

A municipality’s powers are exercised on behalf of its residents by a council elected by them. The minimum size for a municipal council is five members, including the head of council.

Method of Election

Members of council are, with very limited exceptions, chosen from at large elections or ward elections. In an at large election (also referred to as election by general vote), all eligible voters within the entire municipality can vote for any candidate. If there is an election by ward, the municipality is divided into a number of separate geographic areas, usually referred to as wards or districts, with a very limited number of councillors – usually one, sometimes two – elected from each ward. Only the eligible voters within each ward can vote
for candidates running for election in that ward.

Heads of council are, in almost all instances, elected at large. The main exception is that the heads of county councils are chosen by the members of county council in a process usually referred to as **indirect election**. Heads of regional councils were originally chosen in essentially the same way, but they are now increasingly elected at large.

Consider a council consisting of the head and eight other members. We have already noted that the head is elected at large.

If the councillors are elected at large, voters can choose their favourite eight candidates from a list of all those running for council. If, instead, there is a ward system, with two councillors elected from each ward, then the choice for the voter is quite different. (See the sample Ward Map below.) If you are a voter in Ward 1, you will choose your favourite two candidates from a list of those running in Ward 1 (probably no more than four or five candidates).
Many people prefer election by ward when a municipality has a wide range of interests. For example, a municipality may have some wards that are urban and others that are more rural. Election by ward would ensure that each ward would have representation on council. Wards are also popular once a city becomes larger. By having a smaller number of candidates to choose from, it is easier for voters to make a decision. This is why many larger cities do not ask their voters to make their choices from a large number of candidates. Three Ontario cities with populations over 50,000 (North Bay, Sarnia, and Niagara Falls) have at large elections.

Representing Whom For What?

The debate concerning the best method of electing councillors is a reminder of the real purpose and value of municipal governments. While they provide many important services (as discussed earlier), that is not their most important purpose. Municipalities are not just service providers; they are democratically elected governments. They are considered by many to be the foundation of a democratic system. They exist as a means for local residents to identify and address their concerns – in much the same way as a student council is elected as a body that is to represent the views of students in a school. Municipal governments are really an extension of the community and provide a way for the community to govern itself. Their ultimate purpose, ideally, is to identify and respond to the needs and wishes of local residents and to provide programs and services accordingly.
Head of Council

The head of council deserves separate mention when discussing the municipal council. The head is increasingly known as the Mayor, although the historical title of Reeve is still used in some municipalities. The head of a county government has the historical title of Warden, and the head of a regional council is known as the Chair. These titles sound funny at first, but there are historical reasons for them.

Heads of council have only one vote just like every other member of council, but those with strong personalities or a clear vision for their municipality can often exert much more influence and power than their position would suggest. A classic example is the Mayor of Mississauga, Hazel McCallion, who has taken on a very popular status. Mayor McCallion was re-elected in November 2006 with over 90% of the vote, and at 86 years of age she shows no signs of slowing down.

Voting and Running for Council

You are eligible to vote if you are:

- A Canadian citizen
- At least 18 years of age
- A resident in the municipality (or the owner or tenant (renter) of land in the municipality or the spouse of a resident, owner, or tenant of land in the municipality), and
Not otherwise disqualified from voting.

To be a candidate and run for municipal office, you must:

- be qualified to vote, as outlined above
- file nomination papers (including a declaration of qualification), and
- pay a nomination fee ($100 for council candidates and $200 for candidates for head of council).

**Council Duties and Operations**

Councils are elected to represent the residents of the municipality and to provide programs and services in response to their needs and wishes. They must make sure that there are enough municipal staff (employees) to provide these services and otherwise to carry out all the responsibilities of the municipality.

Council must adopt a budget every year that sets out how much money will be needed to run the municipality for the coming year and identifies where that money will be found – including what portion of it will be raised from property taxes.

Provincial legislation known as the *Municipal Act* sets down the rules for how a municipal council operates. Within these rules, municipal councils can establish their own specific operating rules in the form of a procedure by-law (which at minimum must cover the calling, place and conduct of meetings).

The council has to exercise its powers in formal
meetings that must follow a number of legal requirements. Particular emphasis is given to the openness of meetings, on the grounds that “the public’s business is public business.” Municipal councillors may choose to discuss some issues in private (for security reasons for example). Provincial legislation outlines the particular grounds on which a council meeting may be closed and in all other situations council meetings (including meetings of committees of council) must be open to the public.

Municipalities are a very open level of government. Municipal staff provides much of their advice to municipal councillors in open council meetings, in front of those citizens attending and also in front of the surprising number of citizens who watch Cable TV coverage of council meetings where this is provided.

**Municipal Staff**

Discussions so far have focused on members of council. In all except quite large municipalities, however, councillors serve on a part-time basis. Most of them hold other jobs apart from their duties as councillors. One of the basic duties of a council, therefore, is to make sure that enough staff, with the right skills, is hired to run the municipal organization.

Traditionally, the Clerk and Treasurer have been two of the main municipal employees, and municipalities are still required to fill these two positions. The Treasurer’s job is to make sure that municipal revenues are collected and handled properly and that bills are paid. The Treasurer and other staff in the finance area are also responsible for such
matters as preparing the annual budget, maintaining internal controls that ensure the proper use of money, and reporting regularly to council on the state of municipal finances.

The office of the Clerk acts as a central clearing house for municipal information. The clerk prepares the agenda for council meetings and the minutes that report the results of such meetings. The Clerk’s office also carries out a number of duties directed by provincial legislation, such as registering births and deaths and issuing marriage licenses. Next to the head of council, the Clerk is usually the main point of contact for municipal matters. The central role it plays in council meetings makes the clerk’s office the key source for information on past municipal activities and it has often been referred to as “the memory of the municipality.”

A third important employee found in most municipalities from the earliest days was the road superintendent. This person, and the roads department that gradually developed, are responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads, snow-plowing and other road-related activities (such as ditching and drainage). As municipal operations became more complex, engineers have become key members of a roads team.

As municipal responsibilities grew over the years, other key staff positions were added, such as:

- The Chief Administrative Officer or Municipal Manager (which will be covered in detail later in this section).
- Parks and recreation staff to administer the growing number of parks, recreational facilities (arenas, ball diamonds, soccer fields, tennis
courts, basketball courts, etc.) and recreational programs.

- Planners and planning technicians to help decide what should be built and where, and how to protect the environment.

- Staff to administer various social programs including general welfare assistance, provision of public (assisted) housing, homes for the aged, and ambulance services.

- Technical staff to operate the municipal water treatment plant and sewage disposal plant.

- Staff, often mostly volunteer or part time in the early years, to operate the municipal fire department.

- Librarians and other staff to operate the municipal library.

**Structural Challenges and Changes**

As municipalities grew, and more staff were added, many of the organizations became large, complex, and increasingly hard to coordinate. Most municipal departments were headed by experts focused on the needs of their departments. Their main objective was to get more resources for roads, sewage treatment, care for seniors, recreational activities – or whatever was their particular specialty. However, with each municipal department focused on its own responsibility, it is important that they also look at the interests of the overall municipality.

Ultimately, the municipal council is responsible for providing this broader view. This is difficult for councillors who are mostly part time, and it is especially difficult when the
councillors are elected by ward. Such councillors are understandably concerned about what seems best for the people in their ward, the people who elected them to office. However, if councillors are mostly part time and may be focused on only one part (ward) of their municipality, and if staff are experts who may believe that their specialty (planning, engineering, accounting, recreational programming, or whatever) is the most important, how do we create a government organization that looks at the interests of the overall municipality?

If departments are focused on the needs of their areas, and councillors are focused on their wards, who is thinking about the overall needs of the municipality?

Standing Committees

One structure that has been very widely used involves the appointment of a number of standing committees of council. These committees, as illustrated in the chart, are normally responsible for overseeing the activities of one or more departments. In addition, or instead, they may investigate issues and make reports and recommendations, as requested by council.

Standing committees were often set up to reduce the growing workload of municipal councillors. Instead of having to keep on top of everything, councillors could specialize by concentrating on the activities of the one or two committees on which they sat, and the departments under the jurisdiction of these committees. They would become more familiar with these parts of municipal
operations and council would then benefit from the reports and recommendations received from these committees. The idea of handling a large workload by dividing it into more manageable chunks is a logical response. Any one student would find the evening’s homework much easier to handle if it could be divided up among all those in the class.

Standing committees also have other advantages. Their meetings are quite informal compared to council meetings, especially those being televised by local Cable TV. Local citizens who wish to make a presentation usually feel much more comfortable making that presentation to a standing committee.

The use of standing committees also increases the opportunity for public participation. This is the case because matters are normally brought first to council, then assigned to the appropriate standing committee for investigation and a report, and then brought back to council for discussion and decision. This process ensures that several weeks, and several meetings, go by before a decision is made, allowing more time for the public to become aware of an issue and to respond if they wish.

In spite of this impressive list of advantages, standing committees also have their problems and their critics. In fact, some of the advantages listed above have not worked out that well in practice. As municipalities grow and more departments are created, the tendency has been to appoint more standing committees to oversee the additional departments.

Probably the biggest problem with standing committees is the specialized focus that is supposed to be their main advantage. Councillors understandably get appointed to committees of particular interest to them. For example, Councillor “Smith,” who has played
sports all his life and coaches both hockey and baseball may naturally get appointed to the recreation committee of the municipality and constantly focus on getting more money for recreational programming. His actions make sense, and his cause may be good, but councillors have to be able to look objectively at the merits of spending on recreation or social programs, or policing, or a new water treatment plant, or any of the other hundreds of choices that they must make every year—especially in the annual budget process. They may find it hard to have an objective view when they have been serving on a committee of special interest to them.

We noted earlier in this section that individual departments and the experts within them tend to be focused on the needs of their particular specialty. In practice, standing committees may tend to reinforce a specialized outlook. Yet many issues that face a municipality today are very complex and cut across departmental boundaries. That is why matters sometimes get referred back and forth from council to various committees.

Municipalities have responded to these problems in many ways. One approach has been to restructure and simplify both departments and standing committees. A common response has been to abolish standing committees entirely and/or to appoint a chief administrative officer to provide greater coordination of municipal operations.
Chief Administrative Officer

The Chief Administrative Officer or CAO is a senior coordinating officer, responsible for bringing together the various municipal departments. In particular, the CAO should make sure that the advice and recommendations given by staff to council are balanced. Without a CAO, council usually receives specialized reports that deal only with the interests of roads, or recreation, or planning, or some other specialty. Under a CAO system, these focused reports may still be generated, but they will then be brought together and combined by the CAO to give council a better overall picture.

The CAO should also ensure that the decisions made by council are carried out in a coordinated fashion. With such a coordinating officer, for example, we should not have the embarrassing situation in which one department repaves a road only to have another department tear it up a few months later to repair a sewer line.

Concluding Comments

Compared to the governing structure at the provincial and federal levels, the basic governing machinery of a municipality is quite simple and straightforward. There is an elected council which exercises the powers of the municipality and there are appointed staff who advise the council and who deliver the programs and services that council decides to provide. How well councillors and staff work together largely determines how well a municipality is governed. As we will see in the next section, however, there are also a number of other important players who influence and affect municipal operations. Increasingly, municipalities that are effective are learning to reach out and to form partnerships with others in the broader community.
Section V  Municipal Governing Structures

Something to Do

1. Who are the Clerk and Treasurer in your municipality?

2. How many departments are there in your municipal structure, and what are they?

3. Does your municipality have a standing committee system and, if so, what are the committees?

4. Is there a chief administrative officer and, if so, what is his or her name?

5. How many members are on your local Municipal Council?

6. When are the next municipal elections going to take place?

7. How many councillors represent your ward? Name your councilors.

8. How many wards are in your municipality?

9. Name your head of council. Is your head of council a mayor, reeve, warden or chair?

10. If you worked in a municipality, what job would you like to do and why?
Local Government Class Project

Purpose
The purpose of this exercise is to have students gain an understanding of the values of local government. The exercise is meant to help students gain a better understanding of the answer to 3 questions:

- What are democratic values?
- How could you relate them to the school environment?
- What are some of the challenges of implementing democratic values?

Method
A discussion of key terms will set the basis for an informed participation in the following activity. Students will be asked to discuss the meaning of the terms in class and at home.

Background
Canada is a democracy - a form of government in which power belongs to the people. The people, through the electoral system, elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf. Thus Canada is called a representative democracy.

A representative democracy depends on:

- **Majority rule**, where the government is formed by the group that the most members elected. When decisions have to be made and votes are taken, that group can out vote other groups.

- **Respect for minorities**, where the opinions of minority groups are taken into account by government.

- **Political equality of all citizens**, which means that all citizens in a democracy have equal rights. Each citizen’s vote is worth the same as that of every other citizen. Each citizen is equal before the law.

- **Accountable government**, where the decisions made by governments must be justified to the people. This happens through our elected representatives. If the citizens disagree with the decisions of the government, they are able to vote them out at the next election.
Individual freedoms, which means that all citizens in a democracy have certain rights including freedom of speech and opinion, and freedom of association or the right to gather together for political purposes.

Discussing Terms
What do the following terms mean?

1. Municipal Council
2. Provincial Legislature
3. Federal Parliament
4. Minority group
5. Accountable
6. Freedom of speech
7. Freedom of opinion
8. Freedom of association

For homework, each student can discuss these terms with his or her parents/guardians in order to better prepare for the activity below.

Activity
In small groups, create the best way of setting up a truly representative Student Council, which reflects the democratic values outlined above. Be creative! You and your group could act out the situation, create a game, create a poster, or even write a story.

- How would you ensure that the Student Representative Council represents all the students in the school?
- Should all students have an equal say in choosing the Student Representative Council representatives?
- How would you ensure that all students have an equal say?
- What kind of voting system would you use?
- How do you ensure that the voters are able to make an informed choice about who to vote for on the Student Representative Council?
- How would the Student Representative Council make decisions?
- How would decisions be carried out?
- How should the Student Representative Council communicate its decisions and views to the rest of the students?
- What should happen if significant numbers of students disagree with the decisions of the Student Representative Council?
- What are some of the difficulties and challenges of representative democracy at school?
A Voice From the Field

Representatives from your local government can be elected, hired, or appointed. Members of council and school boards are elected representatives. Municipal staff are hired, while members of parks and recreation committees, museum boards, library boards, and the like are appointed by Council.

1. Invite a representative from your municipal government office to make a presentation about how officials are elected, appointed and hired.

2. Take the time to prepare a list of questions you (as a class) would like to ask the representative about municipal government and its functions. Some ideas of questions to ask could be:
   a) Why did you seek employment at the municipal office?
   b) Why do you think people run for public office?
   c) How do you go about getting hired to work at the municipal office?
   d) What qualifications are required for your job?
   e) What kinds of responsibilities do you have in your position in municipal government?
   f) Do you feel that your job is rewarding? Why?
   g) What do you think are the greatest impacts that municipal government has on its local population?
   h) What are some challenges you encounter in carrying out your responsibilities?
   i) What is the organizational structure of our municipality?
   j) Why is it important to vote in elections (when you are old enough)?
Elections Class Project

Purpose
Students will work in groups to engage in creatively conveying information about a municipal issue that is important to them. Students will be required to make a convincing presentation that will be communicated in a visual, creative and entertaining manner.

ACTIVITY 1:
MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION

Teacher Directed Discussion
During an election, candidates must communicate their position on issues to the voters. This activity begins with a discussion on the importance of providing people with enough information to enable them to make decisions.

Preparation
Students will need access to the Internet and/or library to research their issues. Information can also be derived from television news/talk programs, radio, magazines, publications, and newspapers.

Student Activity
Student groups will be responsible for choosing an issue that is important to them. Groups are to choose one of the following methods and then present their issue to the class:

- Play/record a piece of music for the class and then describe how and why the piece of music speaks to the issue
- Recreate a scene or pivotal moment in history
- Dress up like the people/parties involved with the issue
- Make a speech about the issue
- Make a poster or collage about the issue and discuss the poster's significance in relation to the issue
- Write a poem about the issue and read it
- Write a song about the issue and perform it
- Write a pamphlet or information flyer about the issue
Teacher Directed Discussion
After the presentations, both presenters and audience should identify aspects of the presentations which are likely to influence the audience (for example, images appealed to the audience’s sympathy). Would the same be true during an election campaign? Discuss with the students how a candidate may adjust their methods of communication and why he or she would choose to do so (for example, the need for broad appeal, or the need for a consistent message, etc.).

ACTIVITY 2: DEBATING THE ISSUES

Purpose
This lesson will engage students in a debate of a municipal issue and create awareness of the nature and role of interest groups.

Learning Outcomes
Students will:
- Communicate effectively in written and spoken language or other forms of expression, as appropriate
- Gather relevant information from appropriate sources
- Assess the reliability, currency, and objectivity of evidence
- Develop and express appropriate responses to issues or problems

Teacher Directed Discussion
This lesson begins with a discussion on how one group can influence another group.
- Discuss the usefulness of special interest groups in areas such as health care, environment, or education and how they contribute to democratic government systems.
- Introduce the concept of ‘formal debate’
- Discuss how, in a democracy, after listening to and reflecting on the arguments for and against an issue, all representatives cast their vote in order for a decision to be made.

Preparation
- Have students create and then photocopy a ‘Ballot Template’ (or use the following below).
Note to Teachers - Go to the Elections Canada website, Young Voters - Resources For Teachers section, for some good ideas for classroom and school-wide election and voting activities: Elections Canada On-Line | Young Voters Site or, Elections Ontario website, Youth: Teaching Materials.

DEBATING THE ISSUES

Student Activity
Provide students with an opportunity to determine a topic on a municipal issue that they would like to debate. Suggest a topic that relates to a subject that would interest them.

STEP 1: Divide the students into two groups - “For” and “Against”.

STEP 2: Sub-divide the two larger groups into groups of three.

STEP 3: Smaller groups discuss and formulate their arguments.

STEP 4: Reconvene the “For” and “Against” groups to share their arguments.

STEP 5: Select a leader for each group. Have each leader summarize, to the whole class, the arguments for their group’s position. Allow time for and facilitate rebuttals and questions from the class.

STEP 6: After all groups have presented, distribute ballots to the students and have them, by secret ballot, vote for the group representing the position they chose as a result of the debate.

STEP 7: Count the ballots and provide the students with the final results of the “For” party and the “Against” party.

Class Debrief
- Why did you vote the way you did?
- How do you think voters choose whom to vote for?
- Why is voting important?
- Review the electoral experience and ask students for their comments and reflections on this process and why their participation in the democratic process is very important.
VI The Wider World of Municipal Government

The previous section concentrated on the formal structure of municipal government and the roles of councillors and staff. It is true that all official municipal decisions made by council, must be made in council meetings properly called and conducted. There are many other players and influences that help to determine the decisions that are made. It is the purpose of this section to discuss these other influences.

Local Players

We will explore our wider world by gradually moving outward from the municipal government itself, to the surrounding local community, and then to the provincial, federal, and – ultimately – international level.

The Local Electorate

Local voters are key players. They select the members of council and then they have the opportunity again to re-elect their councillor or by electing someone else every four years.

At first glance, it does not seem that voters are all that influential. After all, only about 40% of those who are eligible actually do vote. However, there are several reasons not to underestimate or discount the influence of the voters.

We must remember that 40% is the average turnout. While
the turnout is often considerably lower, especially in large municipalities, it is also often much higher in small municipalities. In 2006, for example, the lowest turnout was 10%, but the highest was 76%. People with higher education and income levels who own their own home are more likely to vote, so the nature and make-up of the local population has an effect on the voting turnout.

It is also important to understand that even if voting is infrequent and limited, councillors still “sit up and take notice” when the public becomes annoyed about some local issue. The very fact that most people ignore municipal actions most of the time means that councillors certainly pay attention when they suddenly get two dozen angry phone calls or a large, noisy group at a meeting. It is not just through voting that local citizens can exert influence.

**Local Citizens Groups**

If a few individuals can have an impact, organizing those people into groups obviously increases their potential influence. As the old saying states, “There is strength in numbers”.

Citizens groups are certainly not new and residents and ratepayers associations have been around for almost a century. Citizens groups are often temporary, formed to address a single purpose issue and many do not survive beyond the life of the particular issue that brought them into existence. A great many citizens groups came into existence in the second half of the 1900s as a result of concerns over the pace of urban growth.

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12 Information compiled from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and accessed on March 22, 2007 from its web site www.amo.on.ca.
and the possible threat that it posed for existing
neighbourhoods. Debates about expressways versus more
public transit became especially controversial. Groups
concerned about the environment have become more common
in recent decades. They have often been established in
opposition to such developments as the expansion of garbage
dumps, further residential development on lakes in cottage country, and factory farms that
may pose a threat to the quality of rural groundwater. These groups are often criticized for
having a NIMBY syndrome – which stands for 'Not In My Back Yard'.

**Business Groups**

Many local citizens groups (with some notable
exceptions) have very limited resources and may have
trouble accessing municipal government and getting
across their concerns. On the other hand, most business
groups are ongoing (permanent), tend to be more
organized, and are often backed by a lot of money and
expertise (stemming from their member base), and able to
access the municipality quite readily. Examples include chambers of commerce (an
association of business people to promote commercial and industrial interests in the
community), and larger organizations such as the Canadian Home Builders Association.

**Service Partners**

Local citizens and businesses and the groups that
represent them are sometimes involved with municipal
governments in ways other than lobbying for or against
some development. Partly because of the financial
squeeze faced by municipalities, there has been a growing
tendency to partner with outside groups as a way of finding additional resources to deliver services.

Community groups are often involved in such activities as:13

- running sports and fitness programs
- efforts to improve the environment and its appearance (as in parks maintenance and recycling);
- organizing social events such as block parties and picnics
- helping with safety and security programs, as with block parents, and
- providing charity, goodwill, and social services.

Consider the example of WINS (Whitby Involved in Neighbourhood Safety).14 This is a coalition of the Whitby council and staff, citizen volunteers, schools, community policing volunteers, local service clubs, the media, local businesses, Neighbourhood Watch, and others. Activities include Parent Safety Patrol at schools, a Car Seat Safety Belt Group, and Road Watch (focused on improved driving and road safety).

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Businesses obviously become involved in service delivery when municipalities hire them to provide such services as garbage collection or snow plowing and removal. In addition, businesses and municipalities sometimes share responsibility for a service through a **public private partnership**. The idea is that a municipality will be able to share with the businesses the costs, risks, and rewards of major projects (such as the construction of water and sewage treatment plants). Municipalities that lack specialized staff with experience in the type of project being done can draw upon this expertise from the businesses involved.

**Something to Do**

1. Compile a list of the local groups that are active in your municipality and surrounding area. Consider not only business groups (such as a local chamber of commerce) but also groups representing a variety of interests such as recreation, agriculture, the environment, neighbourhood safety, seniors, and youth.

2. What are the main objectives of these groups and what do they want from the municipal government in your area? (In many cases, such information may be readily available at the web sites of these organizations or local libraries).
The Mass Media

The mass media – particularly television, radio, and newspapers – influence municipal government in a number of ways. The most basic influence comes from the extent and nature of the coverage that they provide. The fact is that the national media gives little attention to local issues due to their natural tendency to focus on news and issues with an impact on people across the country.

As a result, people have to rely on their local television and radio stations and their local newspapers. Studies show that people depend particularly on local newspapers for coverage of municipal issues. The media regard themselves as a kind of watchdog for the public, on the lookout for any evidence of inefficiency, waste of tax dollars, or corruption. Municipalities have to understand that “good news is not news; bad news is.” As a result, the coverage they receive is likely to seem very critical. The challenge for those in municipal government is “to tell their story,” to make sure that the positive things being done in and for the community receive proper coverage.

The media can influence municipal decisions by the position that they take on particular issues. We frequently see dramatic coverage in the media of the tax increases that are set each year as part of the budget process. We may see an extra large headline in the local paper about taxes increasing. The fact that a tax increase may only represent a small amount of money per week for a household and may not even cover the costs of inflation might fail to get much attention.

Here again, however, municipalities could do more to explain the basis for their annual budgets and the benefits provided. Fortunately, this is now happening more, and
municipalities such as Windsor and Toronto have developed online surveys and workbooks that make it possible for citizens to plug in their own budget priorities and even to choose spending options and then see how these choices alter the budget and affect the tax impact.\textsuperscript{15}

\section*{The Provincial Government}

Many would argue that the Ontario government has the most influence on municipal decision making. From a constitutional and legal point of view, municipalities are completely dependent on the provincial level. It is the province that decides what functions and finances municipalities will have. The province even decides if municipalities will be allowed to continue in existence. It decided in the 1990s for the sake of greater efficiency and lower costs, that many municipalities could be grouped together to form larger municipalities. As a result, the number of municipalities in Ontario was reduced from 815 to 444. Provincial influence is also evident in earlier discussions about municipal finances and municipal services.

As a result of amendments to the \textit{Municipal Act} in recent years, municipalities now have broader powers and more flexibility in how they use them. In addition, the courts have increasingly recognized that municipalities are governments and that they should be allowed some discretion and flexibility to respond to the

\textbf{Did You Know?}

Both provincial law and court decisions now give municipalities more freedom to take action.

\textsuperscript{15} These and other examples of effective municipal communications techniques are found in C. Richard Tindal and Susan Nobes Tindal, \textit{Guide to Good Municipal Governance}, St. Thomas, Municipal World Inc., 2007, pp. 55-56.
needs of their local communities.

The Ontario government will always be extremely important to municipal governments. They remain limited to the authority provided by the province.

However, part of the wider world of municipal government is a new operating framework in which municipalities have more freedom to act.¹⁶

**The Federal Government**

The federal government has no direct responsibility for or jurisdiction over municipal governments. Indeed, provincial governments usually oppose any federal efforts to become more directly involved – pointing out that municipalities fall under the provincial jurisdiction (under the Canadian constitution). Even so, federal actions can affect local communities and their municipal governments in a major way.

For example, federal decisions to build or extend rail lines helped Canada to grow when the country was very young. Federal decisions in recent decades to reduce or cancel rail service have had quite a negative economic impact. Federal policies to provide mortgages for Canadians to build single family homes influenced the way our cities have developed. The federal government actively promotes immigration and that has a major impact on the large cities (such as Toronto,

¹⁶ For an examination of the traditional behaviour of municipalities and the more aggressive behaviour that they should now exhibit, see David Siegel and C. Richard Tindal, “Changing the Municipal Culture: From Comfortable Subordination to Assertive Maturity, Parts I and II,” *Municipal World*, March and April 2006.
Montreal, and Vancouver) where most immigrants settle.

The federal government also influences municipalities by the extent to which it provides financial support for the major costs they face for services such as transportation and housing. With 80% of Canadians now living in urban areas, and with the importance of cities and city-regions to Canada’s global competitiveness, the financial health of our cities has become a matter of national importance – not just local, or even provincial importance.

**The International Sphere**

The wider world of municipal government even extends to the international sphere. Advances in technology have helped to create a global marketplace. International trade agreements and organizations strongly believe that the free movement of goods and services from one country to another is good for the growth and wealth of the countries involved. Since they are no longer limited by trade barriers, industries today are less restricted and able to locate their operations almost anywhere in the world. This gives them strength to pressure municipalities to respond to their demands or face the risk that the industries will go elsewhere.

There is also, however, a positive side to the impact of the global economy on municipal government. As discussed earlier in this material, cities and city-regions have gained status because of the growing recognition that it is these areas that have the environment that attracts and retains knowledge workers – the key to Canada’s competitive position in this new world economy. As a result of this enhanced status, many feel that these municipalities will now be more likely to receive the resources they need.
Concluding Comments: You and Your Municipality

We have traveled quite a distance in this last section – from the local municipality outward to the provincial, federal, and even international level. This quick overview and review should help you to see that municipalities are key players in a complex intergovernmental world. They provide a very wide range of services that make our day-to-day living civilized or not. They plan for the orderly development of our communities and they provide the infrastructure that supports that future development. Municipalities, especially large urban ones, also help to keep Canada competitive in today’s global economy.

Local citizens can become more involved in a variety of ways. The most obvious ways of participating are by voting or running for office, and the requirements for these actions were outlined in Section V. Volunteering is another excellent way to get involved – helping with special events, caring for children or seniors in care facilities, dropping municipal newsletters off to homes, etc.

Most municipalities offer many opportunities to participate by being appointed as citizen members of various local boards and committees. Advertisements are usually placed in the local paper, listing the bodies seeking citizen members and inviting those interested to respond. Serving on a local board is an excellent way to become actively involved without being a member of council.

Participating by keeping informed about municipal activities and issues is a basic step that does not require that much time. In fact, with most municipalities now placing agendas and minutes of meetings
on their web site, it is relatively easy to check periodically on what is going on in your municipality. By staying informed, you will quickly become aware of issues that may concern you. This knowledge, in turn, will give you an opportunity to express any views and concerns that you may have before council makes a decision. As a result, you become part of your municipal government in action.

Another way of participating is by pursuing a career in municipal government. There are a wide variety of job opportunities. Municipal governments need employees who are skilled in such areas as engineering, planning, recreational programming, libraries, by-law enforcement, nursing, accounting, computers, policing, and fire services. In addition, staff with management and administration skills are needed to head up the various departments of municipal government, to coordinate municipal operations, to provide support to council, and to organize and supervise staff in their day to day responsibilities in the delivery of municipal services.

Municipalities, depending on their size, require virtually all of the skill sets that are needed in the business sector. Those employed by a municipality, however, have the unique opportunity to make a difference in their own community – to help improve the area in which they live through the work that they do.

Ways of Getting Involved:

☑️ Voting in municipal elections
☑️ Running for municipal office
☑️ Volunteering
☑️ Getting appointed to local boards
☑️ Keeping informed on local issues
☑️ Pursuing a municipal career
**Something to Do**

Working in small groups, discuss the following questions and explore your preferences.

1. Would you consider running for public office (to be a councillor or mayor) one day? Why or why not?

2. Would you want to apply for a job at a local municipality when you finish your schooling? Why or why not?

3. What departments or jobs in a municipal office seem the most interesting to you? Why?

4. What departments or jobs of a municipality seem the most challenging to you? Why?
Activity 1: Defining a Public Issue

Focus: What is a public issue?

- Students are given photocopies of 2 articles outlining current and local issues.
- Students are split into groups and read the articles carefully.
- Discussion takes place to help students gain a full understanding of the content of the articles.
  - What is the issue or question?
  - What are some of the viewpoints?
  - What people or groups are interested in the question and in its outcome?
  - Are there proposals for solving the problem?
  - Why does this issue present a problem for the municipal government?
- Discussion takes place helping students generalize about what constitutes a public issue.
  - In what ways are these articles similar?
  - What characteristics are common to both?

Group Work

- Each group is to develop a table outlining the characteristics of the issue. Table headings can include:
  - What is the issue?
  - What governmental level is affected?
  - What are the viewpoints being presented?
  - What are the possible actions proposed to fix this issue?

Synthesis

- In their groups, students develop answers to the following questions:
  a) What different positions have been said about these issues?
  b) What are your personal opinions about these issues and how they should be fixed?
  c) What information do you think is missing from the articles?
  d) What do you think would happen if these issues were not resolved?
Debrief
As a class, discuss the various viewpoints proposed by each of the groups. Make sure to leave enough time for and encourage questions and discussion.

Application
Through a facilitated discussion, the class works to achieve consensus and take a collective position on the issues discussed.

Activity 2: Communicating a Public Issue

Note: This activity is a continuation of Activity 1.

Purpose
Through this exercise, students are encouraged to take a position on an issue and to make their points of view heard publicly.

Focus
In a class discussion, develop a list of what information should be included in a formal written paper to the municipal office regarding a particular issue.

Group Work
Assign a group to draft each information item. Encourage students to express their viewpoints in writing, with clarity and brevity.

Synthesis
Have all groups hand in their work and have a class discussion about the consolidated submission. (Are all viewpoints expressed properly? Is something missing? Is the tone of the writing polite yet clear?)

Application
Have each class member sign his or her name on the submission and send to the Clerk at your local municipal office as an information item.
VII For Further Information

Those interested in obtaining more information about topics in this document may find it useful to consult the readings and web sites listed below.

Readings

Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO), Municipal Administration Program, (four units), provides a detailed examination of various local government topics from the perspective of a training program for those working in local government in Ontario.


James Lightbody, City Politics, Canada, Peterborough, Broadview Press, 2006, is a detailed analysis of city politics in Canada.

John Lorinc, The New City, Toronto, Penguin Canada, 2006, examines Canada’s cities from a great variety of perspectives and is filled with statistics about the way they have been evolving.


Municipal Monitor, a bi-monthly publication of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) that focuses on issues and trends in Ontario’s municipal sector from an administrative perspective.

Municipal World, St. Thomas, a monthly publication that is the longest running municipal magazine in the world. It contains articles on almost every aspect of local government operations, from a cross-Canada perspective.


C. Richard Tindal, *A Citizen’s Guide to Government*, 3rd Edition, Whitby, McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 2005, is a very readable account of the general organization and operation of government at all levels in Canada and also provides an examination of various policy areas, including social and economic policy.


National Film Board of Canada, *Government in Canada*, DVD series, 1990. This is an introduction for use by educators to the functioning of federal, provincial and local governments, the election process and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. This 4-part series, designed for Social Studies, Civics and Canadian History across the country, encourages young people to think about how government touches their lives and how they can effect change. ID NO. 183C0190124. Duration: 120 min 21s: www2.nfb.ca/boutique/XXNFBibeCCtptlmDspRte.jsp?a=b&formatid=31040&support=DVK.

### Web Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web Site</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.amcto.com">www.amcto.com</a></td>
<td>Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO). This is the largest municipal staff association in Canada and it provides regular updates on municipal issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.amo.on.ca">www.amo.on.ca</a></td>
<td>Association of Municipalities of Ontario. This organization represents those elected to municipal councils. It provides an ongoing source of information on municipal issues, although some of its contents are only available to members/subscribers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.afmo.on.ca">www.afmo.on.ca</a></td>
<td>The Francophone Association of Municipalities of Ontario provides a forum for francophone municipal councillors, administrators and staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.fcm.ca">www.fcm.ca</a></td>
<td>Federation of Canadian Municipalities. This is the main national organization representing municipalities.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Section VII For Further Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ontario.ca/mah</td>
<td>Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This is the Ministry responsible for municipal government in Ontario and its web site contains substantial information about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.onzone.ca">www.onzone.ca</a></td>
<td>Premier Dalton McGuinty’s website for Ontario Youth, complimenting the Social Studies and Civics curriculum for Ontario students - for educators and students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ontario.ca/e-laws</td>
<td>This web site provides access to all of the laws (statutes and regulations) passed by the Ontario government, including key municipal statutes such as the <em>Municipal Act</em> and the <em>Planning Act</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ontario.ca</td>
<td>The main portal to the Government of Ontario web site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ontario.ca/ezone</td>
<td>The Ministry of the Environment website for youth provides ideas for learning on air quality, conservation, climate change, waste/recycling, famous heroes and other environmental issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## VIII Glossary

For ease of reference, you will find below, in alphabetical order, brief definitions for various terms that have been highlighted in bold in the preceding sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABCs</td>
<td>Agencies, boards, and commissions – that is, the various local boards (such as arena boards and library boards) that are part of local government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda</td>
<td>The agenda sets out the order of business (the items to be covered) for a meeting, including meetings of council and its committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative service delivery (ASD)</td>
<td>This refers to the alternative ways in which local services can be delivered. Besides being provided directly by the municipality, they can be purchased from a neighbouring municipality, contracted out to a private company for delivery, provided on a shared basis with local volunteer or non-profits groups, or delivered through a combined public private partnership (defined below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamation</td>
<td>This involves the joining together or two or more municipalities to form one enlarged municipality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At large elections</td>
<td>These are elections in which candidates run across the entire municipality and all eligible voters in the municipality can choose from among all candidates. It contrasts with ward elections, defined below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby boomers</td>
<td>This term refers to babies born during a boom period of high birth rates. It is most commonly associated with those born in the years following World War Two, when there was a significant increase in the birth rate. Those babies are now becoming senior citizens – again in large numbers – and that creates different demands and costs for governments at all levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital costs</td>
<td>See capital expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital expenditures</td>
<td>These are expenditures to acquire assets that have a long life and a significant dollar value. For example, purchasing a road grader or a fire truck is a capital expenditure. In contrast, current expenditures are for day to day items that are part of ongoing operations – such as gas for the grader or fire truck, or wages for the grader driver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Administrative Officer</td>
<td>The most senior employee in the municipality. All department heads report through the CAO, who is responsible for coordinating municipal operations and the policy advice that is given to council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>The legal status of being a citizen. In terms of social conduct, the duties and responsibilities that come with being a member of a community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City regions</td>
<td>Around almost all sizeable urban municipalities, one can identify a wider urban area composed of one or more other municipalities. Included in this wider area are the people who have strong links to the large, urban municipality because of work, shopping, entertainment, or other factors that require them to travel to the larger, central municipality. City regions often refer to the areas including and surrounding large, urban municipalities. Often, these adjacent municipalities require inter-municipal cooperation to face challenges that impact the whole city-region, such as municipal transit coordination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition</td>
<td>An alliance among entities, groups of people or even countries, during which they cooperate in joint action, each in their own self-interest. This alliance may be temporary or a matter of convenience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community services</td>
<td>This term is commonly used to cover a number of municipal services, such as parks, recreation, culture and the arts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation authorities</td>
<td>These are an example of an ABC (defined above). They were set up to cover one or more watersheds (one or more rivers and the land on both sides). As a result, these authorities usually extend across parts of quite a number of municipalities. They are concerned with watershed planning and management, including groundwater – a source of our drinking water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracting out</td>
<td>One of the alternative service delivery options defined above. This involves the municipality contracting with an outside supplier (usually a private company) to provide a particular service. For example, municipalities often contract out some road construction or maintenance activities and some snowplowing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current value (assessment)</td>
<td>Current value assessment is essentially the same as market value assessment. It is, in the case of a person’s home, the price that could be obtained by selling the home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>The political orientation of those who support government by the people or by their elected representatives; a political system in which the power lies in the citizens who elect people to represent them in government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development charges</strong></td>
<td>These are charges that a municipality can impose on developers when they create new development. Through these charges, the municipality gets revenues from the developer. This money helps to offset the costs of services that will be needed to service the people in the new developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disentanglement</strong></td>
<td>In the context of this Guide, this term refers to a process that attempts to reduce the overlap and apparent duplication that exists when two or more levels of government are involved in providing the same service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Free trade</strong></td>
<td>Traditionally, countries placed tariffs (basically taxes) on imported goods and services to make them more expensive and to encourage people to purchase products produced in the home country. In simplest terms, free trade involves the removal of these tariffs and various other trade barriers. The idea is that companies should be able to sell their products anywhere in the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global economy</strong></td>
<td>This term is broadly used and rarely given a specific definition. Generally, it refers to the fact that advances in technology (notably the Internet) allow information and capital (money) to travel around the world instantly and the fact that goods and services also move around the world much more readily because of the movement toward free trade (defined above).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greenbelt</strong></td>
<td>In the Ontario context, this is a 325 kilometre long area (about 1 million acres) designated by the Ontario government to protect agricultural, environmentally sensitive and rural settlement lands that surround the urban areas from the eastern end of the Oak Ridges Moraine, near Rice Lake in the east, to the Niagara River in the west. The Greenbelt protects features like the lakes, wetlands and forests, headwaters of all major watersheds, about 100,000 acres of the Niagara Peninsula Tender-fruit and Grape Specialty Crop areas, as well as the Holland Marsh Specialty Crop area in the Region of York and County of Simcoe. It is designated to limit further growth or urban sprawl outside of the existing settlement areas in the Greenbelt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Groundwater</strong></td>
<td>As the term implies, this is water found in the ground – or, more precisely, under the ground. It provides the source for drinking water – from wells drilled into the ground – for most of the population in rural areas and even in many small or larger urban communities, with the largest being the Region of Waterloo that relies on groundwater as a water source. Protecting this water from contamination from run-off is a concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Growth centres</strong></td>
<td>These are areas chosen as a focus for future growth. They have services in place to support growth, or such services can be readily extended to them. The idea is to concentrate growth in particular centres rather than having it occur haphazardly or sprawl across the countryside. Municipalities designate growth centres in their Official Plans and the Ontario government had designated Urban Growth Centres in its Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area of Ontario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect election</strong></td>
<td>This is usually the term used to describe a situation in which someone becomes a member of one governing body because they were first elected to another. For example, the heads of the municipalities in a county system automatically become members of the county council. They are not directly elected as county councillors but arrive there indirectly by virtue of winning elections in the lower-tier municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td>This term usually refers to the major, hard services that support land development. It includes roads, bridges, water supply plants, and sewage treatment plants. In recent years, major recreational and cultural facilities have often been included as part of the infrastructure, in recognition of the fact that these facilities also help to attract growth. Infrastructure can also refer to municipally owned buildings and equipments such as truck fleets or computers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge-based economy</strong></td>
<td>The nature of the economy has evolved over time – from agricultural, through manufacturing, to service industries. Today, the emphasis is on information, technology, innovation and creativity – all dependent upon a highly educated workforce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land use planning</strong></td>
<td>This is the process by which a municipality (or other government bodies) identifies the way it wishes to grow and develop in the future and how its land should be used to achieve that future objective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Licensing fees</strong></td>
<td>A municipality can regulate various activities by requiring that a license be obtained (and a licensing fee paid). Examples include licenses for taxi-cab owners and drivers, peddlers (who travel with goods for sale), and refreshment vehicles (such as chip wagons).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local roads boards</strong></td>
<td>These are set up to provide roads in areas of Northern Ontario that are not within municipalities. They are governed by three elected trustees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local services boards</strong></td>
<td>Modeled on the local roads boards, these bodies, are also governed by three elected trustees, and can provide a number of specified services in areas of Northern Ontario outside of municipalities.</td>
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<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local services realignment</td>
<td>Term used to describe the rearrangement of responsibilities for provincial and local services resulting from disentanglement (defined above) in Ontario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-tier municipalities</td>
<td>These are municipalities within a two-tier municipal governance system, of which the upper tier is a county or region (with one exception being the District of Muskoka which is also an upper-tier municipality). They include municipalities of different sizes that are often named as “The Township of…” or “The Town of…” or, “The City of…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal councils</td>
<td>Elected bodies for a municipality that exercise a range of powers that are given to a municipality, on behalf of local residents and ratepayers. (Under the Constitution of Canada, it is provincial governments that have the authority to establish municipalities and to determine what they can do.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities</td>
<td>These are legal entities, with defined powers granted by the provincial government. They are distinguished by having a defined geographic area, an elected council, and the power to tax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official plan</td>
<td>A document prepared by a municipal council or planning board and approved by the province (or other body that has been given the approval power). It sets out long range objectives for the development of the municipality as well as current policies for handling local planning and development issues and applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Municipal Board</td>
<td>A provincial board that acts as a quasi-judicial body (court-like) in reviewing municipal decisions on various matters, including but not limited to making decisions on local land use planning applications where the local decision was appealed to this Board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piped water</td>
<td>This term generally refers to water that is supplied from a water treatment plant and delivered to each home by being pumped through a network of connecting pipes. This water is treated at the plant before being distributed and is a “secure” source. The alternative is well water, which is accessed by drilled wells and draws from available groundwater (defined above). Wells may service individual lots or be connected to a system of water pipes and a water treatment plan that provide the water to many people or a whole community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Property tax</strong></td>
<td>This tax is levied on real property within the municipality. Real property is basically all land and buildings on land. Some categories of real property (such as public hospitals, schools, and other government buildings) are exempt from taxation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public health movement</strong></td>
<td>Health care in Canada is mainly sickness care, provided by doctors and hospitals after someone becomes ill or injured or otherwise in need of medical attention. The public health movement attempts to keep people healthy so that they do not need medical care. It focuses on the factors that support good health. Many of these factors are largely the responsibility of local governments. They include provision of clean drinking water, sewage treatment and waste disposal, affordable housing, and planning that minimizes sprawl and environmental pollution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public housing</strong></td>
<td>See Social housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public private partnership</strong></td>
<td>This term is used mainly to refer to an arrangement in which a municipality (or other public body) and a private company agree to share costs, risks, and rewards in providing a major capital project such as a water treatment plant or hospital. However, such partnerships can also be used in the delivery of day to day services, such as when a municipality partners with a taxi-cab company to provide service to passengers during off-peak hours when city buses would run almost empty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public transit</strong></td>
<td>As an alternative to road travel, municipalities may provide several forms of public transit. The most common are municipal bus systems. Other options, generally used in quite large municipalities, are street cars and subways. Public transit is promoted as a key to reducing traffic congestion and air pollution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ratepayers association</strong></td>
<td>A collection of citizens who pay utility services in a particular jurisdiction, that choose to organize to address a specific issue or issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representative government</strong></td>
<td>People elect members of a government who represent their interests, hence the term a system of representative government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Severance</strong></td>
<td>In Ontario’s land use planning context, a severance or consent is a legal action that has the effect of creating – from a larger parcel of land – a separate legal lot that can then be developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single-tier municipalities</strong></td>
<td>These are municipalities that are not part of a two-tier system. This term applies to municipalities that are geographically located within a county boundary but are not part of that County government system (by choice). It also applies to all municipalities in Northern Ontario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social housing</td>
<td>Social or public housing is basically housing subsidized by governments (in various ways) to make it more affordable. Much of the responsibility for social housing is municipal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sprawl</td>
<td>As the term suggests, this is development that spreads across the countryside. It takes the form of scattered, low-density development that depends on the car for travel and is expensive to service. The contrast is high-density development that is more compact, takes up less land, is cheaper to service, and can be accessed by public transit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing committees</td>
<td>These are committees of the municipal council, made up (mostly of members of council). They are responsible for overseeing the work of one or more municipal departments and/or they investigate matters referred to them and make reports and recommendations to council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subdivision control</td>
<td>This is the control over the subdivision of land in Ontario – that is the division of land into smaller legal lots that can be sold and developed. This division can not take place unless there is an approved plan of subdivision or an approved severance (defined above).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface Runoff</td>
<td>Some of the water that lands on the ground flows over the surface of the land and runs off into nearby streams, rivers, and lakes. The greater the slop of the land, and the less porous the soil, the more runoff there will be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipping fees</td>
<td>These are the fees charged to people when they dispose of waste in the municipal landfill site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uploading</td>
<td>Downloading is a term created when former provincial costs/responsibilities were moved from the Ontario government to municipalities – where municipalities assumed more responsibility for various social programs or services. The exercise was called Local Services Realignment (defined above). In recent years, the province has taken back some of the costs of downloaded programs and services and is currently (in 2008) in the process of reviewing who (the Ontario government or municipalities) should be responsible for the costs such services. Where the costs and responsibilities for services are moved to the provincial level of government, the term uploading is often used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-tier municipalities</td>
<td>Municipalities called Counties and Regions (and the District of Muskoka) are upper-tier municipalities within two-tier municipal systems. The lower tier (defined above) is made up of municipalities of different sizes that are sometimes called, “The Town of …” or the City of …” etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban centres</td>
<td>A general term often applied to large cities or city-regions. There are six urban centres with populations over 1 million in Canada: Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa-Gatineau, Calgary, and Edmonton. The latest Statistics Canada figures indicate that almost half of the population of Canada now lives within these six urban areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanization</td>
<td>As defined by Statistics Canada, urban areas have at least 1,000 people within a specified minimum area. Canada is one of the most rapidly urbanizing nations, with over 80% of its population now classified (in the 2006 census) as urban.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User charge</td>
<td>A fee charged for the use of a particular municipal service. Examples include fees for renting the ice rink, for using the municipal golf course, for riding on the municipal bus, or for a library card (in the case of non-residents of the municipality).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward election</td>
<td>The municipality is divided into geographic areas or wards. Candidates for council run within each ward and eligible voters are limited to voting for the candidates from their ward. The alternative approach is at large elections, defined above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watersheds</td>
<td>A region of land within which water flows down into a specified body, such as a river, lake, sea, or ocean; a drainage basin or catchment basin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
<td>This organization represents some 150 companies and negotiates rules governing international trade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning by-law</td>
<td>A municipal by-law that divides a municipality into zones (e.g. residential or commercial zones) and specifies how land may be developed within each zone. It controls how individuals may use their land and is intended to guide future development consistent with the objectives of the municipality’s official plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teaching Notes

Two Guides to Local Government are available – one which has been generally designed for Grade 5 students learning about social studies and Grade 10 students learning about civics and history. However, information and activities in the Guides are cross-curricular and teachers from other subject areas and age-groups will find information and activities applicable to developing knowledge and skills for students in a range of subject areas such as math, economics, geography, business, science, writing, information technology, careers and general research. All teachers are encouraged to explore the Guides and take advantage of the many cross-curricular resources and activities they offer.

Teachers are encouraged to use some of the materials and activities in this Guide on Local Government during the actual Local Government Week (annually held in October). While we encourage all schools to participate in this week, we recognize and encourage the use of these resources and activities throughout the school year in your classrooms when teaching related curriculum. It is recognized that there will be, at most, five classes available for presentation of this material if it is to be covered during Local Government Week. The obvious organization of the material and classes is as follows:

| Day 1 | Section I: Introduction  
|       | Section II: What Are Local Governments? |
| Day 2 | Section III: Municipal Functions |
| Day 3 | Section IV: Local Government Finances |
| Day 4 | Section V: Municipal Governing Structures |
| Day 5 | Section VI: The Wider World of Municipal Government |

However, since there is more information in each Guide than can be covered during a week (Local Government Week), the Guides have been structured to be modular. This allows you to choose the sections or subsections of interest to your class. The content in a
section can be covered with or without the associated activities, questions or discussion suggestions that are included with each section. Conversely, you may decide to focus on some of the activities, questions or discussion topics without going into detail on the content in some sections – especially if time is limited during Local Government Week. All activities can be modified to best suit your purposes and time. You may also decide to partner with other classes or modify an activity for a school-wide event during Local Government Week.

As mentioned in the Preamble, you are encouraged to visit the Local Government Week web pages for ideas on the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario site at www.amcto.com.

There will also be a place on these web pages to log on and let us know what your class or school is planning to do or did do about local government for Local Government Week or, as mentioned above, at any other time in the school year. We encourage you to log on, download certificates for participating students and let us know all the great things students across Ontario are planning to do or did do.

Additional copies the elementary and secondary level Guides to Local Government, as well as many other resources and activity ideas, will be posted at the above web address and will be available on-line throughout the school year. The Preamble also lists some suggested activities for classes and schools.

Local Government Week is annually held in October. Local Government Week is considered a launch or focal point to engage students in understanding the role local governments play in shaping their communities, and in interesting students in community stewardship and local democracy. Additional posters can be downloaded from the above website, as well as press releases, media templates for schools and municipalities, power point presentations on Local Government in Ontario and many other resources.
If **Word versions of the pages and activities** in this Guide are desired for adapting or editing, they can also be found at [www.amcto.com](http://www.amcto.com) under the Local Government Week pages. Following these Teaching Notes, you will find copies of all the activities in this Guide and on the website in black and white versions for ease of photocopying.

Certainly, outside of **Local Government Week** – throughout the school year - more time could be taken on the materials in each Guide, where you choose to do so. That would make it easier to use more of the proposed content and activities. It is also recognized, particularly in secondary schools, that there may be more than one class of civics offered throughout the year, so teachers may want to reuse the resource materials and activities with each class - for consistency – and not just at the time of Local Government Week.

Some activities involve the possible use of guest speakers, who will obviously need to be lined up well in advance of the **Local Government Week**. The other key matter to be determined in advance is the municipality or municipalities that will be the focus of the various activities to follow. The questions for discussion ask the students about “their” municipality, but that could mean the municipality in which the school is located or the municipality in which a student lives. Checking with the municipality in advance to see if they are planning to actively participate in Local Government Week and if so, what activities are planned will also help you decide what activities to pursue.

Many municipalities will be pleased to also have representatives come speak to classes or the schools outside of **Local Government Week**.

Some classes may have students that reside in different municipalities. If they bring information from their different municipalities, there will not be a common information base for discussion. While that is potentially problematic, it could also be advantageous because students will see how different municipalities vary in what they do, how they pay for their services, etc. You will know the area served by your school and are in the best position to decide how you want to proceed.
Bear in mind that some suggested class activities involve research on a municipal web site or media source such as a tape of a council meeting on Cable TV. Selecting the largest municipality served by your school will usually ensure that there is sufficient information of use to students on the municipal web site and that cable coverage is available. However, if most students are not from that largest municipality, this may not be a good choice. Here again, you are in the best position to make the determination. Whatever the choice, you should then review (from the selected municipality or municipalities) the basic factual information available from their websites, libraries, the local media and municipal office/s.

**To Contact a Municipality:**

Contact the Clerk’s office to see if they are planning any activities specific for *Local Government Week*. If your topic area of interest is very specific, for example math or science, explain that to the Clerk’s office and ask if you could get contact information for a department head that may have some relevance to your topic. For example, if your subject area is math or science, you may want to ask for a contact in the engineering, public works or finance departments, or if the subject is urban studies, geography, or environmental studies, you may want to ask for a contact in the planning, environmental services, water and/or waste management departments.
A Story to Read

Once there was a King who lived in a palace next to a country road. All day long, he would watch from his window as people walked past his house on their way to the nearby village. Day after day, he would hear the people complaining about the way things were. Eventually, he got tired of listening to them complain. He felt discouraged that everyone was happy to complain, but no one was willing to contribute to make things better. So one day, he had an idea.

“I wonder if every single person complains,” he thought. “I think I'll come up with a plan to see if I can find someone who is not afraid to contribute and do their part.”

So, he went into the countryside and found a very large stone. With great difficulty, he moved the stone and placed it in the middle of the road in front of his palace. Then, he sat down near his window again and watched as people approached.

The first person who went by was a man carrying his corn to the mill to be ground. When he saw the stone in the middle of the road, he began to grumble to himself. “Why should that great stone block the way?” he said. “If I were as rich as the King, I would pay someone else to move it!” And, he walked on by.

A little while later, a woman taking her cow to sell at the market approached the stone. “Why should that great big stone be in the middle of the road for good people like me to trip over?” she said. “The King should have someone move it out of the way!” And, she walked on by.

All day long, people traveling along the road came to the stone and grumbled about its being in the way. But no one moved it. They simply complained and moved on.

Toward the end of the afternoon, the miller’s son came whistling along the road. He had had a long day and he was very tired. He came to the stone and stopped. He looked at the stone and was upset to see it in the middle of the road. “It will soon be dark,” he thought to himself.
“Someone is sure to fall over this stone and get hurt. I should move it before it gets any darker!”

He took hold of the stone with both hands. He pushed with all of his might but could only move it a little bit at a time. But he persevered. He tugged and pulled until the last part of the stone was off the road. When he was finished, he stood up with satisfaction and said, “There! Now, the stone can do no harm to anyone!”

The young man put his hands in his pockets and was just about to continue on his way home when he looked down at the place where the stone had been. There in the dirt, there was a big pot. It had been hidden under the stone.

A little confused, the boy lifted the cover of the pot. When he looked inside, his eyes grew large. The pot was filled with shining gold pieces! There was something written on the inside of the pot lid. The boy looked at it closely and read, “This pot and gold inside it belong to the one who takes the stone out of the middle of the road.”

“Why,” said the boy, “that surely must mean me!”

And he carefully filled the hole with soil and went off, dragging the heavy pot behind him, thinking how happy and surprised his family at home would be over his good fortune.

And the King, watching from his window, was happy too. At last he had found someone willing to contribute to the greater good.
Something to Discuss

1. Citizenship can be viewed as a balance sheet between rights and responsibilities. What are some rights you have as a citizen? What responsibilities do you have as a citizen?

2. How are rights and responsibilities related?

3. What does it mean to be a good citizen?

4. Create a concept map (a table, a chart, a diagram, or the like) outlining what it means to be a good citizen in today’s society. Include elements of good citizenship in your family, school, extracurricular clubs, local community, nation, and world.

5. What does the story say to you about the nature of leadership?

6. As a class, create a list of people you think are ‘good citizens’. Why do you think these people are good citizens? Do these people have qualities in common?

7. What kind of things could you personally do to be respectful of your rights and responsibilities as a good citizen?

Something to Do

1. What does the term ‘Democracy’ mean?

2. What does the term ‘Representative Government’ mean?

3. Make a list of the important things you need to live safely and healthily in your municipality. Which of these does your local government take care of?

4. What are ‘Environmental Concerns’? Why are they important?
Activities – What are Local Governments?  
(Chapter II)

Something to Do

1. What is the name of the municipality in which you live?

2. What is the type or classification of your municipality? Is it a lower-tier or a single-tier municipality?

3. If you live in a lower-tier municipality, what is the name of the upper tier to which your municipality belongs?
Activities – Municipal Functions (Chapter III)

Something to Do

Take a walk around your school’s neighbourhood, preferably together as a class.

- What do you see?
- How tall are the buildings?
- What condition are the buildings in?
- How much space is there between buildings?
- Are there any parks or other green spaces (besides what is found on school property)?
- Is the school in the community or the rural countryside?
- Do most people have to drive to get to the school?
- Is it on good agricultural land or near a river or forest?
- What different land uses can you find within your school neighbourhood?
- How much of it is residential (housing)?
- What about commercial uses, such as shops or corner stores?
- Are there any industrial uses, such as plants or factories?
- What about the traffic? Does it move along well, move too fast, or get slowed down and backed up?

After your walk, discuss together what you saw. Does it look like your neighbourhood was well planned and why or why not?
Local Government Class Project

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to understand the distribution of responsibilities among Canada’s 3 levels of government and to gain a greater appreciation for the municipal role in that framework.

Description

Students examine details about the work of their local government councils and relate these to community participation. The activities are planned to answer the following questions:

- What does local government do?
- How does local government help the local community?
- How can people join in the work of local government?

Materials

Local newspapers, information from the local government representatives and Associations, library books, paper, pens, three paper circles (as described below), and materials for posters.

Procedure

1) Setting the scene

Before class begins make three paper circles: a large one with 'Federal Government' on it, a medium one with 'Ontario Government' on it, and a smaller one with 'Local Government' and the name of your local municipality on it. Introduce this discussion by writing the words GARBAGE COLLECTION on the board. Read the word, then ask students what happens to the garbage at home and at school. Lead a discussion which focuses on who collects the garbage and who is in charge of organizing the collection. When the local municipality is identified, put up the circle with Local Government written on it.

Add the circles for Provincial Government and Federal Government. Read the labels on each circle. Tell the students that these are names of three spheres of government.
government. Ask the students why they are different sizes. Ask them to think about why the provincial or federal government is not in charge of local garbage collection. Guide a general discussion to highlight some of the major activities that are taken care of by the municipal level of government.

2) **Clarifying details**

Write the heading ‘Things My Municipality Does’ on the board. Have the students identify those things in their local community that the municipal government is doing to look after people or the environment.

Ask the class whether they know of any people or groups in their community who join in to help the municipality with its work (for example, volunteer firefighters, local historical societies, community groups like Lions, Rotary). Write these names or groups on the board.

3) **Organizing work groups and collecting information**

Tell the students that they will work in small groups to find out more about one of the groups or services on the board. Explain that they will choose one of these and get information about it from their local area. Organize the students into work groups and have each group choose one of the groups or services on the board.

Have students collect information about their topic by contacting the local municipal office or the municipal website, by searching their school or local libraries for municipal publications, local newspapers and information from local community groups. Have them focus on finding out answers to the questions listed below. Provide an appropriate span of time for the groups to collect details on their topic area.

4) **Presenting findings**

After the groups have completed their research, have a class discussion about the ways students can present their information. Have students choose the best option for their group. Remind the students that all the presentations have to give details to answer the following questions:

- a) What is the name of the service or group?
- b) What activities do they carry out to help people or the environment?
- c) Who joins in to do the work?
Something to Do

1. What services are provided by your municipality?

2. If you live in a lower-tier municipality, what other services are provided by the upper-tier (county or regional) government?

3. How does local government help the people in the community?

4. Using the Internet, or choose a student from the class to phone your municipal government offices (clerk’s office) and ask if your municipality has an official plan. Find out what it says about future growth, e.g. what is the future population expected to be and where will any new development likely go?

5. What about the ABCs described in Section II? Using the Internet, or choose a student from the class to phone your Library Board or Public Health Unit and ask what services these ABCs provide.

In-Class Fun

a) On a large piece of poster paper, draw an outline of your municipality. Fill this outline with pictures of how you would like the municipality to be. These pictures can be drawn or cut out of magazines and newspapers, or even printed from websites.

b) Draw an arrow to each of your pictures and explain what it means to you.

c) Post all of the collages around the room and discuss what they have in common, as well as how they are different, and how your municipal government could help make this happen.
Take Home Activity #1

Select three of the items listed below. Use resources such as parents, other adults, telephone directories, websites, or community directories to find out the appropriate person, department or ABC to contact if you find yourself in any of the situations described:

a) You want general information about your community
b) Your bike is stolen
c) You observe a raccoon behaving strangely in a ravine near your house
d) The street light in front of your house is burnt out
e) You want to know about volleyball, soccer, or other sports teams in your community
f) You see a grass fire on an empty lot
g) You want your library to carry a few books in another language
h) The water main breaks in front of your house
i) You want to take a babysitting course in your community
j) You find graffiti at your local park

Something to Discuss

1. What community or municipal issues are important to you?
2. What are some other community or municipal issues you know about?
3. What are some other points of view about some of these issues?
4. Who is responsible for resolving these issues?

Take Home Activity #2

Prepare a list of questions about what municipal functions and services people consider important and why that students can take home and use for interviewing a family member/guardian, or can use for asking a guest speaker from a municipality. Ask each student to write down their parents’ response and bring the report in on the next day for a class discussion. If the questions are given to a municipal guest, have the class create a report (in groups) that outlines the answers they heard.
Activities – Local Government Finances
(Chapter IV)

Something to Do

1. What percentage of municipal revenues (income) comes from the property tax, from grants, and from miscellaneous local revenue sources such as user charges and licensing fees? (This information should be available at the web site of your municipality and/or on the flyer that is sent out to homeowners with the annual tax bills.)

2. What are some examples of user fees charged by your municipality? Why do you think they are charged?

3. What other user fees could the municipality set to create more revenue?

4. What information does the municipality provide to local taxpayers (usually when the tax bill is mailed out) and how well does this information explain where the municipal money comes from and where it goes?

5. How do you think you could improve the process of informing residents about how municipal money is spent?
Activities – Municipal Governing Structures (Chapter V)

Something to Do

1. Who are the Clerk and Treasurer in your municipality?
2. How many departments are there in your municipal structure, and what are they?
3. Does your municipality have a standing committee system and, if so, what are the committees?
4. Is there a chief administrative officer and, if so, what is his or her name?
5. How many members are on your local Municipal Council?
6. When are the next municipal elections going to take place?
7. How many councillors represent your ward? Name your councillors.
8. How many wards are in your municipality?
9. Name your head of council. Is your head of council a mayor, reeve, warden or chair?
10. If you worked in a municipality, what job would you like to do and why?
Local Government Class Project

Purpose
The purpose of this exercise is to have students gain an understanding of the values of local government. The exercise is meant to help students gain a better understanding of the answer to 3 questions:

- What are democratic values?
- How could you relate them to the school environment?
- What are some of the challenges of implementing democratic values?

Method
A discussion of key terms will set the basis for an informed participation in the following activity. Students will be asked to discuss the meaning of the terms in class and at home.

Background
Canada is a democracy – a form of government in which power belongs to the people. The people, through the electoral system, elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf. Thus Canada is called a representative democracy.

A representative democracy depends on:

- **Majority rule**, where the government is formed by the group that the most members elected. When decisions have to be made and votes are taken, that group can out vote other groups.

- **Respect for minorities**, where the opinions of minority groups are taken into account by government.

- **Political equality of all citizens**, which means that all citizens in a democracy have equal rights. Each citizen's vote is worth the same as that of every other citizen. Each citizen is equal before the law.

- **Accountable government**, where the decisions made by governments must be justified to the people. This happens through our elected representatives. If the citizens disagree with the decisions of the government, they are able to vote them out at the next election.

- **Individual freedoms**, which means that all citizens in a democracy have certain rights including freedom of speech and opinion, and freedom of association or the right to gather together for political purposes.
Discussing Terms
What do the following terms mean?

1. Municipal Council
2. Provincial Legislature
3. Federal Parliament
4. Minority group
5. Accountable
6. Freedom of speech
7. Freedom of opinion
8. Freedom of association

For homework, each student can discuss these terms with his or her parents/guardians in order to better prepare for the activity below.

Activity
In small groups, create the best way of setting up a truly representative Student Council, which reflects the democratic values outlined above. Be creative! You and your group could act out the situation, create a game, create a poster, or even write a story.

- How would you ensure that the Student Representative Council represents all the students in the school?
- Should all students have an equal say in choosing the Student Representative Council representatives?
- How would you ensure that all students have an equal say?
- What kind of voting system would you use?
- How do you ensure that the voters are able to make an informed choice about who to vote for on the Student Representative Council?
- How would the Student Representative Council make decisions?
- How would decisions be carried out?
- How should the Student Representative Council communicate its decisions and views to the rest of the students?
- What should happen if significant numbers of students disagree with the decisions of the Student Representative Council?
- What are some of the difficulties and challenges of representative democracy at school?
A Voice from the Field

Representatives from your local government can be elected, hired, or appointed. Members of council and school boards are elected representatives. Members of municipal staff are hired, while parks and recreation committees, museum boards, library boards, and the like are appointed by Council.

1. Invite a representative from your municipal government office to make a presentation about how officials are elected, appointed and hired.

3. Take the time to prepare a list of questions you (as a class) would like to ask the representative about municipal government and its functions. Some ideas of questions to ask could be:
   a) Why did you seek employment at the municipal office?
   b) Why do you think people run for public office?
   c) How do you go about getting hired to work at the municipal office?
   d) What qualifications are required for your job?
   e) What kinds of responsibilities do you have in your position in municipal government?
   f) Do you feel that your job is rewarding? Why?
   g) What do you think are the greatest impacts that municipal government has on its local population?
   h) What are some challenges you encounter in carrying out your responsibilities?
   i) What is the organizational structure of our municipality?
   j) Why is it important to vote in elections (when you are old enough)?
Elections Class Project

**Purpose**
Students will work in groups to engage in creatively conveying information about a municipal issue that is important to them. Students will be required to make a convincing presentation that will be communicated in a visual, creative and entertaining manner.

**ACTIVITY 1: MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION**

**Teacher Directed Discussion**
During an election, candidates must communicate their position on issues to the voters. This activity begins with a discussion on the importance of providing people with enough information to enable them to make decisions.

**Preparation**
Students will need access to the Internet and/or library to research their issues. Information can also be derived from television news/talk programs, radio, magazines, publications, and newspapers.

**Student Activity**
Student groups will be responsible for choosing an issue that is important to them. Groups are to choose one of the following methods and then present their issue to the class:
- Play/record a piece of music for the class and then describe how and why the piece of music speaks to the issue
- Recreate a scene or pivotal moment in history
- Dress up like the people/parties involved with the issue
- Make a speech about the issue
- Make a poster or collage about the issue and discuss the poster’s significance in relation to the issue
- Write a poem about the issue and read it
- Write a song about the issue and perform it
- Write a pamphlet or information flyer about the issue

**Teacher Directed Discussion**
After the presentations, both presenters and audience should identify aspects of the presentations which are likely to influence the audience (for example, images appealed to the audience’s sympathy). Would the same be true during an election campaign? Discuss with the students how a candidate may adjust their
methods of communication and why he or she would choose to do so (for example, the need for broad appeal, or the need for a consistent message, etc.).

ACTIVITY 2: DEBATING THE ISSUES

Purpose
This lesson will engage students in a debate of a municipal issue and create awareness of the nature and role of interest groups.

Learning Outcomes
Students will:
- Communicate effectively in written and spoken language or other forms of expression, as appropriate
- Gather relevant information from appropriate sources
- Assess the reliability, currency, and objectivity of evidence
- Develop and express appropriate responses to issues or problems

Teacher Directed Discussion
This lesson begins with a discussion on how one group can influence another group.
- Discuss the usefulness of special interest groups in areas such as health care, environment, or education and how they contribute to democratic government systems
- Introduce the concept of ‘formal debate’
- Discuss how, in a democracy, after listening to and reflecting on the arguments for and against an issue, all representatives cast their vote in order for a decision to be made

Preparation
- Have students create and then photocopy a ‘Ballot Template’

Note to Teachers - Go to the Elections Canada website, Young Voters – Resources For Teachers section, for some good ideas for classroom and school-wide election and voting activities: Elections Canada On-Line | Young Voters Site or, Elections Ontario website, Youth: Teaching Materials.
DEBATING THE ISSUES

Student Activity

Provide students with an opportunity to determine a topic on a municipal issue that they would like to debate. Suggest a topic that relates to a subject that would interest them.

**STEP 1:** Divide the students into two groups – “For” and “Against”.

**STEP 2:** Sub-divide the two larger groups into groups of three.

**STEP 3:** Smaller groups discuss and formulate their arguments.

**STEP 4:** Reconvene the “For” and “Against” groups to share their arguments.

**STEP 5:** Select a leader for each group. Have each leader summarize, to the whole class, the arguments for their group’s position. Allow time for and facilitate rebuttals and questions from the class.

**STEP 6:** After all groups have presented, distribute ballots to the students and have them, by secret ballot, vote for the group representing the position they chose as a result of the debate.

**STEP 7:** Count the ballots and provide the students with the final results of the “For” party and the “Against” party.

Class Debrief

- Why did you vote the way you did?
- How do you think voters choose whom to vote for?
- Why is voting important?
- Review the electoral experience and ask students for their comments and reflections on this process and why their participation in the democratic process is very important.
Activities – The Wider World of Municipal Government (Chapter VI)

Something to Do

1. Compile a list of the local groups that are active in your municipality and surrounding area. Consider not only business groups (such as a local chamber of commerce) but also groups representing a variety of interests such as recreation, agriculture, the environment, neighbourhood safety, seniors, and youth.

2. What are the main objectives of these groups and what do they want from the municipal government in your area? (In many cases, such information may be readily available at the web sites of these organizations or local libraries).

Something to Do

Working in small groups, discuss the following questions and explore your preferences.

1. Would you consider running for public office (to be a councillor or mayor) one day? Why or why not?

2. Would you want to apply for a job at a local municipality when you finish your schooling? Why or why not?

3. What departments or jobs in a municipal office seem the most interesting to you? Why?

4. What departments or jobs of a municipality seem the most challenging to you? Why?
Something to Talk About

**Activity 1: Defining a Public Issue**

**Focus:** What is a public issue?

- Students are given photocopies of 2 articles outlining current and local issues.
- Students are split into groups and read the articles carefully.
- Discussion takes place to help students gain a full understanding of the content of the articles.
  - What is the issue or question?
  - What are some of the viewpoints?
  - What people or groups are interested in the question and in its outcome?
  - Are there proposals for solving the problem?
  - Why does this issue present a problem for the municipal government?
- Discussion takes place helping students generalize about what constitutes a public issue.
  - In what ways are these articles similar?
  - What characteristics are common to both?

**Group Work**

- Each group is to develop a table outlining the characteristics of the issue. Table headings can include:
  - What is the issue?
  - What governmental level is affected?
  - What are the viewpoints being presented?
  - What are the possible actions proposed to fix this issue?

**Synthesis**

- In their groups, students develop answers to the following questions:
  a) What different positions have been said about these issues?
  b) What are your personal opinions about these issues and how they should be fixed?
  c) What information do you think is missing from the articles?
  d) What do you think would happen if these issues were not resolved?
Have each class member sign his or her name on the submission and send to the Clerk at your local municipal office as an information item.

**Debrief**
As a class, discuss the various viewpoints proposed by each of the groups. Make sure to leave enough time for and encourage questions and discussion.

**Application**
Through a facilitated discussion, the class works to achieve consensus and take a collective position on the issues discussed.

**Activity 2: Communicating a Public Issue**
*Note: This activity is a continuation of Activity 1.*

**Purpose**
Through this exercise, students are encouraged to take a position on an issue and to make their points of view heard publicly.

**Focus**
In a class discussion, develop a list of what information should be included in a formal written paper to the municipal office regarding a particular issue.

**Group Work**
Assign a group to draft each information item. Encourage students to express their viewpoints in writing, with clarity and brevity.

**Synthesis**
Have all groups hand in their work and have a class discussion about the consolidated submission. (Are all viewpoints expressed properly? Is something missing? Is the tone of the writing polite yet clear?)

**Application**
Have each class member sign his or her name on the submission and send to the Clerk at your local municipal office as an information item.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK

List of other Activity Ideas for Educators/Schools

Local Government Week provides a great opportunity for teachers and schools to engage and teach children and youth about local government. To make it easier to plan and participate in activities for Local Government Week, several ideas are outlined below. These activities are resources that can compliment curriculum in a variety of subjects such as social studies, civics, history, math, economics, geography, and English etc., at both elementary and secondary levels. Similar to the additional activities provided in the Local Government Guides for educators and municipal professionals (which can be downloaded from the AMCTO Local Government Web Pages at www.amcto.com), the activities listed below are cross-curricular and can be modified to best suit your time and requirements.

Share your ideas for other, new activities or, let us know what activities from these web pages or from the additional activities found in the Local Government Guides for educators and municipal professionals (found also at www.amcto.com under their Local Government Week link) that you are planning to do or have done as part of Local Government Week.

Register your planned/completed activities by following this link to the LGW Registration Form: http://workbench.amcto.com/lib/Db2File.asp?fileid=23095. Your contributions will grow the data base of activity ideas for educators across Ontario, and give people an idea of participation rates.

Activities For Educators/Schools

Class discussion: “What are some of concerns about your community [neighbourhood] and what do you think is good about your community [neighbourhood]?” Have students list the concerns and strengths, and then make a top 10 list (first in small groups, then as a full class).

- **Grade Levels:** Grade 3 and above
- **Suggested Related Curriculum:** Social Studies and Civics
- **Materials and Preparation:** Black board or Easel Paper, writing utensils, background reading on local issues in Newspapers, local community papers, Parks and Recreation program books, multi-media sources etc., to help steer the discussion specific to your municipality
- **Estimated Length of Activity:** 30 Minutes

A mock council meeting: Pick an issue and initiate a mock council meeting. Provide some background material for the students (i.e. local newspaper articles profiling local municipal issues). Students work in groups to research and outline 2-3 community issues (see below). They report back on their issues to the rest of the class. Students then decide on 1 or 2 of those issues that they want to place as agenda items on a council meeting. Then assign students to a role such as treasurer, clerk, concerned community group
representative, supportive and non-supportive community resident, municipal department head, mayor and councillors. Have each student work with the other students assigned the same role. The Mayor and Council members should work together to decide how they will run the meeting, who should speak first, what to do if the speakers get unruly and how they will vote on the issue(s) at the end. The other role player groups should decide what they want to say about the issue(s) to the Mayor and council, and what they want the council to do about it - developing an argument for or against the issue, and explaining their reasons and the impacts they think it will have on the community. The Mayor and council then vote on whether to support the request(s), defer it to a department head for more research or deny the request. For example, if the issue was the need to increase the amount of recycling of garbage in the municipality, the Clerk would introduce the item and explain to Council who was there to address the issue; the Public Works Department Head may explain how long it would take to do this and that a new recycling plant had to be built; the Finance department might say how much it would cost and that if Council wanted to do this, they would have to defer for several years that planned expansion of the main road in town because there was not enough money in the budget for both, and a local community group might oppose the location of the new recycling plant – not in my backyard...

You may want to also invite a councillor or municipal department representative to come in and then explain to the class what really happened with the issue.

- **Grade Levels:** Grade 5 and above
- **Suggested Related Curriculum:** Civics, Media Studies and Social Studies; depending on the issue/s chosen, it could relate to many other subject areas
- **Materials and Preparation:** Using student activity notebooks have students research and then outline 2-3 issues written up in their local papers; have them identify and write about the various positions or interests on being taken by the members of the community or council. Preparation time for students to research and write about the issues should be about 1-2 hours and can be broken into smaller segments of time. Keep in mind, the teacher may have to work with the Mayor and Councillors to explain some rules about chairing and holding meetings.
- **Length of Activity:** 30 minutes to introduce and describe activity to students, and given some examples of local issues and positions that have been taken. Depending on the Grade level – 20 minutes to an hour to conduct the mock council meeting.

**Money Matters:** Facilitate a municipal budget activity where students must decide what municipal services and functions are in need of additional money. There was a $1,000,000 savings in municipal electricity costs last year due to
the new energy retrofit program and bio fuels now being used in municipal fleets – this money is now available in the budget for other improvements to some municipal services and functions. Create a list of some municipal department heads’ combined requests for the use of this money for services and programs that their departments might be responsible for delivering. Divide the class into groups and give the list to each group. Here is a sample list:

1. One of the two pools in the municipality cannot be used because it is in need of repairs and the Parks and Recreation Department says $200,000 is needed to repair it;
2. A bridge has been inspected and could collapse – $100,000 would keep it safe for another year and $300,000 would fix it permanently, according to the Transportation Department/Engineer;
3. There is a growing number of homeless people and a housing shelter is proposed -$100,000 to house 20 more people or $400,000 to house the majority of the homeless, according to the Housing Department;
4. Drinking water tests reveal a low level contamination of the water that if not fixed, may make the elderly and young people sick – the Sewer and Water Director says $450,000 needed to fix it;
5. The library wants new books for the growing young population of the municipality – the Library Board is asking for $150,000;
6. The Land Use Planning and the Sewer and Water Departments jointly say that new sewers are needed to go to a proposed, much needed new housing development – $400,000 needed for all the subdivision, or $300.000 for each of two years to service the whole subdivision, etc.,).

Each student group must decide what programs and services to fund in this years’ budget, what should be denied, and what has to be deferred until another year - to make sure no more than the $1,000,000 is spent. Groups present and compare their budget conclusions with the other student groups.

- **Grade Levels:** Grade 5 and above
- **Suggested Related Curriculum:** Math, Social Studies, Economics, and Business Studies
- **Materials and Preparation:** Provide background information to students about services/programs that municipalities are responsible for providing (see Section 3 in each of the elementary and secondary level Local Government Guides for educators and municipal professionals on this same website). Assume this budget would apply to the community they know and live in, and as such you may want to tailor the above proposed list of requests to align with what might be the costs, issues and department names common to smaller versus larger municipalities.
- **Length of Activity:** This activity could range from 1 hour to 4 hours in total. The exercise is very versatile in that it could be a short or longer exercise. More specifically, students could be asked to augment this
activity with a written assignment, doing research and a presentation on a local budget issue.

**Current Events:** Throughout Local Government Week, allocate 10 to 15 minutes each day to explore the current events within your municipality. One week before Local Government Week, schedule each student a time slot during Local Government Week to present one current event for 1 or 2 minutes. The “5W” method (who, what, when, where and why) may be used. Either the teacher or students will choose the issue. Higher Grade levels can be asked to develop an argument or opinion on their support or not for this current event, and why.

- **Grade Levels:** Grade 4 and above
- **Suggested Related Curriculum:** Civics, Social Studies, Media Studies, and English
- **Materials and Preparation:** Develop a presentation schedule one week before Local Government Week. Examples of current issues for students could be prepared in advance.
- **Length of Activity:** Dependent on number of students in class. Since this activity will be on-going throughout the week, allocate at least 15 minutes each day.

**Learning by shadowing:** Assign interested students from different classes to municipal staff and/or councillors for a day.

- **Grade Levels:** Grade 9 and above
- **Suggested Related Curriculum:** Various as it can be planned as a school wide activity
- **Materials and Preparation:** Call the Clerk’s office in your municipality and discuss selection of a volunteer “mentors” for a day from either council and/or a municipal department. Certain class subjects, might best be paired with specific departments, i.e. geography students with a land use planner, science students with water or waste water operators, math students with a finance representative, etc., Advanced planning will be required by the school administration, teacher, and municipality, research of questions to ask by participating students, and permission from student’s parent(s)/guardian. The number of students will depend on the population of municipality and its capacity to provide mentors, and size of the class and school. Using the media template on this website, you or the municipality could also notify the local paper/s about this activity. Note – while this is a school-wide suggested activity, it could be scaled to a class activity, or a select number of students chosen by, for example, lottery.
- **Length of Activity:** One day
Municipal Jeopardy: Develop trivia about municipal governments, functions, and historical events across Ontario. Use the Local Government Guides for educators and municipal professionals (which can be downloaded from this website) to extract trivia questions. For more student involvement, have each student develop a question. Suggested categories for the questions: history, geography, councils, municipal services, municipal finance, municipal careers, strange facts and figures...

- **Grade Levels:** Grade 5 and above
- **Suggested Related Curriculum:** English, Social Studies, History, and Civics. Or, depending on the subject area, all questions could relate to one subject area, i.e. for a geography class, categories could be: geography, demographics/population, environment, land use planning etc.,
- **Materials and Preparation:** Watch a game of Jeopardy to review the rules and procedures. Preparation time is partially dependent on whether you plan to develop the questions or have each student develop some questions. An option would be to prepare the questions specific to your area municipality or region – use local websites and/or local papers to get some ideas. The remaining preparation time will involve developing the jeopardy game either by presentation board or a Microsoft PowerPoint slide deck. **Note – Some trivia questions are located at the back of this section. More questions are posted on www.amcto.com under their Local Government Week link.**
- **Length of Activity:** 20 to 40 minutes

A collage: Students can make a collage of pictures and words that visually express what they think represents the concepts of a local government or good citizenship, or what they like about their community. Large class collages can be displayed in the school hallways, as could individual collages.

- **Grade Levels:** Grade 2 and above
- **Suggested Related Curriculum:** Civics, Art, English, Social Studies
- **Materials and Preparation:** This activity should be introduced after there has been some class discussion about what is their local government and how can they contribute to improving their community. Teachers may provide restrictions on the student execution of the activity or encourage a broad spectrum of creativity. Provide magazines to encourage ideas, although students can draw, use pictures from magazines or photographs they may want to take.
- **Length of Activity:** If it is an in-class activity, then allocate at least one hour to the activity. If it’s a take home assignment, the deadline is at the discretion of the teacher.

Class Project: Student will learn the distribution of responsibilities among Canada’s three levels of government and gain a better appreciation for the municipal role. The activity involves student group work, research, and a presentation of findings. For a detailed outline of this activity called "Local
Government Class Project”, view the Grade 5 *Local Government Guide* for educators and municipal professional - Section 3: Municipal Functions (which can be downloaded from this website).

- **Grade Levels:** Grade 5 and above
- **Suggested Related Curriculum:** Civics, History, and Social Studies
- **Materials and Preparation:** See Section 3 of the Guide noted above.
- **Length of Activity:** See Section 3 of the Guide noted above

📖 **Careers Trading Cards:** Develop numerous playing cards. Each with a picture of a municipal worker, matched with another card providing a description of the job responsibilities and contribution to the community. The intention is to have the students match pictures with the description of the job function/municipal profession, i.e. a Chief of Police or waste water services engineer.¹⁷ For further involvement of students (especially at the Grade 10 level), have students create the playing cards, either through group work or individual work. A competitive game can be carried out afterwards.

- **Grade Levels:** Grade 5 and above
- **Suggested Related Curriculum:** Civics, Arts, Social Studies, and English
- **Materials and Preparation:** Develop a list of careers and services within local government. Collect 40 cards (about 5cm by 9cm). Twenty for the picture and another twenty for the job description. Clip art can be used to easily get pictures of municipal professions/jobs. **Note – the cards with job descriptions and pictures located at the back of this section and can be printed and cut for the activity. Coloured cards are also located online at www.amcto.com.**
- **Length of Activity:** 1 hour

📖 **Issue Referendum:** Students will debate a specific issue, such as increasing family registration fees for all municipal recreation programs, i.e. swimming, soccer and other recreational classes, i.e. “All registrations for recreational programs shall be increased by 10% for all families – For or Against”. (Note – teachers can choose other topics for debate.) Prior to the debate, teachers will give the statement to be debated and students will discuss the consequences from a number of angles - the pros and cons with respect to the impact on the municipality, the residents and privately run community sports groups. Following this, a representative from each group presents their argument to the rest of the class. Each person should be given a maximum time limit (3 minutes) and will be stopped when the time is up. Then a class-wide vote will be taken on the issue. [This activity can be broadened to a school-wide referendum and could focus on a school issue or municipal issue, i.e. “Improvements will be made to the school park as opposed to building a new gym - For or Against.”]

- **Grade Levels:** Grade 10 and above

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- **Suggested Related Curriculum:** Civics, Social Studies, Politics, and History
- **Materials and Preparation:** Prepare an outline of the assignment for all students. Arrange students into two groups, “for” and “against”. Groups discuss the issue from the position they have been given.
- **Length of Activity:** Dependant on the number of groups the teacher chooses to set-up. See above Guidelines.

Local Municipal Services: Students will select 1-2 situations from the list below and use resources such as the municipal website, internet, telephone book, library reference services, parents, or other adults to find out the appropriate office/department to contact if they are placed in situations described below. (For smaller municipalities it may be the appropriate person/title to contact as opposed to a whole department.) Other criteria that the student can be asked to report back on include: the process to be followed to receive the service required/resolve the situation; length of time that service has existed; how the service has changed over time, if it has changed; the length of time to receive the service; any costs to the resident; determine if it is a voluntary or municipally operated service; any forms or reports required to be filled out, etc.,

- Your bicycle is stolen
- You want to sign up for swimming lessons at the community recreation centre
- You want to get a new recycling bin for your house
- You need a license for your dog
- The water main breaks in front of your house – you want it fixed
- You want to sign up to volunteer to help out at the municipality’s daycare, home for the aged, hospital, or at the annual “Clean The Parks” day
- The local park has been vandalized with graffiti and broken glass - you want it cleaned up
- You want to find out what programs and services your local library provides for children and youth
- The traffic lights are not working at an intersection - you want them operating again
- You need to apply for a building permit
- You observe a person dumping two bags of garbage on the side of a local road on a regular basis - you want to know if the person can be fined and if he/she can be stopped from doing this
- You object to a new retail plaza (or any type of development) proposed to be built near your house and you want to tell Council why it should not be approved and, if Council chooses to approve it, you want to appeal that application for rezoning to the Ontario Municipal Board
Next, students will explain the process that needed to be followed to resolve their issue and present it in a flow chart. They can also be asked in the more senior grades to write a reflection paper on what they learned about how that service/s operates, concluding with recommendations on what could be done to improve the service/s.

To increase the depth of understanding, teachers could invite a municipal representative responsible for the services related to one of the above situations to the classroom and ask the representative to describe from their perspective what processes and considerations are undertaken to provide that service/rectify those situations, as well as others from their departments/offices.

- **Grade Levels:** Grade 5 and above
- **Suggested Related Curriculum:** Civics, Social Studies, Politics, English and History
- **Materials and Preparation:** Have students select 1-2 above situations. Be prepared to review with students the range of kinds of services and functions carried out at a local government level – Sections 1 and 3 of the Local Government Guide for educators and teachers (which can be downloaded from this website) can assist with this information. Allow at least a week for students to complete the project.
- **Length of Activity:** Discussion, research and writing in-class, with some take-home research and writing work. Time will depend on the depth of research and analysis that is appropriate to the grade level.

Share your ideas for other, new activities or, let us know what activities from this website or from the additional activities listed in the Local Government Guides (located at [www.amcto.com](http://www.amcto.com) under the Local Government Week link) that you are planning to do or have done as part of Local Government Week.

Specific activities

Jeopardy

A great feature of Jeopardy is the range of skill and knowledge levels that can be covered by the clues that are developed on a subject. Jeopardy is also an interactive way for students to learn about Local Government while having fun and developing team work skills. It is also a tool to use to reinforce learning and help assess students’ retention of the knowledge. Many of the suggested clues are based on the information contained in the Local Government Teachers Guides. You can therefore refer to the Guides to prepare your students for the game.

The following information will guide you in preparing and doing the game with your class. A set of trivia cards with clues and answers is provided as Appendix B. These can be printed, cut and placed on a board, or electronically copied into a Power Point slide deck that is projected on to a wall/board.

Preparation:
1. Decide on which clues to use for the game. You will need 30 clues which are divided into 6 categories. Suggested categories for the clues are history, geography, councils, municipal services, municipal finance, municipal careers, strange facts and figures, etc. For more student involvement, have the students develop some clues that you can pick from for the game. Or, develop some clues yourself that reflect more specifically the local municipality in your school area.

2. Have students review some relevant pages of the Local Government Week Guide a day prior to the game. This will better prepare them to answer the trivia clues.

3. Clues and answers can be placed in a PowerPoint slide deck or on a board. If on a board, envelopes with a trivia card in each envelope (fold the cards such that the clue is on one side and the answer is on the back when the card is pulled out of the envelope) and place an envelope in each square, as follows. (Sample trivia cards are provided after the instructions for this Jeopardy activity in the Guide, as well, coloured cards are available online at www.amcto.com.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1</th>
<th>Category 2</th>
<th>Category 3</th>
<th>Category 4</th>
<th>Category 5</th>
<th>Category 6</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>$400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>$600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>$800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>envelope</td>
<td>$1000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A 7x6 grid of squares with an envelope containing a clue from each category should be placed in each square in order of difficulty - ascending order of $200, $400, $600, $800 and $1000. Mark 4 squares (under the envelopes) as “daily double” squares. If you do not want to use envelopes, arrange the cards in the squares such that each clue is covered by a blank square of paper on top and the answer is behind the clue.

4. If you wish to do a second round of jeopardy, you can change the categories or keep them the same, but you will need 30 more clues and answers. Depending on your time, you may go right to the Final Municipal Jeopardy Question (see 7. below).

Team Work: The game will involve teams - cooperative learning emphasizing peer support and negotiation. There can be as many as 12 students on one team. It is easier to only have two teams but the game can be modified to accommodate for more than two teams.

Game Process:
1. Divide students into teams and have them pick a scribe.
2. Remind students to respond to each clue in the form of a question such as “What is local government?”
3. Through a random method, such as picking a number from one to ten or flipping a coin, the first team will choose a category and value within it. Read the clue to the whole class. Allow the student team 20 to 30 seconds to collectively develop an answer. (If you are so inclined, play or hum the Jeopardy music theme.) Emphasize to students this process is a team effort.
4. To answer the clue, the team scribe must write the answer on a piece of paper and show the answer to you. This avoids “shout-out answers” and confusion.
5. If a student team is correct, award them the number of points for that question and give them an opportunity to select another clue to answer.
6. Remember to include four “Daily Doubles” in the game. This gives teams who select a square that has a “Daily Double” the opportunity to wager as many of their earned points on the clue that is in that square.
7. The final part of the game involves a final Municipal Jeopardy question. The same question is given to each team. Within 1 minute, each team will work together to figure out how much they would like to wager and to decide on their answer. Teams with the correct answer get the number of points they wagered and teams that answer incorrectly, have the number of points they wagered deducted from their score.

The attached trivia cards are a starting point for educators and more cards can be found online (located at www.amcto.com under the Local Government Week link). The trivia cards contain suitable clues and answers that you can
select or adapt, depending on the Grade level or subject area. This allows you the choice of which clues to use. Copy and cut the cards for the game.

Fold over at centre:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clues</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Head of Council</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is the Mayor/Chair/Warden/Reeve?</strong> (one answer is sufficient)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This tax is the main source of revenue for a municipality (to pay for municipal services such as garbage collection and road maintenance). This tax is not based on income but the assessed value of your house.</td>
<td><strong>What are Property Taxes?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This acronym describes the behaviour residents express when they are opposed to the development because they think it is undesirable in their neighbourhood. It describes people who are protective of their own “back yards”.</td>
<td><strong>What is NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This form of development spreads across previously undeveloped lands forming scattered, low density development that increases the need to use cars to get around, contributing to air pollution.</td>
<td><strong>What is Sprawl?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A municipal by-law that regulates what, where and how specific land uses can be developed in a municipality.</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is a Zoning By-law?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal, governing corporations created by the Province, with defined geographic areas, the power to tax, and an elected council.</td>
<td><strong>What are Municipal Governments?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Clerk develops this for council meetings.</td>
<td><strong>What is the Agenda?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ontario covers this percentage of the land area of Ontario.</td>
<td><strong>What is 90%?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These local bodies help to plan and deliver various services such as transit, police services, and libraries for residents.</td>
<td><strong>What are Agencies, Boards, and Commissions?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the 1990s, the Ontario Government reduced these from 815 to 445 as a way to increase efficiencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are municipalities?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

80% of Canadians live in these areas of Canada.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are Urban areas?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The upper tier government in a two-tier municipal governance system that covers a large, usually rural geographic area. The term is also part of the official names for the municipalities of Renfrew, Essex and Simcoe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is a County?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Halton, Peel, York, and Durham are examples of this type of upper-tier municipality within Ontario. Hint: They are similar to counties but they can exercise more powers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is a Region?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This municipal staff position has a central role in setting agendas for council meetings and acts as a clearing house for sending reports and information to different departments and staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To run in an election to be a municipal councillor, you must file nomination papers, be qualified to vote, and _______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These bodies are the ABCs of local government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In 1998, the City of Hamilton, City of Kawartha Lakes and the City of Toronto, among others, became new municipal structures based on this type of merger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is the second largest province in Canada in terms of land mass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four of these Great Lakes are in Ontario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The famous hockey player Wayne Gretzky is a native of this city; also known as “The Telephone City”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal governments hold their elections every four years in the fall during this month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The property tax system used in northern Ontario in the territory outside municipal boundaries (known as the “unincorporated or unorganized territory”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This northern district is the largest district in Ontario, having a size of 153,220 square miles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The biggest property tax issue facing municipalities in northwest Ontario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A municipal employee that is responsible for preparing a municipality’s annual budget, collecting municipal revenues properly, and paying bills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Careers Activity - Trading Cards
(See page 128 of this Guide for the activity instructions.)

#### Police Officers and Chiefs

Many municipalities in Ontario have a local police service to ensure security within a community. Other municipalities use the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) to provide police services. Police officers work to prevent crimes, and enforce the law by working in partnership with individuals and the community. Depending on the size of municipalities, there are various specialized units such as community outreach/education, marine units and police dog units. The Chief of Police takes a lead role in managing police services within a municipality and ensuring the police service meets the needs of the community.

#### Councillor

An elected member of municipal council. They act on behalf of the local residents and respond to their particular needs and preferences. Councillors are chosen from at large elections or ward elections. They are responsible to make decisions on behalf of the community for matters such as (but not restricted to) the annual budget, what services and programs to provide, municipal regulations (e.g. to ban the use of pesticides or rezone lands for a new development) and representing the municipality or their ward at public functions. Depending on the municipality, councillors may or may not be paid a wage (or per diem), and may work full or part-time as a councillor.
**Mayor/Reeve/Chair/Warden**

The elected head of a municipal council. Interestingly, the position brings no additional formal powers but often requires an influential political figure. They only have one vote like other members of council and may or may not be paid to serve this position. As head of the municipal council, they chair the council meetings and are recognized as a leader for the municipality. Like municipal councillors, they have many people working behind the scenes as municipal employees to provide an effective and productive means of local governance such as Executive Assistants and Chief Administrative Officers.

**By-law Enforcement Officer**

A By-law is generally a local law passed by the members of a Council to serve a specific purpose and alter behaviour. By-laws are often put in place for health and safety reasons, or to implement a municipal policy (e.g. a zoning by-law that regulates the use of land and implements the Official Plan policies). Other examples include a traffic control, noise control, business licensing, animal control, property standards or dumping by-laws. *By-law Enforcement Officers* enforce the by-laws of the municipality through activities such as conducting investigations or issuing tickets. Also, municipalities employ or contract policy and legal experts to help develop by-laws.

**Librarians**

Do you have a library card? Notice the name of your municipality is labelled on the card. Many municipalities have libraries to serve the community by providing literacy related services and materials such as books, as well as youth homework programs or pre-school reading programs. All municipalities with public libraries must have a library board. Professional *librarians* who are trained in library and information sciences organize, coordinate and deliver the wide variety of services and materials provided by libraries. What services does your local library provide?
Construction Crew Workers

Who fixes the potholes on your street? The construction and repair of municipal streets and sidewalks are great examples of how a municipality functions on a day to day basis to maintain its infrastructure. Staff in departments such as Public Works or Transportation are responsible for these services. Related careers include engineers, millwrights, program superintendent or managers, concrete mixers, machinists, truck drivers, and design and drafting technologists.

The Clerk and Treasurer

All municipalities in Ontario must have a Clerk and a Treasurer position. The Clerk prepares the agenda and the minutes for all council meetings. The Clerk's office is the main point of contact for municipal administration matters and sends information received out to the various departments for follow-up. They must carry out duties directed by provincial legislation. Clerk's issue licenses such as marriage certificates, and register births and deaths. The Treasure takes care of a municipality's finances, especially the preparation of the annual budget and ensuring that revenues are properly collected and the bills are paid. Some municipalities combine these positions into a 'Clerk-Treasurer'. Various professions that work along side with the Clerk and Treasurer are secretaries/administrators, filing clerks, solicitors, auditors, financial officers, financial and communication advisors, and research analysts.
**Fire Fighters**

Fires can be a devastating event resulting in property damage, injuries and even death. Municipalities have fire departments to extinguish fires and rescue people. They also work to prevent fires by conducting building inspections and educating the public on fire prevention. Municipalities can have full-time fire fighters, volunteer fire fighters, or part-time fire fighters, along with a Fire Chief and Captains. Some municipalities partner with neighbouring municipalities in providing local fire services.

**Fleet Operators**

Fleet Operators purchase, maintain and dispose of various vehicles, trucks and heavy equipment used (in most cases) to maintain, repair and service municipal infrastructure. To manage and operate fleets there are various skilled positions required such as certified mechanics, safety inspectors, fleet supervisors/managers, driver trainers, information technologists, and procurement officers.

**Solid Waste Management Workers**

The municipality collects, transports, and processes the disposal or recycling of solid waste. Most municipalities have established rules and policies on related matters such as how often waste is collected, what can be disposed of and how, how much garbage households and businesses can put out for pick-up per week, and recycling. Waste Management Departments require various skilled and professional positions such as waste management directors and coordinators, educators, route supervisors, refuse collectors, and recycling equipment machinists. Some municipalities contract out to private companies to provide their waste management services.
**Land Use Planners**

Deciding on how a municipality will develop or redevelop is an important responsibility of a municipal council. But behind those decisions are the planning professionals that develop and recommend the land use plans, policies and by-laws to council. Three of the main planning powers are adoption of an official plan, passing of zoning by-laws, and subdivision control (or land division). To undertake such work, planners may specialize as (but not limited to) planning policy advisors, by-law control planners, transportation planners, subdivision control planners, environmental planners, housing advisors, research analysts, and also work with professions such as lawyers, Geographic Information technicians and civil engineers.

**Water Service and Operation Workers**

In urban areas, most residents rely on municipal water services for clean water in their sinks, toilets, showers, washing machines and dish washers. The waste or "grey" water returns through underground pipes to a municipality's water facility. The waste water is treated and cleaned at the facility before it goes back into the environment. Most municipalities treat storm water (rain water) and waste water separately. Even in municipal areas without piped water services (with private wells), staff may be required for activities such as well inspections and permits to take water. Various staff are required to do these jobs, such as water technicians/scientists, engineers, pipe fitters, plumbers, treatment plant operators and operation superintendents/managers.
Recreation Workers

Sports, summer camps, arts and crafts, fitness, clubs, and age specific programs are all examples of recreational programs that many municipalities develop and deliver for residents. Recreation facilities include swimming pools, ice rinks, community centres, dance rooms, gyms, etc. These all require maintenance and repair by the municipality. Youth program coordinators, fitness directors and instructors, arena/pool operators, ground/building supervisors, cleaners, and recreational programmers are only a few examples of related careers.

Public Transit Employees

Many municipalities have public transit to provide affordable and environmentally friendly transportation options for their residents. Of course, the size of municipal transit systems is dependent on the regional development and commuting patterns, and municipal population size and distribution. Various types of careers are required to plan, operate, and maintain a municipal transit system, such as driver operators, transportation engineers, project managers, computer programmers, and mechanics.
Homes for the Aged Workers

Most municipalities are involved with providing services and housing for seniors, known in Ontario as Homes for the Aged. There are various programs for individuals requiring care ranging from adult day programs, home-making services and long term care homes. Many municipalities rely on not-for-profit organizations like Meals On Wheels to assist, and may work with neighbouring municipalities to provide services. Several types of careers are involved in this field, such as respite care workers, nurses, activity coordinators, placement coordinators, doctors, program directors, resident councillors and therapists.

Emergency Response Workers

Floods, large snow storms, and explosions are examples of why municipalities need to prepare for disasters or emergencies. All municipalities in Ontario are required to prepare an emergency management/recovery plan. Responding to emergencies requires an emergency and disaster recovery committee. There are many types of careers involved in this municipal service, such as community/land use planners, emergency planning managers/coordinators, rescue workers, police and fire fighters, paramedics, ambulance drivers, financial analysts, and research advisors.
Social Services and Public Housing Workers

There are many programs that municipalities have to support individuals, families, and groups within a community. Municipalities may partner with neighbouring municipalities or not-for-profit organizations to help deliver these services. There is a diversity of services provided, such as parenting support groups, implementation of Ontario Works for employment assistance, child care, and the provision of affordable housing. Careers geared toward these municipal services include social workers, research and policy analysts, councillors, early childhood educators, youth outreach workers, community organizers, integration and training advisors, housing advisors, housing superintendents, and program planners.

Ambulance Service Workers

Municipalities provide ambulance emergency services for people that need critical emergency care. Ambulance service workers work hard to provide emergency health care and a speedy yet safe mode of transport for victims. Transportation may be via ambulance trucks and even helicopters or boats. Paramedics assess, treat, and transport patients safely and promptly to emergency health facilities like hospitals. Emergency dispatchers act as the first line of contact for the help seekers who call in on the phone. Some neighbouring municipalities work together to provide ambulance services.
Parks and Trails

Municipalities have a variety of parks that contain facilities such as trails, playgrounds, gardens, and activity fields for activities such as golf, soccer, basketball, or field hockey. As well, to preserve the features of the natural landscape, municipalities maintain and add trees and vegetation in parks. More municipalities are now starting to build bicycle trails, as well. Various types of careers are required for operational, management and stewardship services such as arborists, project managers/park superintendents, construction workers, gardeners, geographic information technologists, bobcat operators, and engineers.

Traffic Workers

How many street lights are on your street? Municipalities know this because they repair, operate and monitor the traffic and public street lights for security and visibility. Ensuring public street lights turn on at sunset and the traffic control signal is fixed on Main Street are just two examples of what municipal workers do. Careers geared toward this municipal service include traffic control operators, transportation engineers, electricians, signal technicians, and computer programmers.
The Administrative and IT services within a municipality are rarely seen by the public, yet they ensure and simplify the planning and delivery of many municipal services. Every service you use, such as recreational and camp programs, building permits, applying for municipal jobs, paying property taxes or surfing your municipality’s website, are reliant on people such as IT experts, computer programmers, procurement officers, customer service representatives, administrative clerks, secretaries and coordinators.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK
List of Activity Ideas for Municipalities

Local Government Week (LGW) provides a great opportunity for municipal staff and councillors to engage and teach children and youth about local government. To make it easier to plan and participate in activities for Local Government Week, several activity ideas are outlined below. These activities are resources that can compliment various capacities of municipalities. To maximize your opportunity to showcase the important role your municipality plays in shaping Ontario’s communities, you may want to develop a volunteer committee to organize local government activities and events.

Similar to the additional activities provided in the Local Government Guides for educators and municipal professionals (which can be accessed and downloaded from the AMCTO Local Government Web Pages at www.amcto.com), the activities listed below are cross-curricular and can be modified to best suit your municipality and the ages, subject areas and sizes of schools that may be participating with you.

Share any new ideas for activities that you may have for Local Government Week with other municipalities. Or, let us know what activities you are planning or have undertaken from this list of activities or the additional activities found in the Local Government Guides for municipal professionals and educators. You can do this by telling us about what you did or are planning to do on the LGW Registration Form, found at www.amcto.com. We will post all activities registered on AMCTO’s Local government Week pages.

Your contributions will grow the data base of activity ideas for municipalities across Ontario, and give people an idea of participation rates.

Notes:

- If your activity might involve a councillor or a head of council visiting a school, contact your local School Board to determine if there are policies about such visits before directly contacting a school.
- If your activity involves a contest or competition, you may want to let the local media know about the winners. A media template is available to be adapted from this link.
- Some of the below activities may involve at least two months of preparation. Therefore, it is practical to assume these activities will not be completed during this year’s Local Government Week. Nonetheless, announcements about the initiation of such new activities could be made as part of Local Government Week, with participating students/schools and municipalities being showcased. And, such announcements can be reported on using the above noted LGW Registration Form.
- Preparation for the contests and competitions:
  - Develop a marketing campaign to inform and engage students to participate in the essay/story, website competition and poster contest. Consult with teachers, and principles regarding the appropriate criteria
and content during the development process. Ask for volunteers from each school to market, circulate and collect the items for judging;
- Develop a marketing campaign to inform and engage students to participate in the competition/contest. Consult with teachers, and principals regarding the appropriate criteria, content and recognition/rewards during the development process. Ask for volunteers from each school to market, circulate and collect the items for judging.

**Activity Ideas**

✈ **Essay/Story Contest:** The contest can be related to a theme for Local Government Week that your municipality may have selected or the contest can be based on a topic such as: “If I were a [insert municipal career], I would make a difference by....”; “Why does local government matter?”; or, “How can I act local and think global?”
  - **Preparation:** Mandatory requirements can be set, such as the maximum number of words, format (e.g. an essay or story) etc. It is recommended there be two streams of the contest: elementary school level (Grades 4 to 8) and high school level (Grades 9 to 12).

✈ **Website Competition:** Celebrate technologically savvy students by encouraging them to create a web page or site based on various municipal themes or topics, such as:
  - What is special about my municipality?
  - The most important things to know about my municipality
  - What are the most important services my municipality provides to the community?
  - How my municipality contributes to the environment (or climate change)
  - What social services does my municipality provide?
  - Transportation - Getting about my municipality.

✈ **Poster Contest:** The contest may align with an annual theme a municipality chooses as part of Local Government Week. Similar to the essay/story contest there should be two streams developed - elementary and secondary levels.

✈ **Careers in Local Government:** Develop a power point presentation for grade 10 and 11 students introducing various careers in local government. Have a municipal representative/s visit various schools to talk about the variety of careers available.
  - **Preparation:** It is a good idea to consult with professional educators before developing your presentation to understand how best to engage and inform students on perspective careers. In the development of the presentation include a range of careers from different business areas in
the municipality. Try thinking of some unusual positions that some people might be surprised to learn exist in the municipality. Try stumping the students with some of the less well known but interesting municipal positions.

- **Note** – Click on the following link to see an idea for Municipal Jeopardy game that could be done by municipal representatives with classes/students – **Activity List for Educators**.

**☆ Annual LGW Theme:** Develop, and promote a theme to focus on every year as part of LGW. The following are some suggested themes: “at your service”, “sustainable communities”, “volunteering”, “the living infrastructure” or “a livable community”.

- **Preparation:** For a more localized focus, scan the local papers to find key themes/issues that relate to your municipality. This approach can make LGW more relevant to residents of your municipality. For more visual association of the theme, develop a logo and symbol to represent the theme.

**☆ Open House:** Invite the public to tour municipal spaces and facilities such as council chambers, a waste water treatment plant, the fleet operations, fire station, the museum, behind the scenes at a community centre etc. This will enable students to gain more awareness of how a municipality operates - show casing the range of people, local facilities and services that are involved.

- **Preparation:** Survey or nominate various departments/agencies within the municipal corporation to facilitate public or class tours for a day. Market the event in advance. Have participating departments/agencies prepare displays.

**☆ Mentor at Work:** Develop a program (partnering with schools/teachers) that enables students to shadow an elected municipal government official or senior employee for three mornings or afternoons during a week. If it is an elected official, ensure that opportunity is provided for the student to sit in on a committee or council meeting. The expectations for this activity will be:

- exposure to citizen concerns
- a tour of the community looking at issues from a municipal perspective
- an understanding of current issues and the decisions that have been or will be made to address the issues
- 9 hours of participation will be required for the student to receive a certificate of participation/recognition
- Upon completion, the student will write a reflection paper or develop a picture flow chart of the “life in a day” of the municipal employee or elected official that they can present to their class/teacher, or that the municipality and student may wish to post on the municipal web site or in a local paper/newsletter.
☆ **Student – Municipal Matched Assignment:** Similar but shorter than the above activity, assign interested students to municipal staff and/or elected officials for a day.

☆ **Youth Advisory Committee:** Encourage youth to actively engage and get involved in your community by developing a Youth Advisory Committee. The Committee will be comprised of youths ranging from 13 to 17 years of age and represent the diversity of your community and the different schools in the community. The Committee could meet each day as part of LGW or hold its first meeting during LGW. The committee would report back to council, addressing youths perspectives’ on the community needs, issues, and concerns that action should be taken on, and indicating what actions could be addressed by the municipality and what youth could address through activities such as facilitating events and youth-related projects. The Committee could sit each for the one LGW week, or for the duration of the school year.

☆ **Co-operative Work Program:** Work in partnership with school boards and schools to accommodate the placement of secondary school students in the municipality.

☆ **The Mandatory 40:** Support the 40 hour student volunteer services program by informing and providing students with various volunteer opportunities within the municipality.

☆ **At the Table:** Organize one or more Roundtable Discussions during Local Government Week with municipal staff or elected officials as community residents or youth (possibly focused on an issue or theme such as municipal careers or, way to engage with residents). Invite students, educators and community members to participate and engage in discussion on the topic/s.
Certificate of Participation

Presented By

Date

Name of School

Local Government Week

Ontario

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