



:: BUILDING :: COMMUNITIES

Through Local Government

**A Resource for Teaching
and Learning about
Municipal Governments**

Alberta Grade 6 Social Studies

Alberta Municipal
Affairs



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This resource was developed with the assistance of grade 6 teachers, students, municipal officials and staff of both Alberta Education and Alberta Municipal Affairs.

Readers should be aware that Internet websites offered as citations and/or sources for further information may have changed or disappeared between the time this was written and when it is read.

Teachers are cautioned that all websites listed in this resource should be checked for appropriateness and suitability before being provided to, or used with, students.

Every effort has been made to acknowledge sources used in this resource. In the event of any question arising as to the use of any material, we will be pleased to make the necessary corrections in future printings.

Building Communities Through Local Government – A Resource for Teachers

ISBN 978-0-7785-6822-3 (printed version)

ISBN 978-0-7785-6825-4 (online version)

Building Communities Through Local Government – A Website for Students and Teachers

ISBN 978-0-7785-6824-7 www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6.cfm

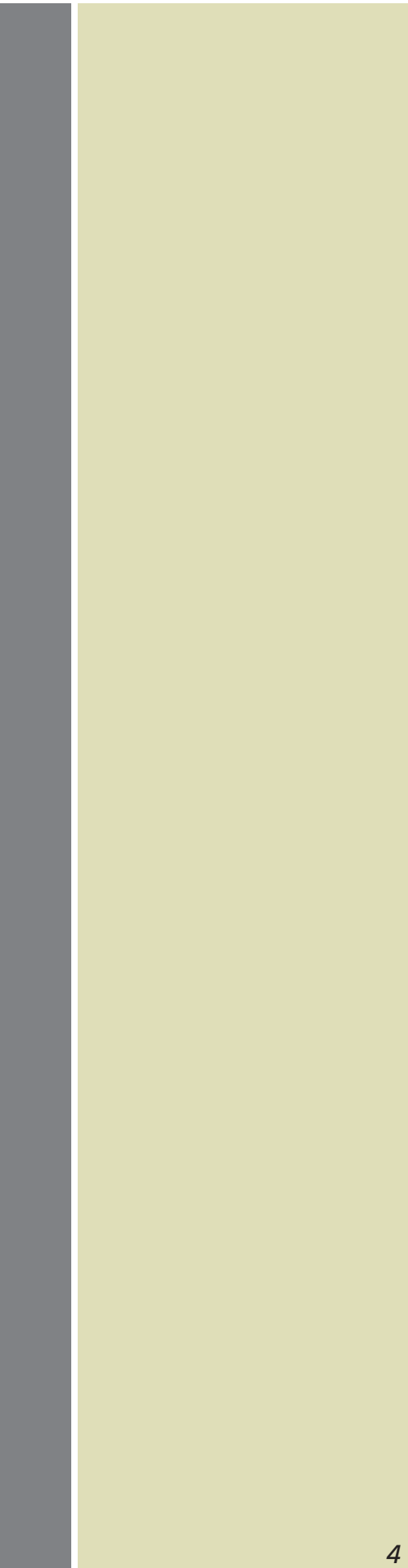
Building Communities Through Local Government

A Resource for Teaching and Learning About Municipal Governments

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This teaching and learning resource has been developed for Alberta students and teachers, and is designed to support, enrich and extend the experiences provided by core Grade 6 Social Studies resources. At the heart of this resource are approaches, strategies and tools that encourage citizen involvement and participation – with students, teachers, municipal officials and community members.



INTRODUCTION

The Alberta Grade 6 Social Studies program of studies focuses on citizenship, identity and democratic processes of decision-making within our society. Students explore ways to participate in democratic processes, be involved in their communities and develop beliefs, values and attitudes that empower them to effect change. The topic of local government is a natural place for students to investigate how issues, challenges and decisions are dealt with in communities.

The *Building Communities Through Local Government* resources provide opportunities for students to explore local government in the context of their own and other communities. The resources support General Outcome 6.1 of the Alberta Social Studies program of studies. They are based on a fundamental assumption that students should be involved in decision-making and encouraged to consider ways that they can be active, participatory and engaged citizens.

Building Communities Through Local Government includes the following components:

- This *Building Communities Through Local Government* Teaching and Learning Resource
- The *Building Communities Through Local Government* website, found at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6.cfm
- The *Building Communities Through Local Government* A Resource for Municipal Officials
- A poster, student trading cards and a CD with PDF files of the resources, assessment tools and website visuals.

These components encourage students to delve into different aspects of municipal decision-making and governance in Alberta. The resources develop students' understandings of, and commitment to, their communities as well as their sense of empowerment and ability to participate in change processes.

Grade 6 Social Studies

Democracy: Action and Participation

Grade 6 students will examine how participation in the democratic process is a means for governments and citizens to effect change in their communities. They will explore how democratic principles and ideals are reflected in the structure and functions of their local and provincial governments.

General Outcome 6.1

Citizens Participating in Decision-Making

Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the dynamic relationship between governments and citizens as they engage in the democratic process.

***Building Communities Through Local Government* encourages students to explore different perspectives and opportunities for becoming involved as citizens.**

The learning experiences in *Building Communities Through Local Government* offer numerous possibilities for students to explore and develop the following understandings and processes:

- Local government, democracy and citizenship
- Municipal government as a type of local authority
- Types of municipalities in Alberta
- Roles and responsibilities of municipal governments
- Processes, structures and functions of municipal governments
- The electoral process
- Accountability and responsibilities of elected municipal officials
- Ways that representatives and citizens interact
- How the decision-making process is applied to issues and challenges
- Ways to be involved in the decision-making process and effect change.

Building Communities Through Local Government provides students with opportunities to inquire into the structures, functions and processes of municipal government in Alberta and investigate the similarities and differences between different municipalities, including urban and rural, large and small. Students are also encouraged to participate in their local community through current affairs that are related to municipal government and decision-making.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Students need to feel a connection to their community and their government. Awareness of political processes and a desire to become actively involved as citizens is important for the development of our communities, province and nation. It is also central to building commitment to the values and attitudes of a democracy. This resource provides a valuable, Alberta-focused supplement to support teaching about local government.

Local government touches people's lives on a day-to-day basis. It responds to the needs of communities and plans for their futures. Local government shapes and influences ways of life of all people, regardless of whether they live in rural areas, villages, towns or cities. It is accountable to its communities. Local government is municipal government, a type of local authority. Local authorities include school board authorities, and health authorities, improvement districts and special areas.

Municipalities are local government structures created by the provinces to provide essential services to communities. The powers and responsibilities of municipal governments in Alberta are established by the *Municipal Government Act*. Municipal governments in Alberta provide services, develop plans, raise revenue and implement policies and decisions. The efforts of municipal government serve community members and work to improve the quality of life in a community. Municipal councils and regional boards consist of local citizens elected by the community – and municipal government staff are often community members. Local government is about citizenship and community.

ORGANIZATION AND INQUIRY

Using This Resource

Building Communities Through Local Government provides a learning sequence that develops and supports selected outcomes from the Grade 6 Social Studies program. This learning sequence can comprise approximately six to ten weeks of time out of the school year, depending upon activities selected.

Building Communities Through Local Government is organized into four sections. A suggested time allocation for each section is based on 50-minute classes.

FEATURES

Within each section of this resource, features provide support for different learning preferences and levels, skill development and integrated planning.



Differentiate provides suggestions and strategies for addressing differing learning needs, interests and prior knowledge.



Integrate identifies opportunities to integrate and provides suggestions and strategies for addressing outcomes across different subject areas in the Alberta program of studies.



Website identifies activities that support and extend the use of the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website.



Assess provides suggestions, strategies and tools for assessment of students. A performance task, as well as rubrics and checklist templates and tools, is included in each section of the resource.



Participate identifies strategies and activities that encourage the development of social participation outcomes. These strategies and activities also reinforce the Participate feature on the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website.



Interact provides suggestions for working with municipal officials in appropriate, meaningful and inquiry-based contexts.



Teacher Backgrounders provide detailed information to support students' learning of concepts and information related to municipal government in Alberta.



Think About provides insights, comments, additional suggestions and extra information to enhance or support the approaches, activities and information provided in this resource.

How to Navigate Through This Resource

Grey page tabs indicate teacher information, tools and strategies. Green page tabs indicate student resources.

Get Personal introduces the concept of municipal government and revisits understandings of community.	10 to 17 class periods
A Good Place to Live focuses on the processes, structures and functions of municipal governments.	11 to 16 class periods
Make Connections explores opportunities and choices for getting involved with community issues and participating in local government processes.	11 to 19 class periods
Participate emphasizes action and change.	7 to 10 class periods

As students build understandings about local government, citizenship and democracy, they explore five critical issues:

- What is a community?
- What should and can a community provide?
- Why share?
- What does it mean to be a citizen?
- How democratic is our community?

Get Personal encourages students to explore what citizenship means to them in the context of daily life in communities. Students develop criteria for an ideal community, discuss connections between community and local government, and identify public services and facilities. They examine municipalities and municipal government in Alberta, investigate what services and facilities can be provided by municipal government, and consider the range of factors that influence individual and community responsibilities and decision-making. Students investigate what democracy means and start to develop an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of municipal government.

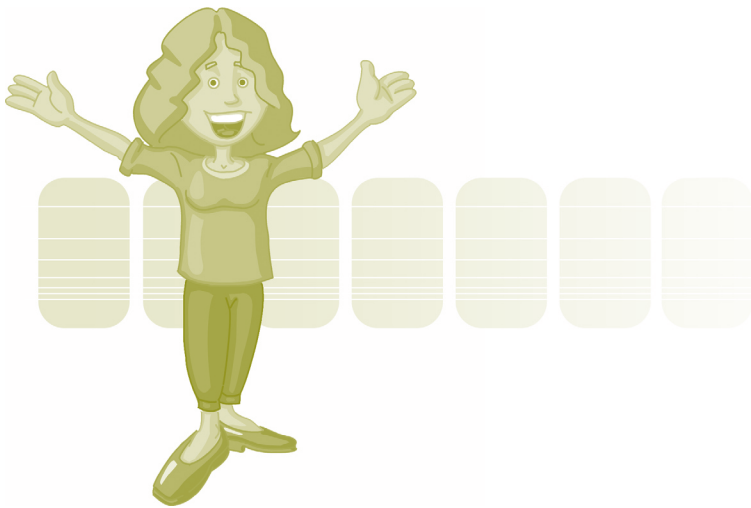
As students focus their inquiry on the roles and responsibilities of municipal government, they explore five critical issues:

- Why do people choose to live in a municipality?
- How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live?
- Why do we need municipal government?
- How does municipal government serve communities?
- How do the decisions of municipal government reflect the values and attitudes of its communities?

A Good Place to Live invites students to explore different types of municipalities and decisions, challenges and issues they may face. Students investigate municipalities in Alberta and identify similarities and differences between them. They conduct a community scan, identifying issues and challenges that influence decision-making in their municipalities. They develop knowledge and understandings about the structures and functions, roles and responsibilities of municipal government, and consider how municipalities make decisions for sustainability. Students develop an appreciation for the ways that decision-making is influenced by different needs as well as by municipal governments and community members.

Make Connections provides students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge of municipal government to ways that citizens can influence and shape decision-making. Students explore the electoral process, representation and citizen action and identify ways that municipal representatives demonstrate accountability to their communities. Students also investigate ways that individuals, groups and organizations share perspectives and beliefs on issues and concerns that affect and interest them. They examine strategies that extend understandings of participation and decision-making. Students build appreciation for ways that people can contribute to the quality of life within communities by working together, supporting and participating in their municipal government.

Participate invites students to investigate a local issue and participate in a decision that affects them and their municipality. Students research, develop and carry out a plan for action. They create a strategic plan to describe a vision, recommendations, rules and principles that should guide decisions for their municipality's future. They build appreciation for the contributions of municipal government officials, and the ways that people of all ages can participate in their municipalities.



As students investigate decision-making in municipalities, they explore five critical issues:

- Why are municipal representatives elected?
- How are elected officials accountable to community members?
- How do local issues in the municipality affect decision-making and participation?
- How do people influence decision-making?
- Why is this local issue important?

As students build strategies for participating in their communities and municipal government, they explore three critical issues:

- What does it mean to participate?
- How can kids participate as citizens?
- To what extent should people and organizations work together to build a vision for the future?

Using the Website

The *Building Communities Through Local Government* website provides students with the opportunity to explore different aspects of municipal government. An illustrated landscape provides the entry point into the website. Once students enter the landscape, they find different types of municipalities, from large and small urban centres to rural areas as well as a Métis Settlement, a different type of government. Students can obtain information by clicking on the icon beside each municipality and the Métis Settlement.

The website also allows students to investigate different facilities and services within three of the municipalities in greater depth. Within each of these three municipalities, students can:

- Investigate the roles of mayors or reeves, councillors, chief administrative officers and others involved in municipal government
- Find out about some of the services and facilities provided by municipal government
- Follow a decision-making process with a fictional student who responds to an issue
- Obtain information about social participation strategies.

Suggestions for integrating the *Building Communities Through Local Government* into classroom activities are provided in each section of the teaching resource.



THINK ABOUT

The **Vote for a Representative** interactive activity is a simulation. Municipal elections occur once every three years on a single day!



The website includes two feature links:

Participate encourages students to explore different options for participating in decision-making and investigating issues. Participate provides examples and discussions on social participation and action – holding community dialogues, attending community meetings, lobbying and creating press releases. This feature also models and encourages citizen participation through two interactive activities:

- **Vote for a Representative** invites students to participate in a mock election of a municipal representative. Students explore the views and stances of three fictional municipal candidates and vote to elect the candidate they believe would best represent them. Student votes register and accumulate daily. When a representative has been elected, each of the three municipalities displays a change that reflects their views. The votes reset daily. Students can view the current or previous day's results.
- **Voice Your Opinion** gives students the opportunity to register their opinion on an issue that will result in change to the municipality. Students respond to a "yes-no" question and their votes accumulate and reset daily. Students can view the current or previous day's results.

Scrapbook provides opportunities for students to track and organize their research on municipal government structures, functions, responsibilities and processes. Students can select icons to add to the website scrapbook and print a record of their research.

Teaching and Learning with Municipal Officials

Building Communities Through Local Government provides strategies for students to work with municipal officials in their municipality. These strategies are supported by A Resource for Municipal Officials, available to municipal officials. The Resource for Municipal Officials provides an overview of what grade 6 students learn about local government and suggested strategies for supporting students in their learning.

The Inquiry Model

The inquiry model used in this resource provides opportunities for students to develop and apply research and social participation skills. Students explore questions and issues by starting with their own knowledge and perspectives, use research skills to collect information, apply critical thinking skills to develop conclusions and consider social action.

When students **Explore**, they are asked to think about what they know and why this inquiry is important, interesting and relevant to themselves and to others.

When students **Consider Perspectives**, they identify research questions and consider who is affected by this issue. They are also asked to find out about different opinions and perspectives that may influence decisions.

As students **Plan and Find Information**, they identify and organize the sources of information that will help them research and understand the issue.

As students **Record and Organize**, they record what they find out, and look for patterns, connections, similarities and differences in the information.

When students **Draw and Share Conclusions**, they discuss and present their conclusions and the evidence that supports them. They explore the perspectives involved, form opinions and make decisions.

When students **Take Action**, they decide what they will do with what they have learned. They are encouraged to make a plan to act on their decisions.

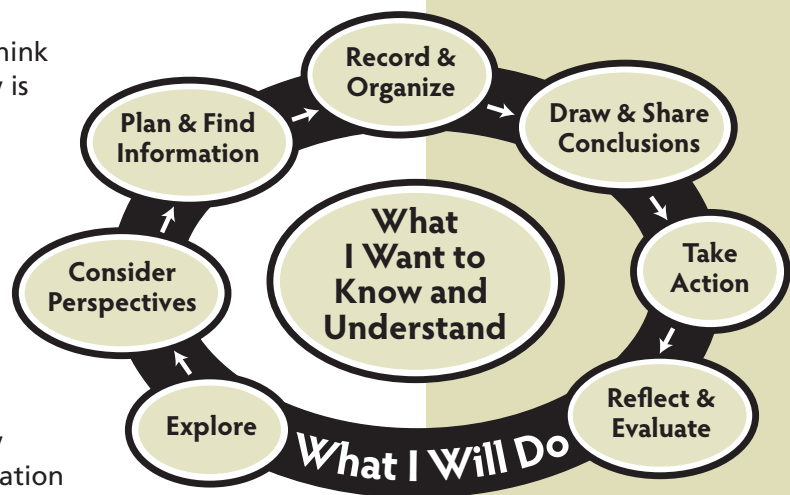
As students **Reflect and Evaluate**, they consider how effective their decisions and actions were. They think about what they could change, do next, or find out more about.

The chart that follows provides an overview of the inquiry process used in this resource, including the purpose of each step in the inquiry process, questions that can guide the inquiry and the critical issues that support and develop each step.



INTERACT

In this teaching and learning resource, **Interact** identifies activities that can be supported by the involvement of people who work with municipal government. Consider the capacity of your municipality and municipal officials when selecting from these activities.



THE PROCESS	Purpose of Each Step of the Inquiry Process	
Explore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivate and generate interest • Establish prior knowledge and experiences • Identify concepts and understandings • Make predictions 	
Consider Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify research questions • Identify individuals and groups involved with the question or issue • Consider different perspectives and opinions 	
Plan and Find Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on research process • Identify, locate and organize sources and information • Allocate tasks 	
Record and Organize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record information • Organize information collected • Analyze the information • Make connections and comparisons 	
Draw and Share Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present the information • Draw conclusions • Analyze the information • Assess information • Consider solutions, perspectives, alternatives and predictions • Make decisions 	
Take Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify actions • Implement actions 	
Reflect and Evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on actions • Consider effectiveness • Assess learning • Identify further research • Start the inquiry process again 	

Questions that can Guide Inquiry	Inquiry Emphasis of Each Critical Issue
<p>Why is this important? What interests me about this issue or question? What do I already know? What do I think about this issue? How does this issue or question affect me? What do I need to understand about this issue?</p>	<p>Section 1: What is a community? What should and can a community provide? What does it mean to be a citizen?</p>
<p>What questions do I have? Who is affected and why? What different opinions exist?</p>	<p>Section 1: Why share? What does it mean to be a citizen? How democratic is our community?</p> <p>Section 2: Why do people choose to live in municipalities?</p>
<p>How will I find out what I need to know and understand? What type of information do I need? What sources do I need to consult? What is the best way to research? Who can we find out more from?</p>	<p>Section 2: How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live? Why do we need municipal government?</p> <p>Section 3: Why are municipal representatives elected? How are elected officials accountable to community members? Why is this issue important?</p>
<p>How will we record our research? What similarities and differences do we see? What comparisons can we make? What connections do we see?</p>	<p>Section 2: How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live? Why do we need municipal government?</p> <p>Section 3: How do local issues in the community affect decision-making and participation? How do people influence decision-making?</p>
<p>How will we share our information? What would happen if...? What conclusions can we make? What evidence supports our conclusions?</p>	<p>Section 2: How does municipal government serve communities? How do the decisions of municipal government reflect the values and attitudes of its communities?</p> <p>Section 3: Why is this issue important?</p> <p>Section 4: What does it mean to participate?</p>
<p>What will we do with what we have learned? What would happen if...? How can we contribute? How can we make a difference? What should we do next?</p>	<p>Section 4: How can kids participate as citizens?</p>
<p>How effective were our actions? What should we change? What should we do next? What more do we need to find out about?</p>	<p>Section 4: To what extent should people and organizations work together to build a vision for the future?</p>

What to Prepare

Building Communities Through Local Government is designed around a series of inquiry-based student activities that focus on local government and decision-making in municipalities. Many of the activities in each section of the resource use current and local affairs. Activities also introduce and develop concepts related to municipal governance.

The following strategies can be used to prepare for the learning experiences throughout this resource:

- Collect local media sources such as newspapers, community newsletters and magazines. Start news clipping files of articles about local community issues, dilemmas, challenges and government decisions.
- Look for community sources such as brochures, photographs and booklets about the community. Check your municipality's website for any resources they may have about the community or the municipal government. Start "pizza box" centres of different types of information about the community, municipality and local government.
- Identify websites that provide information about the community and the municipality. Some municipalities may include more than one community – identify information sources about each community. **Appendix B (pp. 214-215)** provides some websites you may wish to start with.
- Consider having students start an illustrated glossary of vocabulary terms and concepts.
- Consider having students start a learning log or journal to reflect on what they have learned about local government, municipalities, citizenship and participation. Invite them to establish a section in a binder or notebook to collect their work.
- Provide students with their own file folders to start a portfolio focused on what they are learning about citizenship and participation.
- Plan for ways to integrate and link inquiries related to First Nations and Métis authorities and Francophone associations with students' explorations on municipal government. Although these organizations and school districts are not a focus of this resource, inquiries and activities from core resources can be connected and compared as students learn about municipal government structures, roles and responsibilities in Alberta.
- Consider ways that you can also encourage students to make connections and comparisons to provincial and federal levels of government.
- Invite students to work in groups and create a poster with the critical questions for each section of the resource. These posters can be displayed in the classroom. Discuss the critical issues questions as a starting point for your inquiry into municipal government.



THINK ABOUT

Websites I can use with this resource:

TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES

Building Communities Through Local Government is designed around current research and pedagogical approaches that underlie and align with the Alberta Social Studies program. These approaches emphasize an engaged, constructivist approach to teaching about citizenship. They emphasize student-centered inquiry, a community-centered approach to learning, and a focus on critical issues and collaborative decision-making.

The Grade 6 Student and Citizenship Engagement

By grade 6, students are starting to form values they will hold for a lifetime. The Grade 6 Social Studies program encourages students to become knowledgeable and involved in their local communities. Students are ready for more cognitive reasoning, decision-making and critical thinking. They continue to develop concerns over right and wrong. Grade 6 students should be encouraged to explore concepts and values associated with citizenship, engagement, responsibility and rights.

Building Communities Through Local Government:

- Provides grade 6 students with opportunities to link their learning to real-world experiences
- Benefits students and their communities by emphasizing involvement and interaction between students, municipal officials and community members
- Motivates students and encourages interest in local issues
- Initiates students into their roles as participatory and responsible citizens.

Learning Approaches

Research has shown that resources that take a more student-centered, active and participatory stance to learning are more effective in influencing changes in choices, attitudes and behaviours. *Building Communities Through Local Government* emphasizes active learning, and provides strategies and supports for implementing curriculum that is consistent with the philosophy of the Alberta Social Studies program.

Active learning strategies include approaches and activities such as class discussions, hands-on learning, collaborative learning, projects, multimedia simulations and inquiry. This resource recognizes the need to develop critical and creative thinking skills, problem-solving and decision-making strategies, and collaborative and respectful learning environments. The involvement of municipal officials reinforces learning in authentic and real-life contexts.



THINK ABOUT

As students continue to move toward more abstract thinking, they can grasp the ideas that underlie values such as fairness, respect and diversity of opinions.



THINK ABOUT

Active learning strategies are considered most effective when presented within an inquiry-based framework.

Constructivist learning recognizes that students learn most effectively when they are encouraged to construct and analyze their own understandings. It organizes information around conceptual clusters of challenges and questions and provides:

- Activities that are authentic, relevant and of emerging interest to students
- Activities that are problem-based
- Assessment that reinforces the learning process
- Opportunities that require students to be actively involved in sharing ideas, asking questions, discussing concepts and revising their ideas and misconceptions.

Cooperative learning is a strategy for participatory learning that emphasizes accountability and responsibility in group tasks and experiences. Cooperative learning strategies emphasize student involvement and the development of collaborative attitudes towards learning.

Inquiry-based learning is centered on research and investigation, as well as on experimentation and exploration of critical issues and questions. Inquiry-based learning is a fundamental aspect of the Alberta Social Studies program of studies, and includes elements and processes such as:

- Understanding the inquiry
- Exploring perspectives
- Planning the inquiry
- Retrieving information
- Processing and organizing information
- Creating and organizing ideas
- Sharing information and perspectives
- Taking action
- Evaluating and reflecting.



THINK ABOUT

The concept of community is reflected in multiple contexts within classrooms, schools and communities.

A **community-centered approach** to learning encourages the exploration of local and community-based topics and issues. Asking students to explore different meanings associated with the concept of community reinforces the multiple perspectives that influence decision-making. *Building Communities Through Local Government*:

- Presents perspectives and understandings that build a broader understanding of community
- Introduces and develops the process of community building, a critical aspect of local government

- Encourages the development of skills related to citizenship participation and collaborative decision-making.

As students explore the relationship between citizenship and community through local government, they focus on building a shared sense of commitment and belonging and respect for the opinions and perspectives of others.

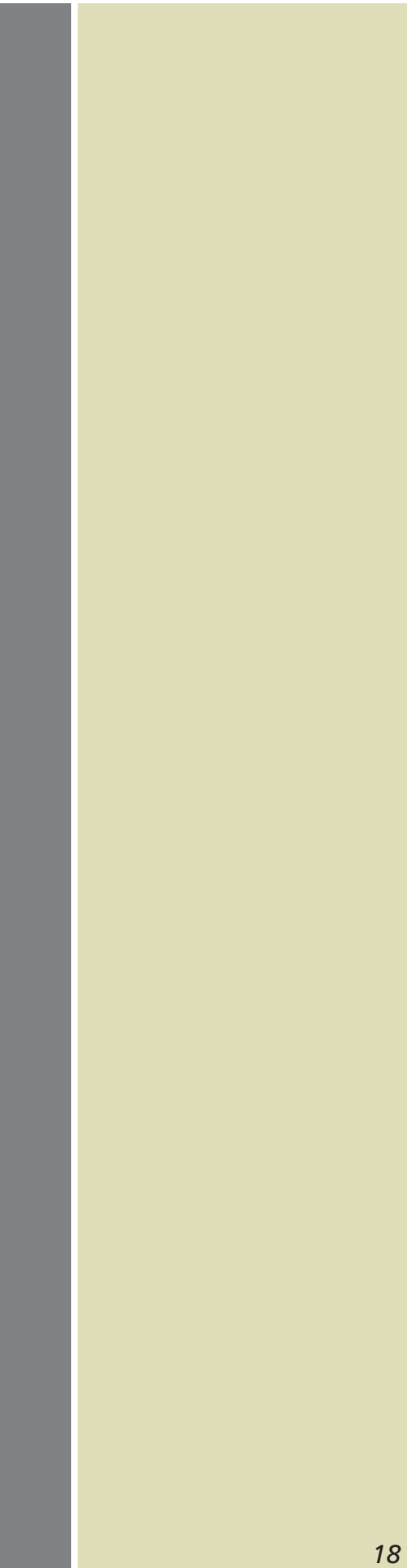
A **critical issues approach** provides dilemmas and inquiries that are relevant and meaningful to students. Critical issues, posed effectively, ask students to develop and apply critical thinking skills, build understandings of multiple perspectives, consider alternatives and recognize that challenges can often involve many different opinions or solutions.

Building Communities Through Local Government is developed around a critical issues approach, one that promotes inquiry-based learning and critical thinking. Issues are framed around questions that are relevant and meaningful to students, and engage students in deliberative research and the development of social participation skills.



THINK ABOUT

Critical issues frame learning around key questions that pose problems and challenges that intrigue and interest students and set a context for motivated learning.



Section 1

1. GET PERSONAL

The learning approaches and activities in **Section 1: Get Personal** encourage students to consider how their own communities set a context for decision-making and shared responsibilities. Students develop criteria for what an ideal community should provide, and identify privately owned as well as shared services and facilities. Students start to develop understandings of the relationship between local government, democracy and citizenship. Students consider the responsibilities involved in building a good quality of life within communities, how local government contributes and how issues involve shared decision-making.

This section introduces students to the concepts of municipalities and municipal government in Alberta and reinforces understandings of citizenship, rights and responsibilities in a democracy. Activities focus on the link between the broader concepts of citizenship and local government and set the context for further exploration of the structures and functions of municipal government in Section 2: A Good Place to Live.

Select, modify and adapt the activities that follow to best meet the needs of your students, reinforce what students have previously learned about the concept of community and introduce students to ways that local government is connected to community and participation.

Involvement in *Involvement in Communities* Communities

Preparing for Learning

This section asks students to work with the concepts of community, municipal government, decision-making and democracy. Students should have been introduced to the concepts of **democracy** and **representation**. A **democracy** is a political system in which citizens have a voice in decision-making. A **representative democracy** provides citizens with the ability to elect a representative to govern and make decisions on their behalf. Students should also have an understanding of the characteristics of urban and rural communities.

There are five critical issues in this section.

What is a community?
1 to 2 class periods*

What should and can a community provide?
4 to 5 class periods*

Why share?
1 to 3 class periods*

What does it mean to be a citizen?
2 to 3 class periods*

How democratic is our community?
2 to 4 class periods*

* Based on 50-minute class periods

WHAT YOU NEED

Student Resources

- ❑ Student Resource 1-1: Building Municipalities (pp. 45-48)
- ❑ Student Resource 1-2: Alberta Municipalities (pp. 49-54)
- ❑ Student Resource 1-3: Shared Spaces (pp. 55-56)
- ❑ Student Resource 1-4: Democracy and Local Government (pp. 57-58)

Graphic Organizers

- ❑ KWHL Chart (p. 200)
- ❑ T-Chart (p. 201)
- ❑ Clipboard (p. 203)
- ❑ Bubble Map (p. 204)
- ❑ Triple T-Chart (p. 202)
- ❑ Sphere of Influence Chart (p. 205)
- ❑ Multi-Flow Map (p. 206)

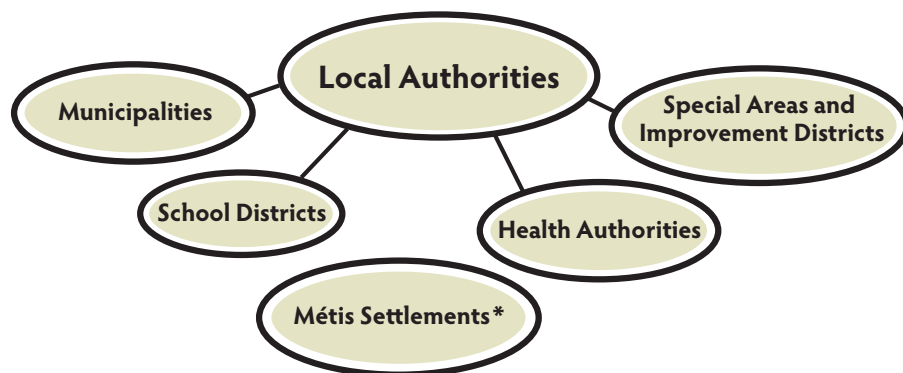
Materials and Sources

- ❑ Poster paper
- ❑ Mural paper
- ❑ Art supplies
- ❑ Local newspapers, magazines, brochures and pictures

Teacher Backgrounders

- ❑ Municipal Government in a Democracy (pp. 59-61)

This teacher backgrounder describes the concept of governance in municipalities. Governance in a municipality usually refers to the roles, responsibilities and activities of the municipal council. As the governing body of the municipal corporation, the council is the foundation of local democracy. However, the *Municipal Government Act*, the provincial legislation governing municipalities, provides that councils can only exercise the powers of the municipal corporation in the proper form, either by bylaw or by resolution.



* A Métis Settlement is a corporation under the *Métis Settlement Act* and provides services and governance like a local authority.



THINK ABOUT

Local government in Alberta is municipal government. Municipalities are a type of local authority.

A First Nations reserve is not a part of any municipality. Through the *British North America Act (1867)*, the federal government has exclusive legislative authority on matters related to Aboriginal peoples and reserves.

The council as a whole has specific roles to play, as does each elected representative. Some of these roles are legislated by the *Municipal Government Act*.

❑ Municipalities in Alberta (pp. 62-66)

This teacher backgrounder provides a description of the types of municipal governments found in Alberta. Each type of municipality has unique characteristics. However, all are governed by the *Municipal Government Act*. The total number of different types of municipalities can change over time.

A municipality is an administrative entity composed of a clearly defined boundary and the population within it. Municipalities are often thought of as urban and rural. However, current municipalities in Alberta go beyond that understanding. Many municipalities have areas and influences that combine both urban and rural ways of life. The designation “rural” should not be interpreted to include only farm or resource-based areas. Some rural municipalities contain substantial residential populations.

This backgrounder provides information on:

- Cities
- Towns
- Villages
- Summer Villages
- Specialized Municipalities
- Municipal Districts.

It also provides information about improvement districts, special areas, and Métis Settlements, which are not municipalities.



LEARNING OUTCOMES AND INQUIRY

Section 1: Get Personal emphasizes the **Explore** and **Consider Perspectives** stages of the inquiry process. The five critical issues in this section include a performance assessment task.

Inquiry Steps and Processes	Questions that Guide the Inquiry	Critical Issues that Emphasize the Inquiry Focus
Explore <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivate and generate interest Establish prior knowledge and experiences Identify concepts and understandings Make predictions 	Why is this important? What interests me about this issue or question? What do I already know? What do I think about this issue? How does this issue or question affect me? What do I need to understand about this issue?	What is a community? What should and can a community provide?
Consider Perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify research questions Identify individuals and groups involved with the question or issue Consider different perspectives and opinions 	What questions do I have? Who is affected and why? What different opinions exist?	Why share? What does it mean to be a citizen? How democratic is our community?

Social Studies Learning Outcomes

General Outcome 6.1

Citizens Participating in Decision-Making

Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the dynamic relationship between governments and citizens as they engage in the democratic process.

Local and Current Affairs

In order to allow opportunities for students to engage in current affairs, issues and concerns of a local nature, the program of studies provides the flexibility to include these topics within the time allotted for social studies.

Specific Learning Outcomes Supported and Developed in Section 1: Get Personal

Values and Attitudes

6.1.1 recognize how individuals and governments interact and bring about change within their local and national communities:

- (1) recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada (C, I)
- (4) value citizens' participation in a democratic society (C)

Knowledge and Understandings

6.1.2 demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- (1) What is democracy? (C, PADM)
- (3) What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens living in a representative democracy? (C, PADM)

6.1.4 analyze the structure and functions of local governments in Alberta by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- (3) How are local governments structured differently in rural and urban settings? (PADM)

Skills and Processes

6.5.1 develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking:

- (1) assess significant local and current affairs from a variety of sources, with a focus on examining bias and distinguishing fact from opinion
- (2) critically evaluate ideas, information and positions
- (3) re-evaluate personal opinions to broaden understanding of a topic or an issue
- (4) generate original ideas and strategies in individual and group activities

6.5.3 develop skills of geographic thinking:

- (1) construct and interpret various types of maps to broaden understanding of topics being studied (i.e., historical, physical, political maps)

6.5.4 demonstrate skills of decision-making and problem solving:

- (3) collaborate with others to devise strategies for dealing with problems and issues
- (7) use graphic organizers, such as mind mapping/webbing, flow charting and outlining, to present connections among ideas and information in a problem-solving environment

6.5.5 demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building:

- (2) work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal

6.5.7 apply the research process:

- (1) determine reliability of information, filtering for point of view and bias
- (2) formulate questions to be answered through the research process
- (3) use graphs, tables, charts and Venn diagrams to interpret information

6.S.8 demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy:

- (1) express opinions and present perspectives and information in a variety of forms such as oral or written presentations, speeches or debates
- (2) express reasons for their ideas and opinions, in oral or written form
- (5) listen to others in order to understand their perspectives
- (7) communicate effectively through appropriate forms, such as speeches, reports and multimedia presentations, applying information technologies that serve particular audiences and purposes

6.S.9 develop skills of media literacy:

- (1) detect bias present in the media
- (2) examine and assess diverse perspectives regarding an issue presented in the media

ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

Ongoing Assessment

Choices can be made about assessing student work in this section. The criteria checklist provided in this section can be used to:

- Observe student work in group and classroom settings
- Develop checklists for assessment of student work in the activities in this section.

Performance Assessment Task

The performance assessment task, *Participation Challenge – How democratic is our community?* involves students in a real-life scenario where they are asked to find evidence of democracy in action in their community, filter for bias and express their opinions. Students have choices in the way they communicate their information.

Criteria for Evaluation

Students provide evidence of their learning in this performance assessment task as they:

- provide evidence of democratic principles (6.1.2.1, 6.1.2.3, 6.S.8.2)
- evaluate sources of information (6.S.1.1, 6.S.7.1, 6.S.9.1)
- express and support opinions (6.S.1.3)
- communicate information (6.S.8.1, 6.S.8.7).



DIFFERENTIATE

Modifiable assessment tools are provided in Word format on the *Building Communities Through Local Government* teacher CD, as well as on the website.



Assessment Tip: Evaluating Differentiated Products

Invite students to identify the important features of the various means of communicating information. Each format will generate a slightly different list of criteria.

A good poster:

- States a clear message
- Uses legible lettering
- Supports the message with appropriate visuals
- Organizes information.

A good newspaper article:

- States a clear message
- Engages the reader with the lead sentence
- Organizes information
- Attends to conventions to support the reader in making meaning.

These criteria help students focus on what is important for their selected presentation format. These criteria are not graded individually; rather, they contribute to the overall impression of the message. As students pay attention to these criteria and improve their work in progress, their performance will be reflected in the rubric score for communicating information.

Students can use the *Checklist for Differentiated Products* provided in this section to record the criteria from their discussion and reflect on their work in progress. Items in the *Not Yet* category should be improved prior to handing in the assignment.



Assessment Tip: Using Checklists

The checklists included in each section of this resource provide a list of assessment criteria for the section that addresses outcomes from the Grade 6 Social Studies Program of Studies. Each criteria statement represents a cluster of outcomes and addresses all Values and Attitudes, Knowledge and Understandings and Skills and Process outcomes supported by the activities in each section. These checklists can be used to assess where students are at the beginning or end of the section. Assessing students at the beginning of the section provides support for making decisions about differentiating instruction or making choices about which activities will be used or how they should be modified. The checklist can be photocopied and placed in a folder for each student or can be used to assess students as they work in groups. Additional assessments can be added to the folder as the unit progresses and comments added to each student's checklist.

Section 1: Get Personal Checklist

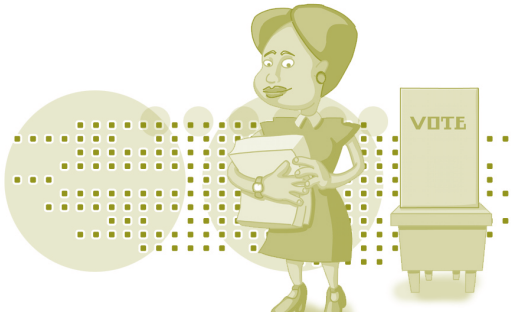
Criteria Students provide evidence of their learning as they:	Yes	Almost	Not Yet
Listen and respond respectfully to understand democratic principles (6.1.1.1, 6.1.1.4, 6.S.8.5)			
Provide evidence of knowledge of democratic principles (6.1.2.1, 6.1.2.3, 6.S.8.2)			
Identify structure and functions of local government (6.1.4.3)			
Develop inquiry questions (6.S.7.2)			
Examine, evaluate and assess sources of information (6.S.1.1, 6.S.1.2, 6.S.7.1, 6.S.7.3, 6.S.9.1, 6.S.9.2)			
Discuss and share original ideas with others (6.S.1.4, 6.S.8.1)			
Express and support opinions (6.S.1.3, 6.S.8.2)			
Use graphic organizers to make connections between ideas (6.S.4.7)			
Use maps to provide evidence of understanding of municipal boundaries (6.S.3.1)			
Communicate information (6.S.8.1, 6.S.8.7)			
Work collaboratively and cooperatively in a group setting (6.S.4.3, 6.S.5.2)			

Section 1: Get Personal

Checklist for Differentiated Products

What’s important when using a _____to communicate information?

Criteria for a good _____:	Does my work demonstrate the qualities of a good _____?		
	Yes	Not Yet	I know this because:
•			
•			
•			
•			
•			
•			
•			
•			



Section 1: Get Personal

Rubric: Participation Challenge – How democratic is our community?

Level Criteria	4 Excellent	3 Proficient	2 Adequate	1 Limited *	Insufficient / Blank *
Identifies and shares evidence of democratic principles (6.1.2.1, 6.2.1.3, 6.5.8.2)	Identifies and shares pertinent and comprehensive evidence of democratic principles in own community.	Identifies and shares relevant and thorough evidence of democratic principles in own community.	Identifies and shares general and partial evidence of democratic principles in own community.	Identifies and shares vague and superficial evidence of democratic principles in own community.	No score is awarded because there is insufficient evidence of student performance based on the requirements of the assessment task.
Evaluates sources of information (6.S.1.1, 6.S.7.1, 6.S.9.1)	Provides an insightful evaluation of sources.	Provides a thoughtful evaluation of sources.	Provides a basic evaluation of sources.	Provides an ineffective evaluation of sources.	
Expresses and supports opinion (6.S.1.3)	Provides compelling support for opinion.	Provides convincing support for opinion.	Provides simplistic support for opinion.	Provides trivial support for opinion.	
Communicates information (6.S.8.1, 6.S.8.7)	Communicates information in a memorable manner to engage the audience.	Communicates information in a purposeful manner to interest the audience.	Communicates information in a straightforward manner that generally holds the attention of the audience.	Communicates information in an ineffective manner that does little to sustain attention of the audience.	

* When work is judged to be limited or insufficient, the teacher makes decisions about appropriate intervention to help the student improve.

GLOSSARY

The following terms and concepts are developed in the activities and student resources of Section 1: Get Personal. Although they are grouped under the critical issue in which they are introduced, many recur and are used throughout the entire section. Definitions and explanations are presented in the context in which they appear in the teacher and student information.

Critical Issue 1: What is a community?

Community is defined as “a group of people with commonalities that may include culture, language, values and beliefs, interests, practices and ways of life, history and/or geographically defined shared space.”

Source: Kindergarten to Grade 3 Social Studies Program of Studies (2005): p. 6.

Most geographic communities in Alberta are governed by a **local government**, the level of government given the power to make decisions that relate to local issues and services. Local government is also called **municipal government**. Municipal government is a type of local government that is created by the provinces to provide services.

There are different types of **municipalities**. Each has similar structures and functions and may deal with similar or different issues. Municipalities are administrative entities comprised of a clearly defined boundary and the population within it.

Cities, towns, villages and summer villages are examples of municipalities.

Municipal districts are also municipalities and may include many different landscapes – rural areas and farmland, forested areas, mountains and parkland. Municipal districts can also be called **counties**, and can include smaller communities such as hamlets or **country residential subdivisions**, areas in which people build houses to live.

Examples of **local authorities** are municipal authorities (municipalities, improvement districts and special areas), regional health authorities, regional services commissions and boards of trustees of a district or division as defined in the *School Act*.

The provincial government also governs and manages **improvement districts** and **special areas**. Improvement districts are a form of local authority that is governed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs (who in the case of Kananaskis Improvement District delegates authority to the Minister of Environment). The Minister may form an advisory council to advise on local affairs. The purpose of a special area is to provide administration of Crown land and came about when the province took ownership of large areas of land resulting from unpaid taxes during the Depression.

Critical Issue 2: What should and can a community provide?

Something that is **viable** has the ability to grow and develop.

The **municipal council** is a group of people who are elected to represent the municipality.

The **council** refers to people who are **elected officials** responsible for representing the interests of their **constituents**, including the people who have the ability to elect them and who live in the area they represent.

Council is given the **authority**, or the power, to speak and make decisions for their constituents in council meetings.

Local authorities are areas in Alberta that provide local government. A municipality is considered to be a local authority. There are also other types of local authorities in Alberta.

Democracy is often defined as a political system or system of government, in which citizens have a voice in decision-making. Democracy involves consideration of equality, fairness, freedoms and justice.

A **representative democracy** provides citizens with the ability to elect a representative to govern and make decisions on their behalf.

All municipal governments have councils that **govern**, or make decisions for, their geographic area.

The provincial government is involved with **managing**, or looking after, improvement districts.

A **ward** or district is a geographic area that a municipality can use to divide areas for election purposes, based on the number of people who live there. The council of a municipal district may have one or more councillors for every **electoral division**, or ward, in the municipal district.

Critical Issue 3: Why share?

A **belief** is something that is assumed to be the truth.

An **attitude** is a feeling, emotion or point of view about a situation. Attitudes can often be seen through our behaviours.

Values are ideas, items or beliefs that we believe to be very important.

Critical Issue 5: How democratic is our community?

The municipal government makes decisions by passing **bylaws** and **resolutions**. Some bylaws and resolutions establish rules that all people who live in or visit the municipality have to follow.

A **fact** describes something that has actually happened, or something that can be proven to be true.

An **opinion** describes an attitude, judgement, point of view or conclusion that cannot be proven true or false.

When articles present opinions as if they were true, they have a **bias**. A bias can also be represented when perspectives or points of view are left out or only one side of an issue is presented.



DIFFERENTIATE

In a **roundtable brainstorm**, students take turns sharing an idea or response with other group members. The group member to the right of the speaker takes responsibility for recording the idea on the group poster. The poster paper and pen is passed to the next group member as ideas are shared. Students can be provided with the option of adding visuals and graphics to their posters.

In a **carousel brainstorm**, each question is recorded on a poster paper. Groups rotate through to each poster to respond to the question. All group members can respond, or a group recorder can record the group's responses.

Critical Issues and Activities

What is a community? 1 to 2 class periods

1 Communities can be defined in different ways and on different levels. Ask students to reflect on and share ideas about communities to which they feel a sense of belonging. Have students work in small groups to define and describe what community means, using a **roundtable** or **carousel brainstorm** strategy. Have groups share their perspectives and experiences in response to questions such as:

- Can there be more than one definition or description of a community? What are some of these? (*Encourage students to consider both geographic communities and groups to which they belong as they think about what community means.*)
- In what ways are you part of different communities?
- How can people build a sense of belonging to communities?

Have groups record their ideas and responses on poster paper. Share group posters in a class discussion.

Invite the class to consider how belonging to communities can influence and affect the decisions people make together. Discuss the following concepts and questions:

- Most geographic communities in Alberta are governed by a **local government**, the level of government given the power to make decisions that relate to local issues and services. Local government is also called **municipal government**. Municipal government is created by the provinces to provide services. Why do you think local government is an important aspect of communities?
- Cities, towns, villages, summer villages are examples of **municipalities**. **Municipal districts** are also municipalities and include many different landscapes – rural areas and farmland, forested areas, mountains and parkland. Municipal districts can also be called **counties** and can include smaller communities such as **hamlets** or **country residential subdivisions**, areas in which people build houses to live. What roles and responsibilities do you think municipalities have? What type of municipality or local authority is our geographic community in?

2 Use a graphic organizer such as a **KWL Chart (Appendix A: p. 200)** to help students brainstorm questions about municipalities and municipal government. Post the questions in the classroom.



WEBSITE

The *Building Communities Through Local Government* website explores the structures, functions, roles and responsibilities of municipal government and municipalities in Alberta. Provide students with the opportunity, either in small groups or as a class, to view the home page of the website, found at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6.cfm.

Invite students to review the information on the home page and respond to the questions. Students can be provided with a graphic organizer such as a **T-Chart (Appendix A: p. 201)** to record and organize responses, ideas and further questions. The text on the home page provides descriptions of community, local government and municipalities as well as the following questions:

- What does community mean to you?
- What do you know about local government?
- What are some unique features of the municipality in which you live?

What should and can a community provide? 3 to 4 class periods

1 Physically conceptualizing and constructing understandings of their own community encourages students to articulate and negotiate important aspects of what a community is and what it should provide to the people who live there. This process provides a starting point for developing deeper understandings or correcting misconceptions students may have about the locations of services and facilities, their purpose and importance. This type of constructivist activity can encourage students to expand their understanding of community beyond neighbourhood boundaries that many students associate with the concept of community.

Ask students to continue to work with their small groups. Invite groups to think about how they would represent their geographic community by posing questions such as:

- What does the community look like?
- What natural places exist within the community?
- What types of services and facilities do people build and use?
- If you could paint, draw or create a model of an ideal community, what would be important to include?

2 Have each group create a mural poster that represents a bird's-eye-view of what they would consider to be an ideal community.

- Provide each group with large poster paper and art supplies, such as construction paper, paints, glue sticks and scissors.



THINK ABOUT

Students are introduced to the concept of **community** in the Kindergarten Social Studies Program of Studies. Community is defined as “a group of people with commonalities that may include culture, language, values and beliefs, interests, practices and ways of life, history, and/or geographically defined shared space.”

Building Communities Through Local Government uses this definition to encourage students to explore the relationship between communities and municipal government.

Municipalities are administrative entities comprised of a clearly defined boundary and the population within it.

Source: Kindergarten to Grade 3 Social Studies Program of Studies (2005): p. 6.



ASSESS

The mural poster activity provides an excellent opportunity to observe how students work collaboratively in groups. As they negotiate and discuss what to include and where to locate places, observe for how they listen and respect others' points of view.



INTEGRATE

ART – EXPRESSION

Students will develop themes, with an emphasis on global awareness, based on environment and places; manufactured and human-made things.

The mural poster can provide an opportunity for students to experiment with different composition techniques and means of expression to visually represent services and facilities in their community environments.

- Use local media sources, such as newspapers and magazines, to help identify stores, businesses and other places that are in the community.
- Draw, cut and paste pictures, create buildings, streets or roads and features and develop a legend for symbols and icons used on the mural poster.
- Ask students to discuss and decide how they should represent their community on their murals. Depending on their choices, students may be given the choice to create murals of a whole city, town, village or a rural area.



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can be provided with options for creating their geographic communities. This activity is based on the creation of a poster mural. However, students can create a three-dimensional model on a tabletop or floor space. Students may also choose to draw or paint the community.

Alternatively, a map of a community (or different communities), showing only roads, can be used as the basis for students to identify different types of services and facilities provided in a community. Have each group create a map focused on an aspect of community life. Ask groups to share their maps to build a deeper understanding of what communities should provide.

Students can also be given the option of creating a photograph mural of the community, using disposable or digital cameras.

3 Provide time for each group to orally present their murals to the class. Explore similarities and differences between murals by asking questions such as the following:

- In what ways are the community murals similar or different?
- Are there any elements in the murals that contradict each other? If so, what reasons could there be for these contradictions?
- What experiences do you think influence and form the ways we see our communities?
- What additional information do we need to represent a community accurately and realistically?

Invite students to consider and discuss what communities should provide for a good quality of life for people.

4 Introduce students to the question “What can a municipality provide?” Revisit the concepts of municipality and municipal government, introduced in the first critical issue activity. Use a whole class discussion to ask students to share their ideas in response to the question. Invite students to work with a partner to start to explore the types of services

and facilities that municipalities provide. Provide each pair with **Student Resource 1-1: Building Municipalities (pp. 45-48)**. This student resource introduces students to the concepts of municipal government and democracy, and asks students to:

- Identify different types of services and facilities found in municipalities
- Consider what is important for municipalities to provide to the people who live there
- Explore what the role of municipal government should be in providing facilities and services
- Think about the role and importance of decision-making in a municipality
- Compile a checklist of criteria for a municipality that provides a good quality of life for all.

5 Ask students to continue working with their partners to examine the different municipalities in Alberta. Provide **Student Resource 1-2: Municipalities in Alberta (pp. 49-54)** to students. This student resource:

- Introduces students to, and poses questions about, the different types of municipalities and other local authorities in Alberta
- Invites students to consider the similarities and differences between different types of municipalities, including those with rural and urban ways of life, using the Venn Diagram graphic organizer. (*Municipalities are all governed by the Municipal Government Act and therefore have the same structures, functions and responsibilities. Differences exist between larger and smaller urban municipalities as well as in those municipalities that combine urban and rural areas in the types of decisions they must make about resources and the types of services they can provide.*)

Have students use the map of Alberta municipalities to discuss the location of their municipality in relation to other municipalities. Ask students to discuss what they notice about different municipalities:

- Which municipalities would you identify as urban? Which would you identify as rural? What are the differences? Why do you think it can be challenging to identify some municipalities as one or the other? (*Municipalities in Alberta are not categorized as urban or rural, but rather by their population density and area. However, cities, towns, villages and summer villages can be considered urban. Areas in which there is less dense population settlement are considered rural. These areas may include hamlets. It can be challenging to identify municipalities as either urban or rural as many municipalities have aspects of both. For example, large hamlets, such as Sherwood Park and Fort McMurray, function like cities yet are part of specialized municipalities that also include rural areas.*)



DIFFERENTIATE

Student checklists can be discussed and compared to create a list of criteria for a municipality that provides a good quality of life. These criteria can be added to or revised as students learn more about local government. Peer awarded votes or marks can be used to make decisions about a whole class criteria list.

- To what extent do you think the environment of a municipality can affect the ways people decide what is important? (*Encourage students to consider how the location, landscape and resources can influence the decisions people make about services and facilities that support and enhance their quality of life.*)
- What type of municipality is our community? Why? How many communities make up our municipality? What are some of them? (*Discuss the idea that municipalities may contain more than one geographic community. A municipal district, for example, may include a number of hamlets, country residential subdivisions, urban service areas or agricultural communities. An urban municipality may contain a number of distinct neighbourhoods that can be considered communities.*)



WEBSITE

Have student revisit the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website to start to explore the different types of municipalities and local authorities found in Alberta:

- Larger urban municipalities, such as cities
- Smaller urban municipalities, such as towns, villages and summer villages
- Municipal districts that include rural areas and unincorporated hamlets
- Other types of local authorities, such as improvement districts, specialized municipalities and special areas
- Métis Settlements, which are not municipalities, but provide a form of local authority.

The *Municipal Government Act* states that a municipality is a corporation. A municipality has “natural person powers,” which means that it has the rights and powers of an individual for the purpose of exercising its authority.

These types of municipalities are found once students enter the website and encounter a map. Each municipality is described in a text window that students can access by clicking on the ⓘ icon. Students can use the up and down scroll arrows to read the information in each text window.

Have students use a graphic organizer such as the **Clipboard (Appendix A: p. 203)** to identify and describe similarities and differences between different types of municipalities. The descriptions in the text window on the website are repeated on **Student Resource 1-2: Municipalities in Alberta (pp. 49-54)**.



DIFFERENTIATE

Provide students with a choice in using the website or **Student Resource 1-2: Municipalities in Alberta** to find information about different types of municipalities and other local authorities.

- ⑥ Invite students to consider the difference between a municipality and a community. What can both provide to offer a good quality of life? *(Encourage students to think about ways that communities provide a sense of belonging and sharing. Municipalities can provide facilities and services, depending on the decisions they make.)*

Discuss the extent to which we often tend to identify our communities by the immediate neighbourhoods in which we live and our personal interests and involvements. Ask students to reflect on ways that communities can be identified in the context of municipalities – such as municipal districts, cities, towns and villages. Revisit and reinforce the definition of municipalities and municipal government.

Guide student discussion and comparisons by asking questions such as the following:

- What is the difference between neighbourhoods and communities? *(Communities can have a broad range of understandings, ranging from an entire urban community, such as a city or town, to an area with identified boundaries within an urban centre, to a village or hamlet. A community can also be a group of people to which a sense of belonging is felt, such as an ethnic community or a community of musicians. A neighbourhood is often described as a geographic area within an urban centre, suburb or country residential subdivision, with identified boundaries.)*
- How big can a community be? *(Communities can range in size, from very large to very small, depending on how they are defined and what is used to define them, such as geographic size or population.)*
- How are boundaries used to define communities? *(Boundaries can be used to establish areas within and between communities. Municipalities also have boundaries. These are used to define cities, towns, villages and municipal districts as municipalities. Boundaries can be geographical or political.)*
- How are municipalities different from communities? *(Municipalities can include more than one community. Municipalities are areas established by the provincial government with the purpose of providing local government. Communities have many different functions, and can include many different neighbourhoods. Communities are often formed by groups of people with a shared sense of purpose.)*
- What impact do you think this difference has on local government and the ways people participate and make decisions in their communities? *(Local governments must balance the needs of all people and communities in the municipality. People from different communities that are part of one municipality have to work and make decisions together.)*

Present the question “What must a municipality provide?” to the class. Invite students to share their ideas and create a list on the board. As students present their ideas, ask them to consider questions or challenges such as the following:

- What may happen if a municipality does not have the resources to provide a facility or service?
- What if there are many people who live in a municipality who have different ideas about what is important?
- Do you think there are facilities and services that are essential for every municipality to provide? *(Tell students that they will be exploring ways that municipalities make decisions about the facilities and services they provide. Consider introducing and discussing some of the following ideas that students may be interested and intrigued in knowing. The Municipal Government Act requires municipalities to provide a council, chief administrative officer, bylaw enforcement, a disaster services committee, a land use bylaw, and tax and assessment notices. Many other facilities and services are choices that each municipality can make. For example, a municipality is not required to provide a fire department or ambulance service. If a municipality decides to provide certain services, there may be requirements imposed to meet safety requirements. For example, if a municipality provides municipal water, then it must meet certain drinking water standards. Or if a municipality decides to build a road, it does not have to be built with curbs, gutters, sidewalks or lights, unless the municipality chooses to provide these.)*

Invite students to revisit their community murals and consider whether the ideas they have identified for a good quality of life in a municipality are reflected in their murals. What is missing? What types of choices might be involved in providing additional facilities and services?



WEBSITE

Students can be directed to the link to different Alberta municipalities on the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website to find their municipality. Check the links to different municipalities on this website to ensure this information is available before having students use it. Ensure that you preview website content for appropriateness.

Links to various municipalities can be accessed through the Municipal Profiles on the Municipal Affairs site at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/mc_municipal_profiles.cfm.

Why share? 1 to 3 class periods

1 Local government involves interactions and relationships that exist within a community. Citizens are connected to each other through facilities and services that they share. The concept of sharing is central to understanding the necessity and importance of local government.

Have students revisit their community models and use a graphic organizer, such as a **Bubble Map (Appendix A: p. 204)**, to identify facilities and services they use in their own or other communities. With themselves in the centre of the map, identify and describe facilities and services they use. Discuss the bubble maps with questions such as the following:

- Which of these facilities and services are shared with others in our community?
- With whom are they shared?
- Why and how are these facilities and services shared by all people who live in our community?
- In what ways should these and other facilities and services be shared?

2 Write the words “public spaces” and “private spaces” on the board. Ask students to brainstorm and discuss differences.

- Start with the idea of public and private spaces in homes or in the school. For example, private spaces may include rooms, closets, desks or lockers that are used by one individual. Public spaces may include kitchens, living rooms, gymnasiums or classrooms that many individuals share.
- Discuss how more than one individual may use a private space, but only if the person who owns it consents to this use.
- Ask students to think about how the concepts of private and public spaces can apply to a community and a municipality. (*Encourage students to consider examples such as privately owned businesses that set hours when people can come in or private homes or land. Public spaces that students consider may include roads, streets and sidewalks, public parks or recreational facilities, libraries and public lighting.*)

Have students work with their small groups and use a **group consult** strategy to complete **Student Resource 1-3: Shared Spaces (pp. 55-56)**. This student resource asks students to:

- Identify public spaces and private spaces in communities. (*Encourage students to consider how some spaces, such as roads, walkways, parks and recreational facilities are public spaces and are used by all members of the community. Other spaces, such as homes and businesses, are private and can only be used by other members of the community if the owner consents.*)



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can be given the choice of drawing a map of the community or communities to show the places they use, instead of using the Bubble Map.



ASSESS

Look for ways that students demonstrate willingness to share original ideas and perspectives about the concepts of sharing and responsibilities.



DIFFERENTIATE

In a **group consult**, students work in a group to take on different roles and cooperatively develop responses. As one group member reads or reviews the first question, group members discuss possible responses. The student to the left of the reader checks to see that all group members understand and agree on a response. When there is agreement, each group member picks up a pen and records a response in his or her own words. Have students rotate roles through the group.

- Reflect on how beliefs, attitudes and values influence the meaning of sharing. *(These concepts may need to be explored with students before they complete the handout student resource. A **belief** is something that is assumed to be the truth. An **attitude** is a feeling, emotion or point of view about a situation. Attitudes can often be seen through our behaviours. **Values** are ideas, items or beliefs that we believe to be very important.)*
- Connect the concept of shared spaces to the responsibilities of local government.
- Consider how sharing affects quality of life.



PARTICIPATE: Schools Involved with Communities

Develop a list of five to ten ways that the school is involved, or could be involved, with the community. Develop criteria with students to analyze the effectiveness of these involvements. Consider having students exchange positive messages about the effectiveness of each other's ideas for school–community involvement.

Consider questions such as the following in developing the list and criteria:

- What features and facilities does your school share with the community? *(Consider ways that some school facilities are used for community meetings, events or elections, when school policies and insurance permits.)*
- What responsibilities do you have as a student in your school and community?
- How should your school support the activities of the community?
- What activities do you do in your school to support the community? What activities could your school do? *(Consider ideas such as inviting community members to school events and distributing a school newsletter to community members.)*
- What could you do to strengthen the relationship your school has with the community?

What does it mean to be a citizen? 2 to 3 class periods

1 How do students connect their daily lives to their citizenship? Ask students to discuss what “being a citizen” looks like, sounds like and feels like. Complete a graphic organizer, such as a **Triple T-Chart (Appendix A: p. 202)** with the entire class, recording ideas and examples the students provide. Encourage students to make connections between what they experience in their municipality and what citizenship means.



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can be given the choice of completing their own T-Chart or interviewing one or two other students to complete the T-Charts.

What being a citizen looks like...	What being a citizen sounds like...	What being a citizen feels like...
Community meetings	People talking about issues	Belonging
Neighbours working together	Making a decision with a group	Friendship
City hall		Respect
		Responsibility

2 Municipal government takes responsibility for looking after all communities within the municipality. Citizens and groups share this responsibility. How far do these responsibilities go? Questions that encourage students to develop a commitment to their municipality set the stage for thinking about citizenship and involvement with local government. Ask students to consider the following question:

- As a citizen of the municipality, how much responsibility do you have for what happens around you?

Invite students to revisit their community murals and share examples of ways that citizens take, and should take, responsibility in and for their communities and municipalities.

Have students use a graphic organizer, such as a **Sphere of Influence Chart (Appendix A: p. 205)**, to consider the extent to which they are responsible within and beyond their municipalities. Place themselves in the centre of the sphere of influence chart and move outward through each circle of the chart, moving from themselves to their homes, neighbourhoods, communities, municipalities, the province and beyond. Have students describe or draw examples of ways that they are, or should be, responsible to their municipalities.



DIFFERENTIATE

Provide options for students in completing graphic organizers – using textual descriptions, examples, visuals or symbols in their charts. Encourage students to use prior knowledge and experiences by including examples from the community in which they live now, as well as other communities in which they may have lived previously.



WEBSITE

What should municipal government be responsible for? Have students revisit the municipalities on the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website to look for and identify examples of public and private facilities and services in the municipalities. Once students enter the website, they will see a map. There are three municipalities on the map that students can access by clicking on the ⌂ icon to enter or leave. Students can also enter these three municipalities by clicking on the picture icons at the bottom of the map.

Students can use the **Scrapbook** feature on the website to record visuals that represent different facilities and services they find in each municipality. To access the **Scrapbook**, students must click on the “ADD TO SCRAPBOOK” bar in each text window. This records a visual in the **Scrapbook** page. The **Scrapbook** page can be printed and provides the visual and space to record ideas and information. The **Scrapbook** feature is session based. This means that students must print their **Scrapbook** pages when they are finished on the site, or they will lose the visuals they have collected.

Ask students to consider each place they identify using questions such as:

- Which of these facilities and services do you think local government takes responsibility for?
- What should these responsibilities be?

Alternatively, students can be invited to use a graphic organizer, such as a **Multi-Flow Map (Appendix A: p. 206)** to predict and organize their thinking. Have students record a shared public facility or service in the centre of the multi-flow map, and record, in the boxes around the centre, questions, ideas and what they know about ways it is used in the municipality.



THINK ABOUT

These concepts are developed in the core resources for the Alberta Grade 6 Social Studies program. If students have not been introduced to these concepts, discuss what each means and invite students to generate a list of questions or ideas.

❸ Municipal governments often must balance decisions about those services and facilities that look after the essential needs of community members, with those services and facilities that enhance and benefit quality of life. Invite students to talk about, write about or draw a response to questions such as:

- What types of services and facilities are essential for municipal governments to provide?
- What types of services and facilities would you consider to be optional?
- Are there any services or facilities that you think a municipality should not provide? What are these? Why?
- How do you think the responsibilities of individual citizens compare to those of municipal governments? *(Remind students that municipal governments have to take responsibility for the needs of the entire municipality; do individuals have to do the same?)*

Use class ideas to develop a list of criteria that would help identify what makes services and facilities essential and what makes them optional for municipal governments to provide to the communities they serve.

How democratic is our community? 2 to 4 class periods

❶ Invite students to revisit or review what the concept of democracy means to them by discussing the question:

- What do you think of when you hear the word **democracy**? *(Democracy is often defined as a political system, or system of government, in which citizens have a voice in decision-making. Democracy involves consideration of equality, fairness, freedoms and justice.)*

Ask students to brainstorm the qualities that are needed for a democracy to exist. Create a class list of ideas. Students may be encouraged to consider ideas such as:

- Representatives that are elected
- Freedoms to make choices or express opinions
- Ability to vote for representatives
- Equity, or respecting both individual and collective rights
- A justice system that applies to everyone
- Involved citizens
- Governments that take responsibility for their actions.

2 Invite students to work with a partner to identify and find examples that represent “democracy in action” in their community. List or clip examples and collect them in a file folder. Use sources such as:

- Newspapers and magazines (stories, headlines, advertisements, photographs)
- Local, community or school newsletters
- Pictures.

Introduce students to the question “How democratic is our community?” and ask them to discuss what their examples tell them about democracy in the community. Ask students to consider what a community without democracy would be like.

3 Student Resource 1-4: Democracy and Local Government (pp. 57-58) encourages students to analyze and reflect on the connections between local government, municipalities and democracy. This student resource:

- Reviews the purpose of local government in Alberta as it is defined in the *Municipal Government Act*
- Asks students to use the examples they collected from media and community sources, as well as their own personal stories and pictures, as examples to help them construct and support a personal response to the question “How democratic is our community?”



ASSESS

Student Resource 1-4: Democracy and Local Government also provides the performance assessment task for this section. A rubric is provided in the assessment notes and should be shared and discussed with students prior to beginning the task.



INTEGRATE

LANGUAGE ARTS 3.2 SELECT AND PROCESS

Have students add sources to their media poster assignment that reflect personal experiences and perspectives – music lyrics, stories, art, poetry – or those that reflect experiences of people around them – family, neighbours, friends.

Music lyrics and stories can be drawn from different types of sources:

- Popular music that students are familiar with
- Picture books and excerpts from library books
- Newspaper or magazine stories.



THINK ABOUT

Start a clippings collection of articles about the municipality and municipal government. These articles will be used in activities in **Section 2: A Good Place to Live**.



INTERACT

There are a number of ways to encourage students to become involved with municipal government. Start by contacting the municipal office. Some of your students may come from different municipalities than the one in which the school is located. Consider this when planning activities that involve municipal officials.

- Work with students to brainstorm a list of questions about what the municipality does and who is involved in municipal government in your community. If applicable, identify each municipality that students in your class come from.
- Help students identify community or municipal government websites that can be used for research.
- Get together with other grade 6 teachers in your school and contact a municipal government office by e-mail, phone call or letter to discuss ways a municipal official could be involved with students as they study municipal government.
- Invite a municipal employee or elected official to come to the classroom to be interviewed by the class. Have students revisit questions they created at the beginning of their study of local government. Prepare the interview questions to send to the municipal official in advance of the interview.
- Alternatively, select three or four interview questions to e-mail or mail to a municipal official and ask if responses can be returned or, if appropriate and possible, posted on the website as an FAQ section for students.

Appendix B (pp. 214-216) provides tools and processes for contacting municipal officials in your community.

Student Resource 1-1

Building Municipalities

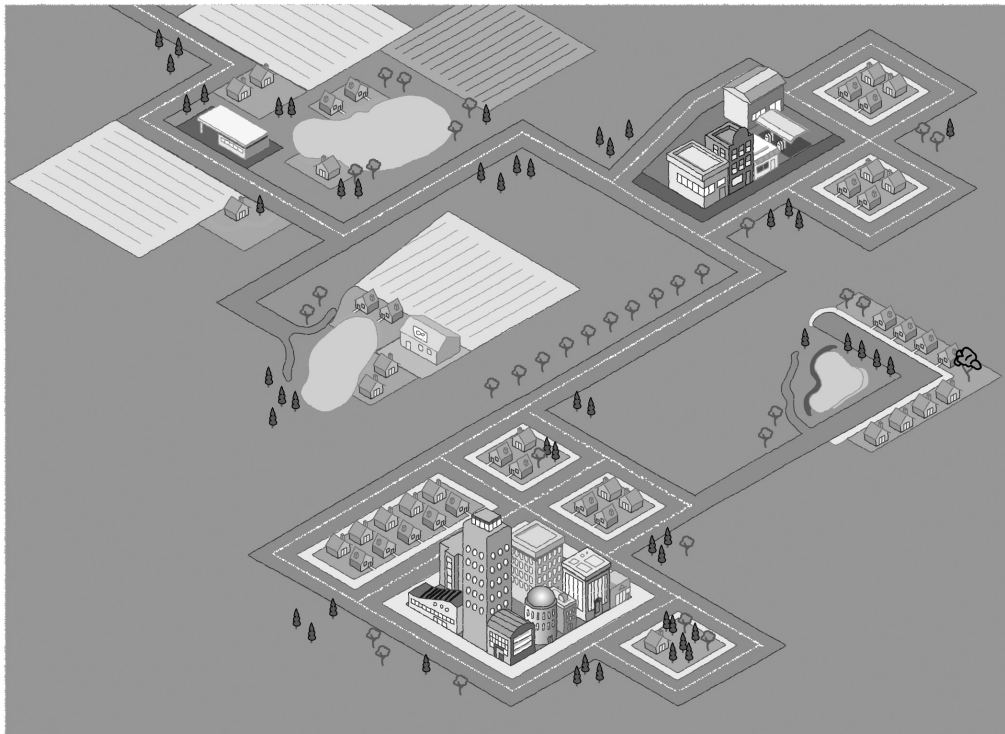


When people hear the word **community**, many think of a neighbourhood, town, city or area. A community can be a group of people who have something in common. This can include where they live, a common identity or a sense of belonging. Being part of a community can involve having a common history or common interests. Community members often share purposes or goals.

Local governments work within communities to represent the interests and goals of community members. Local governments provide services to residents, or people who live in the community, and encourage them to make local decisions together, build positive relationships and learn from each other. This strengthens the community as a whole.

In Alberta, the areas that are served by local governments are called **municipalities**. There are different types of municipalities. Each has similar structures and functions and may deal with similar or different issues. **Municipal government** is local government that is created by the province to provide essential and desired services to communities.

How do you think local government affects the many places you find in different municipalities? Use the illustration below and chart on the next page to predict ways that local government affects places in different types of municipalities.



Places Where	How I Think Local Government Affects these Places
people live	
people buy goods and obtain services	
people work	
people play	
community activities happen	
natural features are protected	

Alberta has legislation called the *Municipal Government Act*. It says that the purpose of a municipality is to:

- Provide good government
- Provide services, facilities or other things that are important or necessary for all or part of a municipality
- Develop and maintain safe and viable communities within the municipality.

Something that is **viable** has the ability to grow and develop. What are some examples of things that are viable?

What do you think a viable community would look like? What do you think a safe community would look like? What could this information help you add to your chart?

Making Decisions

The **municipal council** is a group of people who are elected to make decisions on behalf of people who live in the municipality. The people on the municipal council are called **elected officials**. Elected officials represent **electors**, or the people who elect them, as well as residents, property owners and businesses. Sometimes the residents, property owners and businesses in a municipality are called **constituents**.

Elected officials are given the **authority**, or the power, to speak and make decisions for their constituents in council meetings. Although municipal councils are important, many other people work with municipal governments to provide different types of services to municipalities. For example, municipal employees are hired to work for the municipality and provide services such as safe drinking water and garbage collection.

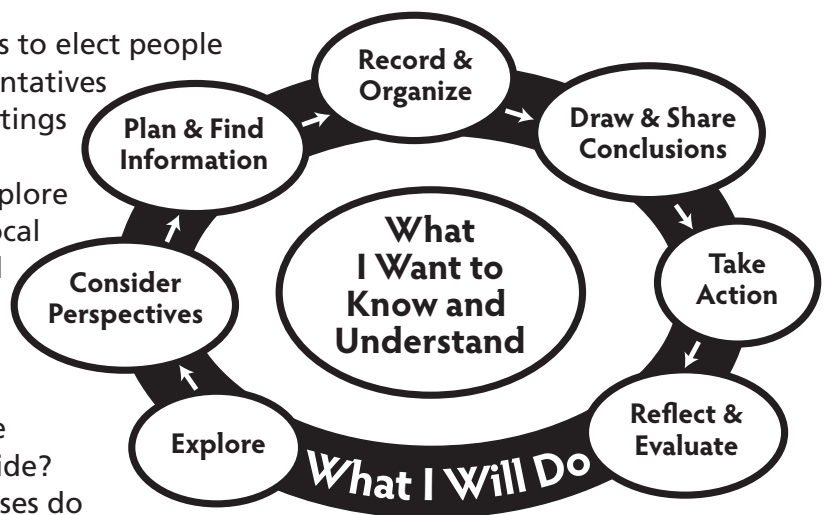
Municipal governments:

- Are responsible for providing good government and maintaining the safety of their communities
- Encourage citizens to participate and cooperate with municipal governments, and work together to meet residents' needs and make decisions
- Consider the rights of all people, and respect and listen to all viewpoints.

When citizens have a voice in decisions and governance, this is called **democracy**. In a **representative democracy**, citizens have the ability to elect a representative to govern and make decisions on their behalf.

Each municipality has its own elections to elect people to represent the municipality. Representatives discuss issues and ideas in council meetings and are responsible for letting people know about their decisions. As you explore the responsibilities and functions of local government in municipalities, you will also use a model for decision-making and inquiry.

How do you think municipalities make decisions about the services they provide? What types of decision-making processes do you think they use?



Good Government

What would you expect to find and see in a municipality that is viable, safe and democratic?



Create a Top Ten List of what you would expect to find and see in a municipality that supports a good quality of life.

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
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8	
9	
10	

Alberta Municipalities

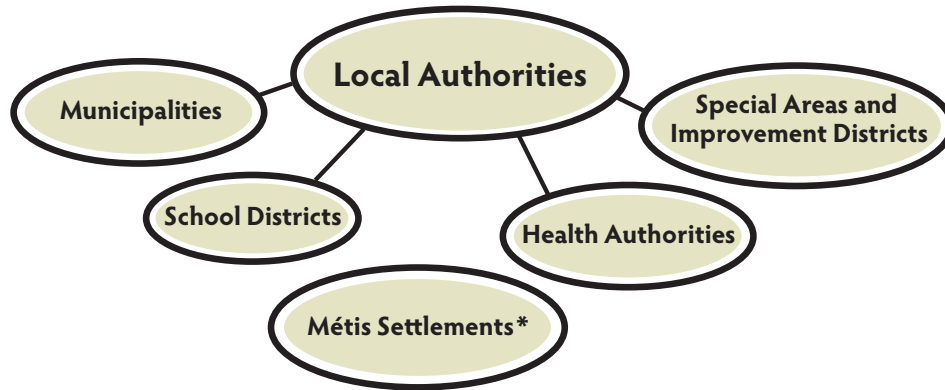
Where is your municipality?



Alberta Municipal Affairs
and Housing

Local Authorities

Local authorities are areas in Alberta that provide local government. A municipality is considered to be a local authority. There are also other types of local authorities in Alberta.



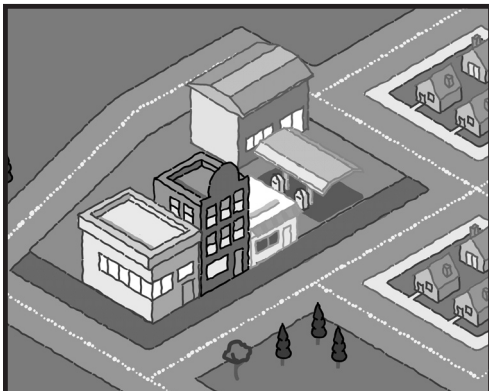
*A Métis Settlement is not a local authority, but provides services and governance like one.

Municipalities in Alberta

There are different types of municipal governments in Alberta. All municipal governments have councils that **govern**, or make decisions for, their area. These municipalities make decisions in similar ways, but may have different structures, populations and population densities.

Cities

Cities are large urban municipalities with a population of at least 10 000 people. Cities can have **ward** systems, with councillors who are elected in each ward, and are governed by a mayor and a council. A ward is a district that any municipality can use to divide areas, based on the number of people who live there. Which municipalities in Alberta are currently classified as cities?

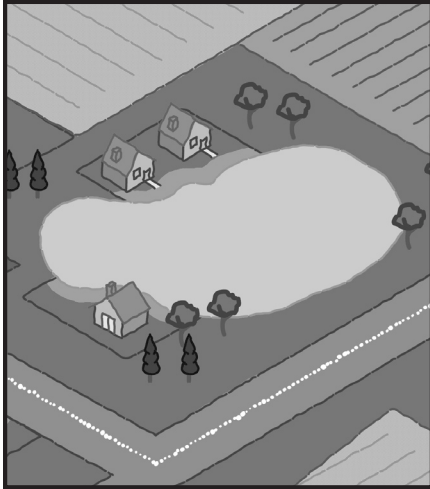


Towns

Towns can be formed when an area has at least 1 000 people. Towns are governed by seven councillors, including the mayor, unless the town has decided to have a higher or lower number. The number of councillors can be no lower than three and must be an odd number. Why do you think councils have an odd number of councillors?

Villages

Villages must have a population of at least 300 people. The council of a village has at least three councillors. One of these councillors is the mayor. This number may be increased to a higher odd number of councillors. Why do you think a village would consider having a council with a higher number of councillors?



Summer Villages

Summer villages are a form of government that was designed to meet the needs of part-time residents. Summer villages required at least 60 per cent of the land to have buildings used as dwellings. A summer village is a type of municipality that may no longer be created. Residents of a summer village are allowed to vote in two municipal elections. They can vote once in the summer village where they have property, such as a cabin or cottage, but do not live there full time. Residents may also vote once in the municipality where they live permanently. Why do you think these citizens have this ability?

Municipal Districts

Municipal districts are rural areas and include many different landscapes such as farmland, forested areas, mountains and parkland. Municipal districts can include smaller communities such as hamlets or **country residential subdivisions**, more densely populated areas in which people build houses to live. Some municipal districts include larger population areas such as those around Edmonton and Calgary. The council of a municipal district may have one or more councillors for every **electoral division**, or **ward**, in the municipal district. Why do you think there are municipal districts in Alberta?

Hamlets

The council of a municipal district can designate a small community that is within its boundaries to be a hamlet. A community can be a hamlet if it consists of five or more dwellings, has a name, boundaries that help identify the community and contains land that is non-residential. Why do you think a community should have a name?

Did you know?

Counties were originally formed to govern the municipality as well as the school board. When school boards were reorganized in the 1990s, there was no longer a need for counties to look after the government of both the municipality and the school board. Today, these areas are considered to be municipal districts, although some have kept the word "county" in their names. Some municipal districts have changed their name to include "county."

Specialized Municipalities

Specialized municipalities are formed when other forms of municipalities do not meet the needs of the people who live there. They often include both urban and rural areas. The specialized municipalities in Alberta in 2007 were the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Strathcona County, the Municipality of Jasper and Mackenzie County. What can you find out about these municipalities? Why do you think they are specialized?

Other Local Authorities

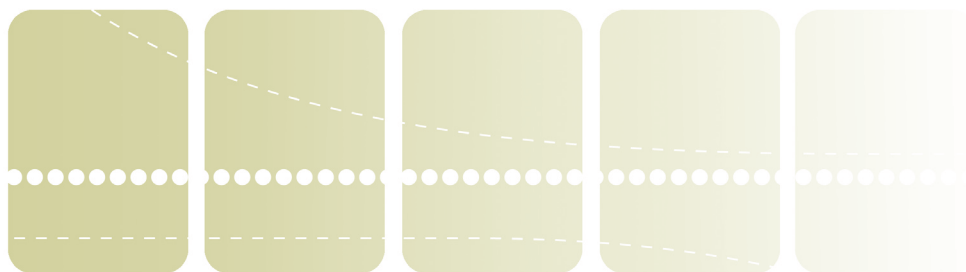
There are other areas in Alberta that are called **local authorities**. Special boards or councils are set up or elected to govern and make decisions for these areas. Examples of local authorities are improvement districts, special areas, school boards and health authorities. Métis Settlements are not a local authority. However, Métis Settlements function as a local government structure for Métis people.

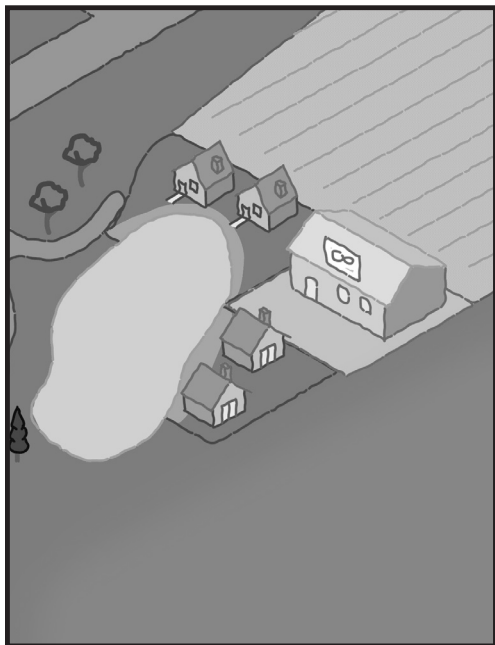
Improvement Districts

Improvement districts are rural areas that have an advisory council, usually made up of seven to nine members. The provincial government is responsible for the functions of municipal government in improvement districts. The Minister of Municipal Affairs can appoint an advisory council that can be councillors who are elected. The advisory council governs the municipality on behalf of the provincial government. Five of the seven improvement districts in Alberta are located in national parks – Banff, Jasper, Waterton, Elk Island and Wood Buffalo. The other two improvement districts are provincial parks – Kananaskis Improvement District and Willmore Wilderness. Why do you think the provincial government is more involved with **managing**, or looking after, improvement districts?

Special Areas

A special area is a different government structure that is used in a rural area located in southeast Alberta. There are three special areas in southeast Alberta, but they are often referred to as one because they are governed by a single board. The special areas were created near the end of the Depression to help deal with the hardships that the drought caused in these areas. The special areas have a board of three people appointed by the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. There is also a 13-member advisory council. The Special Areas Board is responsible for providing all municipal services and looking after the land. Sixty per cent of all lands are used for grazing, cultivation or irrigation. What do you know about this area of Alberta?





Métis Settlements

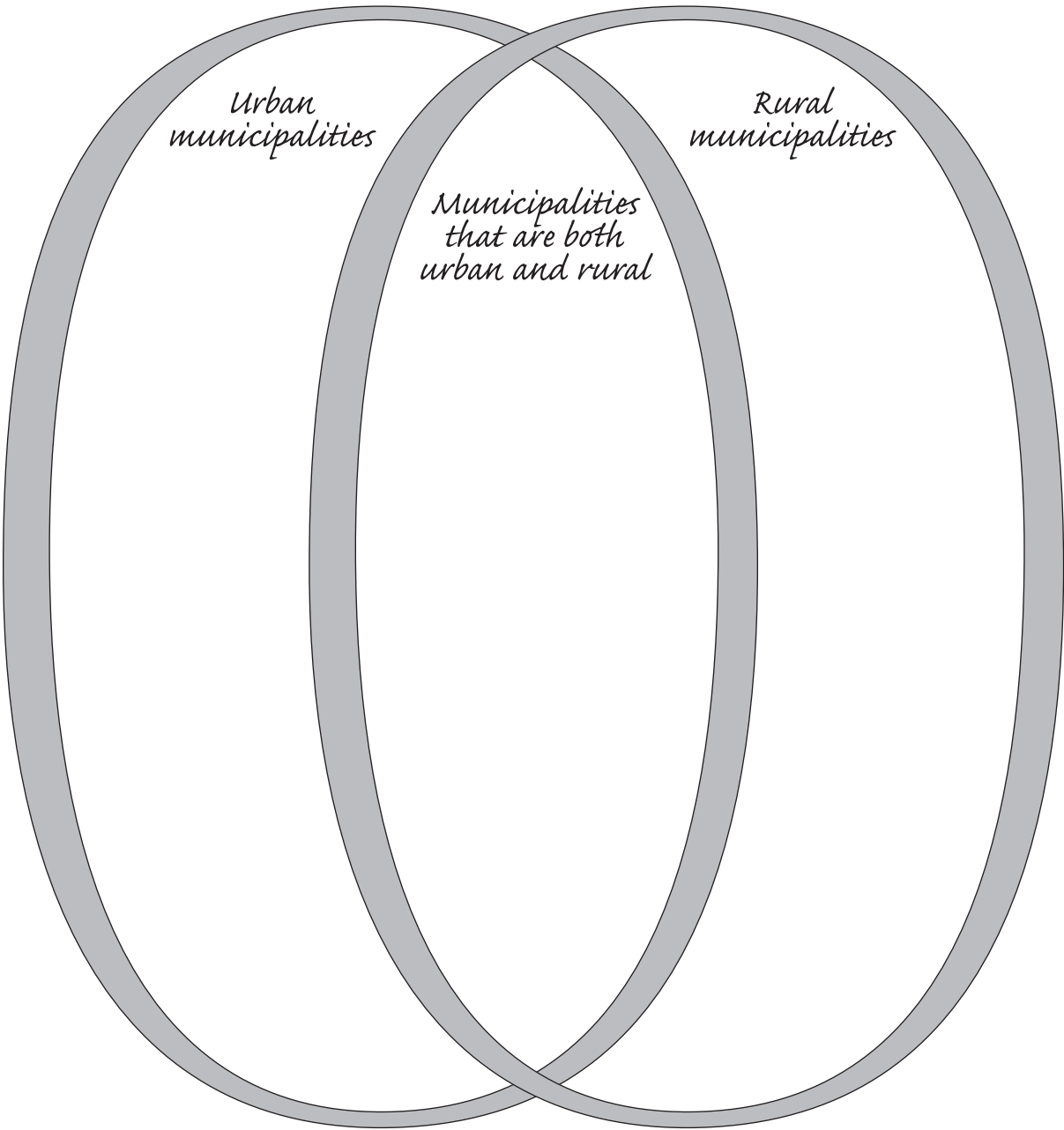
There are eight Métis Settlements in Alberta that were established by the *Métis Settlements Act of Alberta*. Métis Settlements are not considered to be municipalities, but are a form of local government. The Métis Settlements in Alberta are Buffalo Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Gift Lake, Kikino, Paddle Prairie and Peavine. Approximately 9 000 people live on the eight settlements. Métis Settlements are governed by the Métis Settlements General Council. The General Council represents all Métis people in the eight settlements. The Métis Settlements General Council has five elected councillors from each of the eight settlements. These forty councillors elect a four-member executive, or leadership team. Why do you think Métis Settlements elect a general council to represent all people in each of the settlements?

First Nations Reserves

A First Nations reserve is not part of any municipality. The federal government takes responsibility for First Nations reserves.

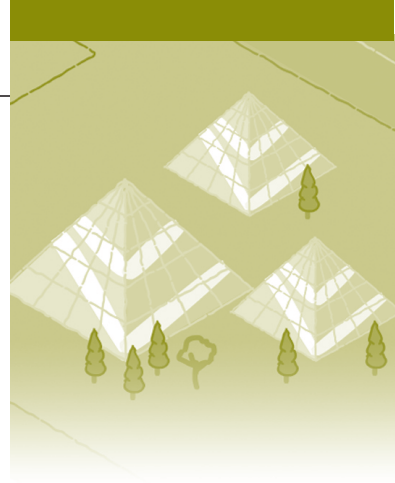
What kind of municipality or local authority do you live in?
Describe the characteristics of your municipality or local authority.

Identify the types of municipalities that are urban municipalities in the first circle of the Venn Diagram below. In the second circle, identify the types of municipalities that are rural. In the centre, identify those municipalities that have both urban and rural communities and ways of life.



Student Resource 1-3

Shared Spaces

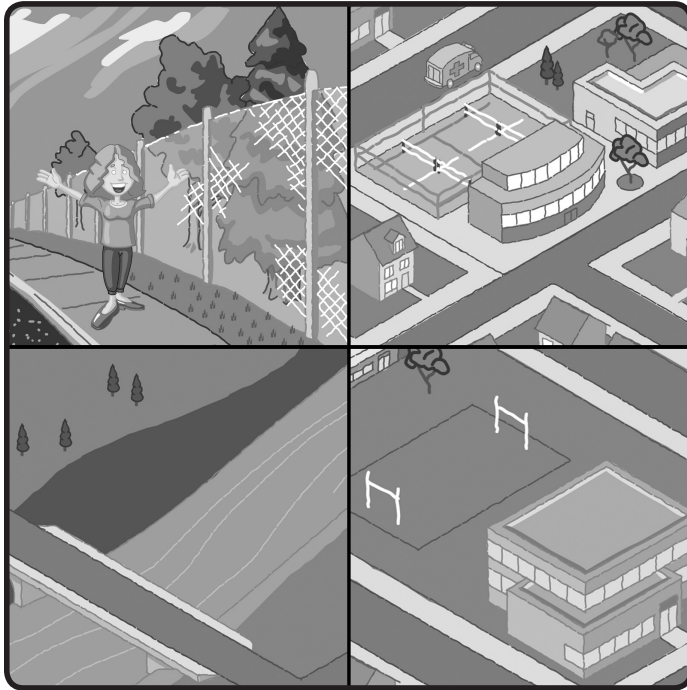


What are some shared, or public, spaces in your community? What are some personal, or private, spaces in your community? Use the chart below to help you record information about the different spaces in your community.

What I see	Where it is located	What it is used for	Shared (Public) or Personal (Private)

What does sharing mean to you?

Just like the concept of community, the concept of sharing can have different meanings. What meanings do the words and visuals below have to you?



“ *Shared space is the physical place we live. It is our home, our block and our neighbourhood. It is the land we walk and the air we breathe. It is the schools, parks, streets, woods and rivers that make up our world.*

Shared space is in our emotions. It is a sense of belonging. It is the place that families and neighbours call home. It is the place we plant our hearts.

Shared space is common beliefs, values and attitudes. It is communities working together to ensure the well being of all people.

Shared space is the focus of communities' decision-making. Its goal is to build strong and vibrant communities.

”

Adapted from Torjman, Sherri (2006). *Shared Space: The Communities Agenda*. Caledon Institute of Social Policy: Ottawa, ON: p. 1. www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6_external_resources.cfm.

How do you think the use and care of shared spaces in the community affects the work that local governments do?

Who should be responsible for creating shared or public spaces in a community?

Why do you think sharing is important to the quality of life in a community?

Student Resource 1-4

Democracy and Local Government

A **democracy** gives citizens a voice in decision-making and action. A democracy is evident when there are:

- Representatives that are elected by citizens
- Freedoms to make choices or express opinions
- Ability to vote for representatives
- Equal rights and responsibilities for everyone
- A justice system that applies to everyone
- Involved citizens
- Governments that are accountable for their actions.

Think about what “democracy in action” could mean. Democracy in action might include community meetings or a local election. It might involve the rules that people in your municipality have to follow. The municipal government is responsible for making these rules. The municipal government makes decisions by passing **bylaws** and **resolutions**. Bylaws and resolutions are decisions that can establish the rules that all people and businesses have to follow.

The work of the municipal government affects the ways of life for everyone who lives in the municipality. In some municipalities, this can include more than one geographic community.

How democratic do you think your community is? What evidence of democracy can you find in your community? Start to look for stories and examples about your community to prepare for a Participation Challenge!

Choose stories and examples that will help you answer the question “How democratic is your community?”

Fact, Opinion and Bias

*Many newspaper and magazine stories contain a mixture of factual information and opinions. A **fact** describes something that has actually happened, or something that can be proven to be true. An **opinion** describes an attitude, judgement, point of view or conclusion that cannot be proven true or false.*

*When an opinion is expressed as if it were true, it has a **bias**. A bias can also be represented when perspectives or points of view are left out or only one side of an issue is presented.*

Think about whether the stories and examples you select represent facts or opinions about the community. Are any of these stories or examples biased toward a particular point of view? Should they be included?



Participation Challenge

To: All youth in our community

From: The Youth Participation Centre

Re: Participation Challenge - How democratic is our community?

At the Youth Participation Centre, our goal is to help young people become involved in our community. We wonder how much young people understand about the rights and responsibilities of living in a democratic society.

We have issued a challenge to our youth. We want you to go out into our community and find evidence of democracy in action! Youth submissions will be used by the Centre in a variety of ways as part of our public awareness campaign.

To participate you will need to do the following:

1. Identify the key principles that you expect to find in a democracy. Then gather evidence of these principles at work in our community. Use a variety of resources to help you gather evidence, including:
 - websites
 - print materials – brochures, newspapers, books
 - photographs
 - interviews with family members and neighbours
 - personal experiences
 - family stories and artifacts.
2. Include a list of the resources you used during your research. Write a sentence or two to evaluate how effective you think each resource was. Identify any bias that limits the usefulness of the resource.
3. Express your opinion by responding to these questions:
 - How democratic is our community?
 - What strengths do we have as a democratic community?
 - Has your opinion changed as you have taken the Participation Challenge?
 - What suggestions do you have to make our community more democratic?
4. You can share your evidence and opinion in a variety of ways:
 - a multimedia presentation that can be posted on the Youth Participation Centre website
 - a poster for the Centre
 - an informational brochure for the Centre
 - a letter to the editor of the local newspaper
 - a song to be aired on the local radio station
 - a skit for an infomercial for the local cable TV station.

We are looking forward to your submission. Let us know what you think!

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN A DEMOCRACY

Purpose, Powers and Capacity of a Municipality

Municipalities provide essential and non-essential local services such as road maintenance, water and sewer services and garbage collection. Municipalities share the characteristics of having land and boundaries, providing residents with ways to make decisions about local issues and being a focus for community activities.

In municipalities, there are also other local authorities, such as health care authorities and school boards. Alberta Municipal Affairs works in partnership with Alberta's municipalities to ensure Albertans live in safe and sustainable communities, and are served by open, effective and accountable governments.

The *Municipal Government Act*, the provincial legislation governing municipalities, outlines the purpose, powers and capacity of a municipality. Municipalities are established to:

- Provide good government
- Provide services, facilities or other things that, in the opinion of council, are necessary or desirable for all or a part of the municipality
- Develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

The *Municipal Government Act* defines the broad powers or general jurisdiction of municipalities. For example, municipalities have the authority to regulate the activities of the public. These rules are found in municipal bylaws and resolutions. Bylaws and resolutions are passed by council under the authority established by the *Municipal Government Act*. The council uses resolutions as a way to make decisions when a bylaw is not required.

A municipality's powers are addressed in the *Municipal Government Act*, which states "a municipality is a corporation" that has been provided with "natural person" powers. Natural person powers give municipalities the rights and powers of an individual for the purpose of exercising their authority. So, just as an individual can start up a business, enter into agreements, lease equipment or hire employees, so can a municipality. However, the municipality can use these powers only to the extent that those powers are limited by the *Municipal Government Act* or any other enactment of the legislature. The *Municipal Government Act* states that a council may pass bylaws for their municipalities respecting the following matters:

- The safety, health and welfare of people and the protection of people and property
- People, activities and things in, on or near a public place or place that is open to the public



TEACHER BACKGROUND

This teacher background describes the concept of governance in municipalities. Governance in a municipality usually refers to the roles, responsibilities and activities of the municipal council. As the governing body of the municipal corporation, the council is the foundation of local democracy. However, the *Municipal Government Act* provides that councils can only exercise the powers of the municipal corporation in the proper form, either by bylaw or by resolution.

The council itself has specific roles to play, as does each elected representative. Some of these roles are legislated by the *Municipal Government Act*.

NOTES

[illegible]

NOTES

- Nuisances, including unsightly property
- Transport and transportation systems
- Businesses, business activities and persons engaged in business
- Services provided by or on behalf of the municipality
- Public utilities
- Wild and domestic animals and activities in relation to them
- The enforcement of bylaws.

Acting within the legislation of the *Municipal Government Act*, the councillor's job is to work with other council members, including the mayor or reeve, to set the overall direction of the municipality through their role as a policy maker. The policies that council sets are the guidelines for administration to follow as it does the job of running a municipality. Council members may spend a lot of time researching, creating new policies and programs or reviewing the current ones to make sure they are working as they should.

The Entire Municipality

Elected officials on a municipality's council are elected to look after the interests of the entire municipality. In a municipality with a ward system, an official who has been elected to represent a ward must be careful not to place the interest of the ward or electoral division above the interest of the whole municipality. A ward or district is a geographical area that any municipality can use to divide areas equally, based on the number of people who live there. Municipalities may also choose to elect councillors at large, or by and for the whole municipality. As challenging as it may be at times, elected officials must base any decision on what is best for the entire municipality. The council's effectiveness depends on elected officials providing input on their areas while thinking and voting for the whole municipality.

Elected officials also have to make certain that they do not put themselves in a pecuniary interest situation. This means that they must ensure that decisions made do not monetarily affect them or their immediate family. When a council member or his or her family, employers, business interests or partnerships can potentially benefit or lose monetarily from decisions made by the council, he or she has a pecuniary interest. The *Municipal Government Act* states that "when a councillor has a pecuniary interest in a matter before the council, a council committee or any other body to which the councillor is appointed as a representative of the council, the councillor must, if present:

- Disclose the general nature of the pecuniary interest prior to any discussion of the matter
- Abstain from voting on any question relating to the matter
- Abstain from any discussion of the matter

Source:
Municipal Government Act,
Section 172(1).

- ...leave the room in which the meeting is being held until discussion and voting on the matter are concluded.”

A council can require, by passing a bylaw, that the councillor file a statement with the names of family members and employers, as well as any corporations, firms or partnerships from which the councillor benefits.

A councillor's constituents have expectations that the councillor will represent them in an ethical and informed manner. Public perceptions of the openness of local government influences how the public interacts with the council. When issues arise in a municipality, the public may perceive a council member to have a conflict of interest. However, from a legislative context, the only guidelines that are established by the *Municipal Government Act* are for pecuniary interest.

NOTES

[illegible]



TEACHER BACKGROUNDER

This teacher backgrounder provides a description of the types of municipalities found in Alberta. Each type of municipality has unique characteristics. However, all are governed by the *Municipal Government Act*. The total number of municipalities can change over time.

Municipalities are often thought of as urban and rural. However, current municipalities in Alberta go beyond that understanding. Many municipalities have areas and influences that combine both urban and rural ways of life. The designation “rural” should not be interpreted to only include farm or resource based areas. Some rural municipalities contain substantial residential populations.

This backgrounder provides information on:

- Cities
- Towns
- Villages
- Summer Villages
- Specialized Municipalities
- Municipal Districts.

It also provides information on:

- Improvement Districts
- Special Areas
- Other Local Authorities
- Métis Settlements
- First Nations Reserves.

MUNICIPALITIES IN ALBERTA

A municipality is an administrative entity composed of a clearly defined boundary and the population within it. As a means of governance, municipalities can either have officials elected at-large or from wards, which divide the municipality into more manageable sections. When a ward system is used, each ward usually has the same number of councillors. The number of wards within a municipality are specified when it is formed, but may be changed by council through a bylaw. When a municipality has its councillors elected at-large, this means all councillors are elected by the eligible voters of the whole municipality. Candidates, or those nominated to run for election for a position on council, are required to be residents of the municipality for six consecutive months immediately preceding nomination day. Municipal elections are held every three years.

Urban municipalities (cities, towns, villages, summer villages) are formed in areas where the majority of buildings are on parcels of land smaller than 1 850 square metres. Municipal districts are formed in areas in which a majority of the buildings used as dwellings are on parcels of land with an area of at least 1 850 square metres.

Cities

Cities have populations of over 10 000 people. All cities have a mayor who is elected by all eligible voters. Cities are governed by a council, with a mayor or chief elected official who is most often elected at large by all residents, and an even number of councillors or aldermen.

Edmonton and Calgary are the only large urban cities that use a ward system. Other large urban cities such as Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Red Deer elect councillors at-large. In some cities, councillors are referred to as aldermen. The term “aldermen” is used to describe both male and female council members. There should always be an odd number of elected officials on the council to avoid tie votes.

Towns

Towns can be formed when the population is at least 1 000 people. A town’s population may exceed 10 000 people and remain a town unless it requests a change to city status. A town has a seven member council, including the mayor, unless a local bylaw establishes the number of council members to be higher or lower. However, the number of councillors should be no lower than three and be an odd number.

Villages

Villages may be formed in areas where there is a population of at least 300 people. A village may apply to the province for town status when the population reaches 1 000. The council of a village usually consists of three councillors, unless this number is increased to a higher odd number by local bylaw. The mayor is typically appointed from council unless the council passes a bylaw to have the mayor elected at-large.

Summer Villages

Summer villages are a form of government that was designed to meet the needs of part-time residents. Summer villages required at least 60 per cent of the land to have buildings used as dwellings. In a summer village, elections and annual meetings are required to be held in the summer. A citizen, as well as his or her spouse, who owns property in the summer village is entitled to vote in its election. A summer village is the only type of municipality where a person can vote twice in municipal elections: once in the summer village and once in the municipality where their permanent residence is located. In 1995, the provincial government made the decision that summer villages could no longer be created in Alberta.

Municipal Districts

Municipal districts include rural areas, as well as unincorporated communities such as hamlets and country residential subdivisions. Municipal districts usually elect one council member as the chief elected official or reeve, although a bylaw can be passed that enables the reeve to be elected at large. Municipal districts use a ward system to elect officials to council.

Prior to the introduction of the *Municipal Government Act* in 1995, there were also rural municipalities that used the word “county” in their names. The county structure of local government played the dual roles of municipal government and school board. When the legislation changed, all rural municipalities became municipal districts, but many former counties chose to retain the word “county” in their names. More recently, municipal districts are adopting the word “county” in their names.

Hamlets

Hamlets are found within municipal districts or specialized municipalities. The council of a municipal district can designate a small community that is within its boundaries to be a hamlet. A community can be a hamlet if it consists of five or more dwellings, has a name, boundaries that help identify the community and contains land that is used for non-residential purposes.



THINK ABOUT

Jasper and Banff are unique municipalities because they are located inside national parks, which are under federal jurisdiction. The *Rocky Mountain Park Act* of 1887 allowed for the creation of the townsites of Banff. In 1907, Jasper became Canada’s fifth national park, and the town of Jasper started to grow around the railway station. Today, management of these two townsites is provided under the *Municipal Government Act*. Banff was incorporated as a town in 1990 and Jasper as a specialized municipality in July 2001. The federal government retains control over some activities, such as planning and development. Management responsibilities for the areas surrounding these two townsites are conducted under the authority of an improvement district government structure.

NOTES



THINK ABOUT

Any municipality may also have municipal boards and committees. Some boards are mandatory, such as the subdivision development appeal board. Examples of municipal boards and committees include:

- Advisory committees
- Family and community support services boards
- Library boards
- Special events and economic development committees
- Youth councils.

Specialized Municipalities

Specialized municipalities are formed when the other forms of municipalities do not suitably meet the needs of its residents. Specialized municipalities may include those with both urban and rural characteristics in one municipality. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Strathcona County, the Municipality of Jasper and Mackenzie County are specialized municipalities.

Improvement Districts

Improvement districts are a form of local authority and not a municipality. The provincial government, through Alberta Municipal Affairs, is responsible for all functions of municipal government in improvement districts, including the levy and collection of taxes. The residents of an improvement district may elect representatives, who are subsequently appointed by the Minister, to an advisory council that assists in its administration. The formal power of a council rests with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, but most power and responsibility has been delegated to improvement district councils. These councils, generally consisting of seven to nine members, guide the activities of the improvement district's manager and staff. Some improvement districts do not have an advisory council.

Five of the current seven improvement districts (IDs) in Alberta are located in national parks – ID No. 9 (Banff), ID No. 12 (Jasper), ID No. 4 (Waterton), ID No. 13 (Elk Island), and ID No. 24 (Wood Buffalo). The other two improvement districts are provincial parks – Kananaskis Improvement District (including Kananaskis Provincial Park), and ID No. 25 (Willmore Wilderness).

Special Areas

A special area is a form of local authority and not a municipality. The Special Areas Board is a unique government structure used in a rural area that covers approximately 2.1 million hectares in southeast Alberta. The board is responsible for the administration of the area and provision of all municipal services, as well as the leasing of public lands and operation of five community pastures. Sixty per cent of all lands in the special areas are public lands and are leased for grazing, cultivation or irrigation. The area has a very low population density. The chairperson of the board reports directly to Alberta Municipal Affairs.

The special areas are also involved in the Prairie Association for Water Management, which has membership extending from the City of Calgary to Kindersley, Saskatchewan. The association examines, in concert with government agencies, rural and urban needs and develops water resource plans and strategies.

Each settlement is run by a five-person council that is elected by membership and headed by a chairperson selected by the council members. Elections are held every three years on the third Monday in October. Settlement councils can make bylaws, provided that they do not contravene any provincial law or General Council policies. Bylaws must be approved by the members of the settlement. Settlement councils assume responsibility for a range of municipal and social functions – the latter expanding their role beyond the “municipal” functions of typical local governments in Alberta. This broad scope means that in addition to municipal concerns such as streets, water, sewer and bylaws, settlement councils are responsible for land allocation, membership, housing, business, economic development, culture and other activities.

First Nations Reserves

A First Nations reserve is not a part of any municipality. Through the *British North America Act (1867)*, the federal government has exclusive legislative authority on matters related to Aboriginal peoples and reserves.

Section 2

2. A Good Place to Live

The teaching and learning activities in **Section 2: A Good Place to Live** invite students to explore municipal government in the context of quality of life in communities. Students consider how the sustainability of communities can be connected to the work and decisions of municipal government and research its roles, responsibilities, structures and functions.

Students explore roles, responsibilities, structures and functions of municipal governments in different municipalities – from large and small urban centres to rural areas. They develop understandings of the reasons for municipal government and analyze the differences created by different community environments and ways of life.

The activities in this section provide the research background for involvement in local issues and concerns that students have identified in Section 1: Get Personal.

Select, modify and adapt the activities that follow to best meet the needs of your students and reinforce how municipal government works to strengthen and develop sustainable communities.

*Processes,
Processes, Structures
Structures and
and Functions
Functions*

Preparing for Learning

This section encourages students to develop understandings about the roles, responsibilities, structures and functions of local government. Students should understand the concepts of **local and municipal government** and **municipalities**.
Section 1: Get Personal develops these concepts.

There are five critical issues in this section.

Why do people choose to live in a municipality?

1 to 2 class periods*

How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live?

4 to 5 class periods*

Why do we need municipal government?

1 to 3 class periods*

How does municipal government serve communities?

2 to 3 class periods*

How do the decisions of municipal government reflect the values and attitudes of its communities?

2 to 4 class periods*

* Based on 50-minute class periods

WHAT YOU NEED

Student Resources

- ☐ Student Resource 2-1: A Good Place to Live (p. 95)
- ☐ Student Resource 2-2: Community Scan (pp. 96-102)
- ☐ Student Resource 2-3: Roles and Responsibilities of Municipal Government (pp. 103-109)
- ☐ Student Resource 2-4: All in a Day's Work (pp. 110-112)
- ☐ Student Resource 2-5: Snapshot of Our Municipal Government (pp. 113-116)
- ☐ Student Resource 2-6: Making Choices (pp. 117-118)

Graphic Organizers

- ☐ Mind Map (p. 207)
- ☐ Triple T-Chart (p. 202)
- ☐ Clipboard (p. 203)
- ☐ Trading Card Template (p. 208)
- ☐ T-Chart (p. 201)

Materials and Sources

- ☐ Atlases, newspapers, magazines and travel brochures or Alberta Motor Association publications
- ☐ Local newspapers and magazines
- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Information on municipal government departments, roles and responsibilities from your municipal office
- ☐ Poster paper

Teacher Backgrounders

- ☐ Municipal Representatives and Officials (pp. 119-121)

This teacher backgrounder provides an overview of the responsibilities of municipal representatives and officials. The structure of local government is established by the *Municipal Government Act*, which establishes the responsibilities and duties of:

- The Council
- The Chief Elected Official
- Council Members
- The Chief Administrative Officer
- The Municipal Organization and Administration.

- ☐ Responsibilities and Functions of Local Government (pp. 122-131)

This teacher backgrounder provides an overview of the structures, responsibilities and functions of municipal governments in Alberta. In municipalities, the elected councils and the administrations work in partnership to provide good government and services to their residents. Councillors are responsible for developing and evaluating policy and



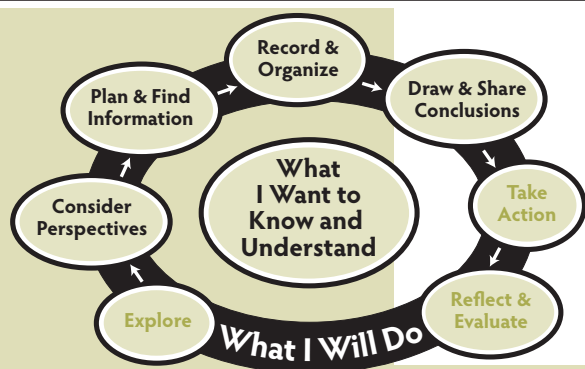
THINK ABOUT

The concept of sustainability is important to municipalities as councils make decisions about the ways resources are used to provide services and facilities. Generally, something that is sustainable is maintained at a particular level to conserve a balance by avoiding the depletion of resources. This description comes from definitions related to environmental sustainability, as a definition of municipal sustainability has not been agreed to at this time.

programs and the administration is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the municipality.

These responsibilities include the following areas, which are covered in this backgrounder:

- Financial Decision-Making (pp. 122-124)
- Land Use Planning (p. 124)
- Public Works (p. 125)
- Utility Services (pp. 125-127)
- Protective Services (pp. 128-129)
- Recreation and Cultural Services (pp. 129-130)
- Family and Community Support Services (pp. 130-131).



LEARNING OUTCOMES AND INQUIRY

Section 2: A Good Place to Live encourages students to develop understandings and processes involved in a number of stages of the inquiry process. The five critical issues in this section include a performance assessment task.

Inquiry Steps and Processes	Questions that Guide the Inquiry	Critical Issues that Emphasize the Inquiry Focus
Consider Perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify research questions Identify individuals and groups involved with the question or issue Consider different perspectives and opinions 	What questions do I have? Who is affected and why? What different opinions exist?	Why do people choose to live in a municipality? How do the decisions of municipal government reflect the values and attitudes of its communities?
Plan and Find Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on research process Identify, locate and organize sources and information Allocate tasks 	How will I find out what I need to know and understand? What type of information do I need? What sources do I need to consult? What is the best way to research? Who can we find out more from?	How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live? Why do we need municipal government?
Record and Organize <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record information Organize information collected Analyze the information Make connections and comparisons 	How will we record our research? What similarities and differences do we see? What comparisons can we make? What connections do we see?	How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live? Why do we need municipal government?
Draw and Share Conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present the information Draw conclusions Assess information Consider solutions, perspectives, alternatives and predictions Make decisions 	How will we share our information? What would happen if...? What conclusions can we make? What evidence supports our conclusions?	How does municipal government serve communities? How do the decisions of municipal government reflect the values and attitudes of its communities?

Social Studies Learning Outcomes

General Outcome 6.1

Citizens Participating in Decision-Making

Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the dynamic relationship between governments and citizens as they engage in the democratic process.

Local and Current Affairs

In order to allow opportunities for students to engage in current affairs, issues and concerns of a local nature, the program of studies provides the flexibility to include these topics within the time allotted for social studies.

Specific Learning Outcomes Supported and Developed in Section 2: A Good Place to Live

Values and Attitudes

6.1.1 recognize how individuals and governments interact and bring about change within their local and national communities:

- (1) recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada (C, I)

Knowledge and Understandings

6.1.4 analyze the structure and functions of local governments in Alberta by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- (2) What are the responsibilities of local governments (i.e., bylaws, taxes, services)? (PADM)
- (3) How are local governments structured differently in rural and urban settings? (PADM)

Specific Learning Outcomes Supported and Developed in Section 2: A Good Place to Live

Skills and Processes

6.S.4 demonstrate skills of decision-making and problem solving:

- (3) collaborate with others to devise strategies for dealing with problems and issues

6.S.5 demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building:

- (1) demonstrate the skills of compromise to reach group consensus
- (2) work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal

6.S.7 apply the research process:

- (1) determine reliability of information, filtering for point of view and bias
- (2) formulate questions to be answered through the research process
- (3) use graphs, tables, charts and Venn diagrams to interpret information
- (4) draw and support conclusions based on information gathered to answer a research question
- (5) include references in an organized manner as part of research
- (6) formulate new questions as research progresses
- (7) design and follow a plan, including a schedule, to be used during an inquiry process, and make revisions to the plan as necessary
- (8) access and retrieve appropriate information from the Internet, using a specific search path or from given uniform resource locations (URLs)
- (9) organize information, using tools such as databases, spreadsheets or electronic webbing
- (10) use a variety of technologies to organize and synthesize researched information
- (11) reflect on and describe the processes involved in completing a project

6.S.8 demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy:

- (5) listen to others in order to understand their perspectives
- (6) organize information gathered from the Internet, or an electronic source, selecting and recording the data in logical files or categories
- (7) communicate effectively through appropriate forms, such as speeches, reports and multimedia presentations, applying information technologies that serve particular audiences and purposes

ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

Ongoing Assessment

Choices can be made about assessing student work in this section. The criteria checklist provided in this section can be used to:

- Observe student work in group and classroom settings
- Develop checklists for assessment of student work in the activities in this section.

Performance Assessment Task

The performance assessment task, *All in a Day's Work*, involves students in a real-life scenario where they identify responsibilities of municipal government departments and consider how various departments work together to meet the needs of citizens. Students work collaboratively to complete some portions of the task. The assessment portions, however, are provided in the *Snapshot of Municipal Government*, and are based on individual contributions to the group project and personal reflection of the processes involved. It is important to provide sufficient time for students to complete the reflective portions of the task. Teachers may need to guide and encourage students toward thoughtful, complete responses.

Criteria for Evaluation

Students provide evidence of their learning as they:	Sources of evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify responsibilities of local government (6.1.4.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual student contribution to information profile, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher review of final project - Student reflection from portions of <i>Intern Performance Review</i> • Individual student responses to the middle column of part 1 of <i>Snapshot of Our Municipal Government</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze structure and functions of local government (6.1.4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual student responses to the right-hand column of part 1 of <i>Snapshot of Our Municipal Government</i> • Individual student response to part 2 of <i>Snapshot of Our Municipal Government</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect on project (6.S.7.11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual student responses to part 1 of <i>Intern Performance Review</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to group process (6.S.5.1, 6.S.5.2, 6.S.8.5). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual student responses to part 2 of <i>Intern Performance Review</i> • Teacher observation of individual student performance during group process



ASSESSMENT TIP: Assessment during Group Projects

Group work is an important part of social studies. Assessment, however, should provide evidence of individual student attainment of the outcomes, with both content and process.

In this performance task, students work as a group to complete a product; however, the product is not the major focus of the summative assessment. Rather, evaluation is based on individual student performance during the project. Two student assessment handouts help gather evidence of both the content and the process. Teachers use evidence from the information profile (the final product), the student assessment handouts, and teacher observation to make a judgement of the level of student performance according to the descriptors on the rubric.



ASSESSMENT TIP: Working with Rubrics and Rating Scales

Rubrics are evaluation tools that identify the criteria for evaluation and provide a word description of each level of performance for each criterion. Often the language is complex for students and this is one of the challenges in using rubrics. They are also time consuming to create. Rubrics are best used for summative evaluation.

Rating scales are evaluation tools that describe the desired behaviour and then provide a scale for rating current performance. The addition of a comment column provides a place to provide evidence for the rating. Rating scales can be based on frequency, consistency, independence or quality of performance. They are generally not translated into percentage scores and therefore can have three or more levels depending on how much specificity is desired.

Rating scales are useful because they are less complex than rubrics. They can be used for formative assessment to help students (or peers) evaluate work in progress and identify areas for improvement. Rating scales are also useful for providing evidence of a wide range of process skills.

Rating scales and rubrics can be used together to create a broader picture of student performance. In the *All in a Day's Work* performance task, students use a rating scale to reflect on their contribution to the product as well as to rate their use of process skills. Teachers use the evidence provided by the students on the rating scale as well as their own observations to assign rubric scores for the various criteria.

Section 2: A Good Place to Live Checklist

Criteria Students provide evidence of their learning as they:	Yes	Almost	Not Yet
Listen and respond respectfully to understand democratic principles (6.1.1.1, 6.S.8.5)			
Identify responsibilities of local government (6.1.4.2)			
Analyze structure and functions of local government (6.1.4.2, 6.1.4.3)			
Develop a plan for an inquiry process (6.S.7.7)			
Develop inquiry questions (6.S.7.2, 6.S.7.6)			
Access and organize information from different sources (6.S.7.8, 6.S.7.9, 6.S.8.6)			
Examine, evaluate and assess sources of information (6.S.7.1, 6.S.7.3, 6.S.7.4, 6.S.7.10)			
List references used as research sources (6.S.7.5)			
Communicate information (6.S.8.7)			
Work collaboratively and cooperatively in a group setting (6.S.4.3, 6.S.5.2)			
Contribute to group processes (6.S.5.1, 6.S.5.2, 6.S.8.5)			
Reflect on processes used (6.S.7.11)			

Section 2: A Good Place to Live

Rubric: All in a Day's Work

Level Criteria	4 Excellent	3 Proficient	2 Adequate	1 Limited *	Insufficient / Blank *
Identifies responsibilities of local government (6.1.4.2)	Provides comprehensive information about responsibilities of local government.	Provides thorough information about responsibilities of local government.	Provides partial information about responsibilities of local government.	Provides superficial information about responsibilities of local government.	No score is awarded because there is insufficient evidence of student performance based on the requirements of the assessment task.
Analyzes structure and function of local government (6.1.4.2, 6.1.4.3)	Provides an insightful analysis of the structure and function of local government.	Provides a logical analysis of the structure and function of local government.	Provides a basic analysis of the structure and function of local government.	Provides a vague analysis of the structure and function of local government.	
Reflects on project (6.5.7.11)	Provides a perceptive reflection on the project.	Provides a thoughtful reflection on the project.	Provides a simplistic reflection on the project.	Provides a trivial reflection on the project.	
Contributes to group process (6.5.5.1, 6.5.5.2, 6.5.8.5)	Makes an effective contribution to final product and consistently engages in appropriate group behaviours.	Makes a skillful contribution to final product and frequently engages in appropriate group behaviours.	Makes a reasonable contribution to final product and occasionally engages in appropriate group behaviours.	Makes a haphazard contribution to final product and seldom, if ever engages in appropriate group behaviours.	

* When work is judged to be limited or insufficient, the teacher makes decisions about appropriate intervention to help the student improve.

GLOSSARY

The following terms and concepts are developed in the activities and student resources of Section 2: A Good Place to Live. Although they are grouped under the critical issue in which they are introduced, many recur and are used throughout the entire section. Definitions and explanations are presented in the context in which they appear in the teacher and student information.

Critical Issue 2: How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live?

A **community scan** is a description of ways of life and issues that influence and affect a community. A community scan collects information about the community, such as economic, social and environmental factors that may impact the community in the future. The scan identifies issues and challenges that municipal governments can deal with. Community scans gather information, such as demographic changes and economic forecasts, and examples of different ways of life, questions, issues, interests and decisions in a community. Community, or environmental, scans can be used by municipal officials to identify and examine issues that relate to and affect the quality of life and sustainability of communities. A scan can be described as a set of observations with a common goal.

Sustainability can involve the need to ensure that there are enough resources for the future of the community when making decisions for the present. For example, building a road requires money to maintain it to fill potholes, clear snow and repave.

Critical Issue 3: Why do we need municipal government?

Municipal councils are made up of **elected officials**.

In municipal government, these elected officials are called **council members**, and include councillors and the mayor or reeve.

The Chief Elected Official is the person who leads and is the public spokesperson for the council. The title of the Chief Elected Official can also be **Mayor** or **Reeve**.

In some municipalities, the Chief Elected Official can be **appointed**, which means he or she is chosen by and from the group of councillors who have been elected by the citizens.

Councillors can be elected **at-large**, which means they are elected by all eligible voters in the municipality.

The eligible voters are called **electors**.

Councils and council committees must conduct their meetings in public unless matters to be discussed require a closed meeting. A councillor is responsible to keep in **confidence**, or keep private, matters discussed in a closed council or council committee meeting until discussed at a meeting held in public.

An **intern** is a temporary employee or volunteer who is responsible for learning while they work at a job.

Critical Issue 5: How do the decisions of municipal government reflect the values and attitudes of its communities?

A **justifiable** decision involves a decision that is made with the support of valid reasons.

When choices are **prioritized** they are often rank ordered. **Priorities** represent those choices that are most important. The way that a municipal government makes decisions about the use of the land depends on the ideas and ideals that are important to the municipality. Priorities are also established around budget choices.

Before municipalities decide whether to build or provide facilities and services, they have to think about the **costs** and the **benefits**. A cost is a consequence of an action. A benefit occurs when a decision results in well being or the common good.

Some of a municipality's revenue will come from the taxes that the municipal government will require the property owners to pay. **Property taxes** are **levies**, or an amount of money charged to property owners in the municipality. **User fees** are fees for using services and are commonly used to pay for utilities such as water, sewer and garbage pick-up.

Critical Issues and Activities

Why do people choose to live in a municipality?

2 to 3 class periods

1 When students are encouraged to explore reasons why people choose to live where they do, it can help them appreciate different ways of life and strengthen their sense of commitment to their communities. Invite students to consider and discuss the following questions:

- How many times have you heard our municipality described as “a good place to live?” What makes it a good place to live?

2 Have students use a graphic organizer, such as the **Mind Map (Student Appendix A: p. 207)** to explore what makes their municipality a good place to live. Students can also apply these questions to the community murals created in Section 1: Get Personal.

- What do you think provides a good quality of life in our municipality? *(Encourage students to think beyond “things” that make a good quality of life. Revisit factors they have learned in previous grade levels, such as family and peer relationships, health, a range of positive activities, contributions they make or a sense of belonging. Ask students to consider whether there are “things” that are not good to have in a municipality.)*
- Why might people consider different factors when they describe their quality of life? *(Individuals define their quality of life in their own ways. Everyone has different factors that influence how they perceive their quality of life. The different factors that influence quality of life of others should be respected.)*

3 Ask students to consider and discuss how urban and rural municipalities may face different issues and challenges and different types of decisions to try to provide a good quality of life. Encourage students to share perspectives and experiences from their learning in previous grade levels:

- What they have learned and know about communities and municipalities
- What influences quality of life
- How the environment and resources affect choices to live and work in a place
- How the environment and resources shape or influence ways of life.

4 Provide students with **Student Resource 2-1: A Good Place to Live (p. 95)**. This student resource invites students to reflect on the reasons why people decide to live where they do.



DIFFERENTIATE

The mind map can be completed as an individual, paired, small group or class activity. Alternatively, students can be provided with the choice of creating a tri-fold brochure entitled “A Good Place to Live.” A tri-fold brochure can be created by folding an 8.5” x 11” paper into three sections.



DIFFERENTIATE

Students were introduced to the concept of urban and rural in Section 1: Get Personal. Students who need additional or guided practice in working with these concepts can be provided with different sources of information, such as atlases, newspapers, magazines and travel brochures or Alberta Motor Association publications, to find examples of municipalities that could be described as rural or urban. Students who can handle more advanced sources can also use the Municipal Profiles on the Municipal Affairs website at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/mc_municipal_profiles.cfm. Work with students to categorize and discuss the examples.

How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live? 4 to 5 class periods

1 Community or environmental scans are used by municipal officials to identify and examine issues that relate to and affect the quality of life and sustainability of municipalities. A scan can be described as a set of observations with a common goal. A **community scan** searches for and examines a wide range of evidence and examples that provide observations and insights on how a community or communities within the municipality function and how outside influences affect it.

Engaging students in the construction of a simplified community scan encourages them to consider factors that influence and affect quality of life and sustainability issues in the municipality. The community scan asks students to consider how ways of life in their community are affected by the actions of people who live, work and play there. The scan also introduces students to the range of factors that influence decision-making in municipal government and encourages them to look towards the future of the municipality.

Introduce students to the term “community scan.” Ask them to define what a scan is by looking up the term in a dictionary, and comparing it to more familiar terms such as “scanning a story” or to an electronic or X-ray scan. Have students form small working groups. Assign each group the responsibility of researching one factor in the community scan. Groups can be of different sizes, as some factors of the community scan may require more research than others.

2 Provide each group with the appropriate section from **Student Resource 2-2: Community Scan (pp. 96-102)**. This student resource provides:

- Directions for the task. Students are asked to submit their research as members of a Student Committee. They are instructed to represent what they find in a visual collage, using drawings, photographs, quotations, stories or media sources.
- A series of questions related to each factor of the community scan. Each is on a separate page so that groups can be assigned different factors to research.
- A visual model that summarizes each factor in relation to community choices and decision-making that can be used to help students summarize the results of their scan.



DIFFERENTIATE

The community scan activity can be structured and organized in different ways, depending on the degree of support needed by students:

- A **jigsaw** strategy can be used to have groups become experts on one of the factors, then share their learning with others.
- Individual students can select a factor on which to focus, and then share their research with others who examined the same factor. Results can be combined using a guided class discussion.
- For municipalities with multiple communities, groups of students can focus on different communities within the municipality.
- Students can be asked to select three questions in the factor they are assigned to research if time limits prevent completion of the entire scan.



PARTICIPATE: School Conditions and Issues

Have students adapt the community scan and apply it to the school. What conditions and issues affect quality of life in the school? How does the scan help identify issues? What can be done about these issues? The school scan can also be used first to introduce the community scan concept in a context that may be more familiar to students.

3 Discuss the elements and process of a community scan as a class. Have groups use a variety of sources to complete their community scans. Discuss the importance of using both primary and secondary sources:

- Students' knowledge of their community (*primary source*)
- Local media sources, such as newspapers, magazines, television and radio (*secondary source*)
- Interviews with family and community members (*primary source*)
- The Statistics Canada website provides a link that allows students to research and construct community profiles, at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6_external_resources.cfm. Some useful information may be accessed by students on this site (*secondary source*).



INTEGRATE: Health and Life Skills: Wellness Choices

Students can be asked to explore what makes their community a healthy community. Have students create a list of the criteria that identifies what they would find in a healthy community. Ask students to create advertisements or public service announcements that communicate what municipal governments do to contribute to a healthy community.

4 Once the community scans have been completed, have each group present a brief summary of their results with the class. Have students share:

- What they found out about how their community functions
- A challenge or issue arising from existing ways of life and functions in the community.

Provide students with a five- to eight-minute time limit for their presentations. After students present their summaries, ask them to consider which challenge or issue they think could have the greatest impact on the municipality. Ask them to provide reasons for their choices.

If students in your classroom complete the scan on different communities,



ASSESS

Have students keep track of their research sources and use them to create a bibliography. If necessary, work with the class to develop this skill. Assess the bibliographies as evidence of skill development.



ASSESS

Assess student presentations, looking for evidence of effective communication skills and the ability to listen to others.



THINK ABOUT

Ask students to revisit the differences between the concepts of community and municipality. Geographic communities can be municipalities; however, they can also be smaller communities within municipalities. When students complete their community scans, they may touch on factors and issues related to different types of communities that can overlap, intersect and coexist. These communities may, or may not, exist within the municipality. Which of these factors are the responsibilities of a municipality? Some factors or issues may be the responsibility of societies, volunteers, provincial or federal government or private citizens.



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can be provided with the option of completing the Triple T-Chart individually, as well as in small groups.



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can be given a choice in presenting their summaries:

- Develop a role play, taking on the roles of community members or municipal council members
- Develop a press conference
- Develop a news broadcast.

As an alternative to presenting their summaries, have each group create a board game that represents some of the issues and challenges a municipality may face. Have them include issues, challenges and possible solutions or decisions. Plan movement around the board using 'go forward' for positive results or 'go backward' for negative results.

have them discuss and compare the results.

5 Have groups revisit their community murals and identify and list services and facilities that are affected by the issues and conditions identified in the community scan. Have students consider questions such as the following:

- Has the community scan helped us identify any services and facilities that we did not originally include on our community murals? Why are these places and facilities important to the community?
- What other conditions and issues can we identify from examining the community murals? How could these conditions and issues affect quality of life in a community?

6 Invite students to use their community scans to explore how decisions made by municipal government can affect the future of a community within the municipality. Use a graphic organizer, such as a **Triple T-Chart (Appendix A: p. 202)** to guide the class through the process of selecting one of the issues from the community scans and assessing possible actions and their impact. The class can be guided through the completion of a class chart such as the example on the following page.

What is the issue or challenge?	What are some choices for acting on this issue or challenge?	How might these choices affect the community in the future?
The community is growing quickly and people cannot find places to live.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find more land to build houses. Renovate older houses in the centre of the community. Permit homeowners to rent basement suites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The land used for houses can no longer be used for agriculture or green space. There may be more problems with pollution. The community will have to spend more money to provide services and renovate; this money cannot be used for other things. The centre of the community may become busier and more jobs will be created; more people will be needed to fill these jobs.

Pose the following question to students:

- Why should municipal governments consider what might happen in the future when they make decisions about community issues or challenges? (*When we make choices, there are always effects. Making one choice means that we give up other options. We have to consider the effects of making a choice, as well as not choosing the alternative. There are often no easy answers.*)

7 Use responses to discuss the concept of **sustainability**, or the need to ensure that there are enough resources for the future of the municipality when making decisions for the present. Ask students to share understandings of this concept from previous grade levels.

Use a strategy such as a **board share** to explore examples of sustainable actions that municipal governments can consider. The following topics reflect some of the choices that many municipalities have to balance in considering how to keep their communities sustainable. Write the topics on the board and have groups brainstorm examples of choices municipalities can make.

- Keeping the municipality strong and growing (*Consider ideas such as ways to encourage growth, including job creation, cultural attractions and tourism. If the municipality is shrinking, consider ideas for ways to support it in the future.*)
- Encouraging people to be involved with the municipality (*Consider ideas such as promoting the municipality, encouraging municipal events and advertising and holding meetings so people can participate in local government decision-making. Discuss how volunteers can contribute or how they can be overused.*)



THINK ABOUT

Issues and challenges that impact a community can have far-reaching effects on the municipality or on other municipalities. Encourage students to start to examine their community within the broader perspective of the municipality.



DIFFERENTIATE

A **board share** is a strategy for large group brainstorming. Students are asked to brainstorm ideas in a small group. One group member is assigned the role of group recorder (two group members can also be asked to take on this role). As the group brainstorms, the recorder is the “runner” and comes to the front of the room to record the group’s ideas on the board.



INTEGRATE

Language Arts: 4.1 Enhance and Improve

The class can be asked to write a letter to the municipal office or to the editor of the local newspaper, using business letter format and choosing words appropriate for the context, audience and purpose of the communication.

- Encouraging citizens to run for office to keep the municipal government strong (*Consider ideas such as encouraging citizens to vote and involving council members in community events. Ask students to think about what might happen if the municipality can no longer find citizens to run for office.*)
- Choosing ways to use resources and provide services (*Consider ideas such as protecting the environment and providing housing. Discuss what could happen if a municipality is shrinking (fewer people, businesses and resources). Choices might involve reducing service levels to what the municipality can afford. Introduce the idea that municipalities may have to make decisions about which services are required, which are nice to have, and which may have to be given up.*)



INTERACT


Students can share the results of their community scans with municipal offices as a student perspective on the municipality.

- Contact the municipal office to provide information about the community scan projects that students have completed and ensure that the projects can be sent to municipal officials.
- Guide groups through the process of collating and organizing their community scans into a class product. Include some of the solutions that students have developed.
- Compile the results into a binder or presentation folder.
- Send the classroom community scan to the municipal office, with a letter that describes and summarizes what the scan revealed. If you live in a larger municipality, you may want to consider working with other grade 6 teachers and sending the results of your community scan as a school submission. A sample letter format, appropriate for sending to municipal government offices, is provided in **Appendix B (p. 216)**.
- If your students come from different municipalities, you may consider having students organize the results of their community scan around each municipality or selecting pertinent aspects of the community scan to send to each municipal office.
- Alternatively, you may choose to invite a municipal official to listen to student presentations on the results of their community scans.




WEBSITE

Students can be introduced to the features on the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website that they will use in greater depth in the next activity.

There are three municipalities on the map that students can access by clicking on the  icon and then clicking the “ENTER” button to enter each municipality:

- A large urban municipality
- A small urban municipality
- A rural municipality.

When they click on the  icon beside each of these three municipalities, they will be able to explore various services and facilities in a detailed map. Pose the following question to students:

- If you could choose to live in any type of municipality, which would you choose? Why?

Have students use the detailed municipalities to brainstorm and list ideas and reasons for their choice using a graphic organizer, such as the **Clipboard (Appendix A: p. 203)**.

Why do we need municipal government?

3 to 4 class periods

1 The roles, responsibilities and functions of municipal governments in Alberta are similar in many ways. However, they differ in the types of decisions and the issues that municipalities face. These differences are often centered on the environment, resources, activities and ways of life in individual municipalities, and are reflected by the places in which people live, work and play. Ask students to revisit the list of different types of places found in their municipalities that they created in **Student Resource 1-1: Building Municipalities (pp. 45-48)**, as well as in their community murals:

- Places where people live
- Places where people buy goods and obtain services
- Places where people work
- Places where people play
- Places where community activities happen
- Places where natural features are protected.



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can complete **Student Resource 2-3: Roles and Responsibilities of Municipal Government** in a number of ways, depending on their learning needs and the classroom environment:

- Individually
- Collaboratively, with a partner or in small groups
- With support of a learning buddy or parents.

2 Provide students with **Student Resource 2-3: Roles and Responsibilities of Municipal Government (pp. 103-109)** to use as the starting point for their own research into municipal government. The student resource asks students to:

- Identify what they think are the five most important places in the municipality
- Explore and predict what municipal government takes responsibility for and what might happen if it did not take responsibility
- Consider the roles and responsibilities of individuals involved in municipal government and create an address book page that identifies these individuals in their own municipality
- Review a list of the facilities and services that are provided by their municipal government
- Consider examples of student-focused questions related to the responsibilities of municipal government, such as:
 - o How can I find a place to meet with my hobby club?
 - o What are the rules about walking dogs in parks?
 - o How can I find out about soccer teams I can join?
 - o If I wanted a skateboard park in my area, who do I need to talk to?
 - o How can we get the street light outside our house fixed?
 - o When do we have to shovel the snow?
 - o Where can I take my recycling garbage?

These questions can be added to and revisited when research on the roles and responsibilities of municipal governments is completed.



WEBSITE

Students may also be given the option of using the research information and **Scrapbook** feature of the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website, in addition or as an alternative to completing the Student Resource.



ASSESS

Student Resources 2-4: All in a Day's Work also provides the performance assessment task for this section. A rubric is provided in the assessment notes and should be shared and discussed with students prior to beginning the task.

3 Have students form small research groups. Provide students with **Student Resource 2-4: All in a Day's Work (pp. 110-112)**. This student resource provides the context for student research. Explain to students that each group will take on the roles of student interns who have been asked to learn about a different municipal government department. Their task will involve learning about:

- The responsibilities and functions of different areas of municipal government (*Encourage students to share what they have already learned about the responsibilities of municipal government to set a context for this task.*)

- Some of the individuals who have important roles within municipal government. *(Ask students to discuss some of the roles within municipal government they may already know something about – mayor or reeve and councillors. Some students may also mention jobs that are part of what the municipal government takes responsibility for – firefighters, garbage collectors, police, bylaw officers, administrators or managers. Accept all student answers at this time and discuss ideas for finding out more about these roles.)*

Each group should take responsibility for one department. The departments that students can use include:

- Financial Services (property taxes and municipal revenue)
- Protective Services (police services, bylaw enforcement, fire protection, ambulance service, disaster and emergency services)
- Public Works (roads and streets, sidewalks, lighting, storm water management, equipment management, engineering and public transit)
- Utility Services (water, wastewater, solid waste management, electricity and gas)
- Land Use Planning (subdivision development and building permits)
- Family and Community Support Services (municipal programs, community groups and seniors' services)
- Recreation and Cultural Services (recreation programs, facilities, pathways and parks, cultural programs, libraries and volunteerism)
- Economic Development (business and community promotion).

Brainstorm and discuss possible research sources with students:

- The *Building Communities Through Local Government* website
- The *Building Communities Through Local Government* Trading Cards
- Municipal websites (including Municipal Profiles on the Municipal Affairs website, found at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/mc_municipal_profiles.cfm)
- Interviews or discussions with community members.



THINK ABOUT

Municipalities may have different departmental structures. You may want to model and adapt this list to be more similar to your own municipality.

- 4 Tell department groups that, as part of their job as student interns, they have been asked to inform the residents of the community about what their department does.

Have each group work together to create a profile of the responsibilities and functions of their municipal government department.

- Profiles can be created in the form of brochures, file folder kits or booklets that groups put together with information they have gathered from their research.
- Identify how services and facilities are examples of the responsibilities of municipal governments. Compare the services and facilities that different municipalities provide.



DIFFERENTIATE

To introduce the research task to students who may need more concrete examples, have students discuss or list the types of responsibilities that are involved in the school or classroom. Discuss the specific responsibilities associated with different roles and jobs in the classroom or school.

Students can prepare their department profiles using a variety of formats:

- A print presentation, using maps, posters, brochures or handouts
- A PowerPoint presentation
- A videotape or audiotape
- A role playing presentation
- A series of billboards, commercials or public service announcements
- A feature magazine article.

These options are also presented in **Student Resource 2-4: All in a Day's Work (pp. 110-112)**.

Students may also be asked to add services and facilities that reflect each department to the community murals created in Section 1: Get Personal.



The *Building Communities Through Local Government Trading Cards* are an ancillary resource provided with this teaching resource. The trading cards provide information on different services and facilities that can be found in municipalities. Research questions are also provided on question cards. The information and research questions are also provided in the three municipalities on the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website. The trading cards can be used in a number of ways:

- As an alternative or supplement to the website research
- To have students create their own board game or card games
- To group students into research groups
- To create visual displays about roles and responsibilities of municipal government
- As a tool for reviewing roles and responsibilities of municipal government.

Students can be encouraged to develop their own trading cards to reflect further research they may do, or to reflect their own municipality, using the **Trading Card Template (Student Appendix A: p. 208)**.



WEBSITE


Have students revisit the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website to explore the roles of mayors, reeves and councillors. These individuals are found in the municipal offices of each of the three municipalities. They are also provided on the Trading Cards.

Students can be asked to use index cards to create role cards on the responsibilities of individuals who have different jobs in municipal governments. The roles of individuals who work in different municipal government departments can also be described. The role cards can be used to explore and assess perspectives and points of view that different individuals bring to issues and decisions in the municipality.




WEBSITE

The *Building Communities Through Local Government* website provides students with a research source that can be used to explore the roles, responsibilities and functions of municipal governments. Have student revisit the municipalities on the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website to look for and identify examples of the services and facilities for which municipal government is responsible.

Once students enter the website home page, they will see a map. There are three municipalities on the map that students can access by clicking on the  icon then clicking on the "ENTER" button to enter each municipality:

- A large urban municipality
- A small urban municipality
- A rural municipality.

Students will be able to explore various services and facilities on a detailed map in each of these three municipalities. Text windows with information on roles, responsibilities and functions related to municipal government will appear as students click on each  icon. Students can be encouraged to identify the similarities and differences in the roles, responsibilities and functions of different municipalities.

Students can use the **Scrapbook** feature on the website to select icons that represent the different types of places they find in each municipality. To access the **Scrapbook**, students must click on the "ADD TO SCRAPBOOK" button in each text window. This adds a visual that represents each service or facility to the **Scrapbook** page. The **Scrapbook** page can be printed and provides the visual and space to record ideas and information. The **Scrapbook** feature is session based. This means that students must print their **Scrapbook** pages when they are finished on the site, or they will lose the visuals they have collected.



PARTICIPATE: Classroom Administration

Invite students to establish a classroom administration. Identify and describe the different departments and their responsibilities. Assign groups to these departments and create job descriptions. The class can elect its own council and mayor or reeve in Section 3: Make Connections, when students explore the electoral process.

5 Invite the class to discuss the following questions:

- What do you think a municipal government needs in order to build facilities and provide services? *(Discuss how municipal governments raise money through taxation and fees for services, such as licensing and utility bills. Some municipalities may also obtain funds through grant programs. Students may be asked to consider questions such as what services and facilities people should pay directly for or what services and facilities should be subsidized by property taxes.)*
- Why do you think municipal governments have to allocate money for each department? How do you think they do this? *(Discuss the costs that students think may be associated with the various facilities and services they have outlined in their department profiles. Students may be asked to develop a list of questions relating to taxation and finance for further research. Some community websites provide budget allocations – students can be asked to find out what percentage of the budget is allocated for different departments. Some municipalities may also provide financial reports from the previous year that could be used as an information source.)*



INTEGRATE

Mathematics: Statistics and Probability (Data Analysis)

Students can be asked to construct bar or pie graphs to illustrate budget allocations for different departments in a municipality.



INTERACT

Plan a field study tour to a municipal office as part of student research for this activity. Ensure that you contact the municipal office and explain the context and purpose of the field study tour. Share some of students' research questions in advance and discuss the types of information students would find useful. You may wish to consider requesting whether the field study tour can include:

- A visit to council chambers
- Listening to a portion of a council, committee or board meeting (note that these meetings are often held during the evening and may not be an option for the field study tour)
- Visiting with a department head who is available during the day (for example, the finance manager or disaster services coordinator).

Have students prepare questions that focus on the types of decisions that are made by the municipal government and the various functions and responsibilities of the municipality. If there is information available on the responsibilities of municipal government, have students collect this information or ask for a class copy. Some municipal offices may be able to provide information on their roles and responsibilities.

As an alternative, have students tour the municipality's website to collect information. Students can find some of these links in the Participate feature in the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website. If your students come from different municipalities, have them select one on which to focus. For example, the City of Edmonton provides a virtual tour at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6_external_resources.cfm. The City of Calgary can be visited at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6_external_resources.cfm. Click on CityHall, then About Calgary, then Civic Complex to access the Civic Complex Virtual Tour.

How does municipal government serve communities?

1 to 2 class periods

❶ Invite each group to set up a table display with their department profiles. Have groups rotate through the table displays so they can examine what each group has created. Place a feedback sheet beside each table display for each group to add their comments. Use questions such as the following to generate reactions to each group's display:

- How do you think each of these local government departments provides benefits to the municipality?
- What different types of choices and decisions do you think are made when municipalities implement these services or build facilities?
- What did you learn that you did not know before from this group's research? What did this group do really well?



DIFFERENTIATE

A **carousel** sharing strategy can be structured in different ways to accommodate different learning needs of students. A group member can stay with the table display to share the group's project. Or, groups can travel together and add comments to a group feedback sheet placed at each table. Alternatively, students can be provided with a feedback sheet with questions they must respond to individually or as a group as they visit each table display.



ASSESS

Students can be asked to submit **Student Resource 2-5: Snapshot of Our Municipal Government (pp.113-116)** as a summative assessment. The rubric for this section can be used to evaluate students' projects and individual work and reflection.

❷ Have each group work together to summarize the primary roles, responsibilities and functions of each department using a graphic organizer, such as a **T-Chart (Appendix A: p. 201)**.



INTERACT

Invite a municipal official to visit the class displays that students have created. Ensure that you provide information about the department profiles. Encourage municipal officials to prepare questions they might ask students about their displays and provide some examples or suggestions. Consider asking the municipal official if the profiles can be displayed in the municipal office or a municipal facility such as the public art gallery or a community centre.

How do the decisions of municipal government reflect the values and attitudes of its communities?

2 to 3 class periods

1 Have students continue to work with their municipal government department groups. Ask each group to revisit the issues and concerns identified in the community scan and consider the following questions.

- Which issues and concerns affect their department?
- What decisions could their department make to address these issues and concerns?

2 Tell students that they will use a process that many municipal governments use to make decisions about how the municipality can change and grow while balancing these decisions with limited resources. This is also part of what municipal governments must consider to address issues related to sustainability.

Provide each department group with **Student Resource 2-6: Making Choices (pp. 117-118)**. This student handout:

- Provides a list of choices that a municipality is considering to improve the quality of life of its citizens
- Asks groups to consider the choices from the point of view of their government department, and make recommendations to the class for adding facilities, programs and services to the municipality.



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can be asked to create their own “Muni-Dollars” to help them make decisions. Have them create a variety of denominations adding up to 100.

Students can be asked to display the results of their choices on the community murals that were created in Section 1: Get Personal. They can be encouraged to reflect on the changes that resulted to their community murals as a result of their decisions.

3 Have each group create a short presentation from the perspective of their department that presents their recommendations. Present the following question to the class:

- If you had 100 budget units to spend in the community, what should the community spend these units on?



INTEGRATE

Mathematics: Number (Number Concepts)

Use this activity to reinforce and work with the concept of percentages. Students can be asked to calculate the percentage of their budget that is allocated to different departments. They can also be asked to graph their results.

Have the class make choices by using a majority or consensus model of decision-making. Work with students to discuss possible ways the budget could be allocated to add up to the limit of 100 units. Have students try both decision-making models and reflect on differences between the two. *(Municipal councils use a majority decision-making model to vote on bylaws and resolutions. Compare this to groups that use consensus models of decision-making, such as the provincial government in Nunavut. Encourage students to consider ways that both decision-making models reflect the elements of democracy.)*

④ Then, have the class consider the following questions and justify the choices they have made:

- How do economic limitations necessitate choices? *(Consider how a limited budget and choices that exceed that budget mean that choices must be made. Municipalities have to make these types of choices.)*
- Have our choices supported the diverse needs of different business owners and groups in our community? *(Consider seniors, families, business owners, young people and those who need economic support.)*
- Were some choices made at the expense of others? *(Consider such choices as whether making more land available for housing meant that fewer schools could be built, or if encouraging more business development took away natural spaces in the community.)*
- Were these **justifiable** decisions? *(Discuss how a justifiable decision involves a decision that is made with the support of valid reasons.)*
- What difficulties were experienced when choices had to be made?
- What strategies did we use to **prioritize** these choices? *(Compare prioritizing to rank ordering and have students discuss how priorities represent those choices that are most important.)*
- What does the community value? What is the evidence? *(Encourage students to consider values associated with the types of choices they made. For example, a choice to build a recreational facility may reflect values related to the benefits of activities and sports; new public housing may reflect values of helping those in the community who need support; and building a recycling plant may reflect values associated with environmental protection.)*
- How sustainable are the choices we made? *(Encourage students to revisit the concept of making decisions today that consider what might happen in the future. For example, decisions to build new facilities will affect the budget priorities in the future with issues such as upkeep, maintenance, repairs, upgrades and replacement.)*

Student Resource 2-1

A Good Place to Live



Use the chart below to record your responses to these questions:

- What makes your municipality a good place to live?
- What could be changed to improve the quality of life in your municipality?

What we like about our municipality	Some of the challenges our municipality faces	What we would like to change and why we would like to change this

Student Resource 2-2

Community Scan

A **community scan** is a description of ways of life and issues that influence and affect the community. A community scan collects information about the community, and identifies issues and challenges that municipal governments can deal with.

Community scans gather information and examples about different conditions, ways of life, questions, issues, interests and decisions in the community. Each of the topics in the mind map below is explored through a series of questions.

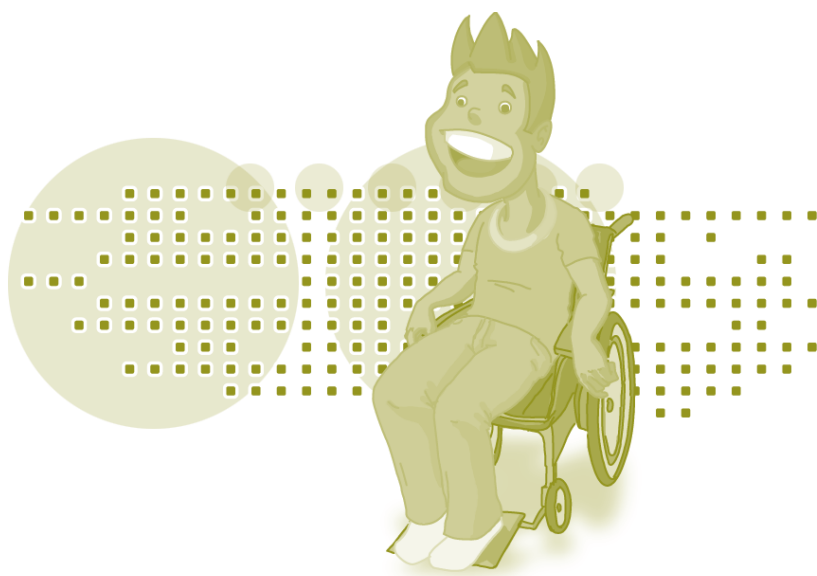


The Task

You have been asked to be part of a student committee for your municipality. The council would like information on a community within the municipality that represents students' perspectives. The municipality has asked students in your classroom to conduct a community scan.

- Discuss how you would define your community. Remember that there can be different communities within one municipality. Which community will you focus on for your community scan?
- Work with your class to gather information for the community scan, using the questions as a guide.
- Assign each group the responsibility for one area of the community scan.

- Use different sources of information. Consider the different perspectives and opinions that each source provides. Use sources such as:
 - o Your own knowledge about the community
 - o Newspapers, community newsletters and magazines from your community
 - o Interviews with family and community members
 - o Local websites about the community.
- Use the questions in the handout as guidelines only. Add your own questions and ideas.
- You may not be able to answer all of the questions. Answer the ones on which you are able to find information.
- Choose a way to present your findings. You can write a report or create a visual collage, using drawings, photographs, quotations, stories or newspaper or magazine articles.



Social

How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live?

Who lives in our community and municipality? What is the current population of our municipality?	
Has the population changed recently? How has it changed? Why has it changed?	
What issues or challenges are we facing because of an increasing or decreasing population?	
What types of social services are provided to community members? Where are these services provided? <i>(Find out about services like family, youth, cultural and recreational programs. Consider whether they are centrally located or in other areas of the community or municipality.)</i> Are these services thriving, growing, declining or failing?	
In what ways do community members volunteer? Is volunteerism thriving, growing or declining?	
Does our community advertise or promote its social programs and services? How?	
What facilities and services are available for health care in our community? In our municipality?	
What else do you think is important to know and understand about our community and municipality?	

Environmental

How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live?

<p>What important environmental features do we have in our community? In our municipality?</p>	
<p>How do activities in our community and municipality affect the environment?</p>	
<p>What environmental programs and services do we have in our community and municipality? <i>(Look for evidence of programs such as recycling, water quality or conservation, night time lighting rules and protected areas.)</i></p>	
<p>What are some environmental issues and decisions we are facing in our community and municipality? What places in our community do these issues and decisions affect? Are there any conflicting decisions about how land and resources should be used? What are these decisions?</p>	
<p>What is happening outside our community that may affect our environment?</p>	
<p>What else do you think is important to know and understand about our community and municipality?</p>	

Economic

How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live?

What types of jobs and occupations do people have? *(Look for examples of jobs and activities that happen in the community, such as businesses, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism or other services.)*

Are there jobs available in the community? How challenging is it for people to find jobs? Where do people work outside of the community and municipality?

Are there any major projects happening in our community right now? What are these projects? *(Look for examples of new buildings, homes, businesses, recreation centres, etc.)* Where are these projects going to be located?

What are some planned projects in the future? Where will these projects be located? What benefits might these projects have? Who will they benefit?

Is new home building increasing or decreasing? What options do people have for places to live? *(Look for examples of areas where you would find single family homes, multi-family homes, apartments, etc.)*

Are new businesses starting in the community? Are businesses declining or closing down? What kinds of businesses are these? What types of new businesses might benefit the community?

What are issues, challenges and decisions our community is facing because of increasing or decreasing jobs, projects or businesses?

What else do you think is important to know and understand about our community and municipality?

Political

How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live?

How many citizens serve on our municipal council? Is there usually more than one candidate running for elections?	
How would you describe the voting turnout rate in the last election? What might be some reasons for high or low voter turnouts? <i>(Consider searching the Internet for "municipal election results" and your municipality's name to find this information. Some municipalities record election results and voter turnout on their websites.)</i>	
What are some current decisions that the municipal council has to make? What are the opinions in the community on these decisions? <i>(Look for one or two examples of decisions. Some examples might include ways land will be used, building a new recreation centre, adding more lighting and fixing roads or streets.)</i>	
In what ways can people communicate with the council? Is the council accessible? Is the municipal office easy to find and use?	
What kind of partnerships does our municipality have with other municipalities or organizations?	
What else do you think is important to know and understand about our community and municipality?	

Technological

How do people in a municipality contribute to building a good place to live?

How does our community and municipality provide information and services, using technology such as the Internet? Does the community or municipality provide public access to technology? If so, where?

Does our municipality have its own website? Is the website friendly and easy to use? What type of information is provided on the website?

Has technology changed the way our community or municipality communicates with people? In what ways? In what ways has technology encouraged the exchange of ideas?

What issues or challenges is our community and municipality facing with the use of technology?

What future technology-related projects might benefit our community?

What else do you think is important to know and understand about our community and municipality?

Student Resource 2-3

Roles and Responsibilities of Municipal Government



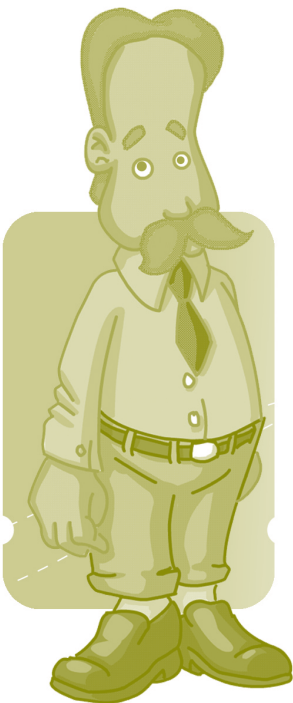
What do you think the municipal government is responsible for in your municipality? Pick what you think are the five most important services or facilities in your municipality. Fill out the chart for each.

Five most important services or facilities in the municipality	Why these services or facilities are important	What responsibilities the municipal government has	What could happen if municipal government did not take responsibility

Roles in Municipal Government

Municipal councils are made up of elected and appointed officials. In municipal government, **elected officials** are called **council members**, and include councillors and the mayor or reeve. Other people are hired to work as employees for the municipality and to help the council carry out their work. The main appointed official is the chief administrative officer.

Who are the people who are elected or appointed for municipal government in your municipality? Use the information and questions that follow, as well as your municipality’s website or other sources of information on your municipality, to help you create an Address Book page.



Chief Elected Official

The chief elected official is the person who leads and is the public spokesperson for the council. The title of the chief elected official can also be **mayor** or **reeve**. The chief elected official can be elected by the majority vote of all the people who live in the municipality or be **appointed**, which means he or she is chosen from among the group of councillors who have been elected by the citizens. The chief elected official:

- Has the same responsibilities as a councillor
- Makes sure the meetings of the council are run according to the procedures and rules that the municipality has established, unless a bylaw assigns that duty to someone else.

What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of appointing a chief elected official from among elected councillors would be? What would the advantages and disadvantages of electing one by majority vote be?

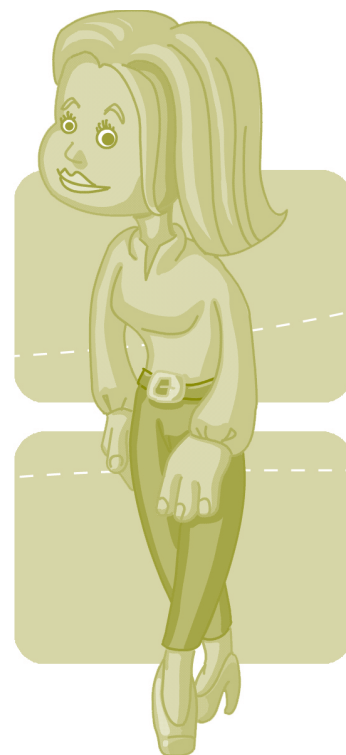
	Advantages	Disadvantages
Appointing		
Electing		

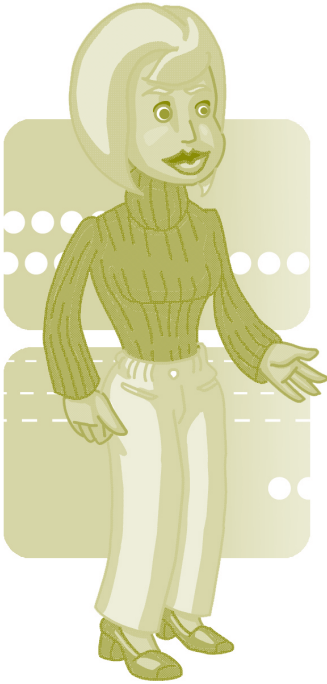
Councillor

Councillors are elected by citizens who are eligible to vote. The eligible voters are called **electors**. Councillors can be elected **at-large**, which means they are elected by all eligible voters in the municipality. Or they can be elected in a ward by the electors in that ward. A councillor has the following responsibilities:

- To consider the well being and interests of the municipality as a whole
- To bring anything that would make the municipality a better place to live to the attention of the council
- To help develop and evaluate the policies and programs of the municipality
- To participate in council meetings and committee meetings
- To stay informed about the operation or administration of the municipality
- To keep in **confidence**, or keep private, matters discussed in private at a council or council committee meeting until discussed at a meeting held in public.

How are councillors elected in your municipality? What are some benefits of electing councillors at-large? What are some benefits of electing councillors in wards?





Chief Administrative Officer

The council of a municipality appoints a chief administrative officer. This person is responsible for making sure that the decisions of the council are put into place. The chief administrative officer also keeps the council informed about the way the municipality is operating. This person makes sure that the day-to-day functions of the municipal government are carried out. The council and the chief administrative officer work together to keep each other informed. The council depends on the chief administrative officer to give it information so that it can make informed decisions.

Why do you think it is important that every municipality has a chief administrative officer?

My Municipal Government Address Book Page

Who is your municipality's Chief Elected Official?	
What is this person's title?	
Who are the councillors for your municipality? Name the councillors.	
How many councillors does your municipality have?	
Who is the Chief Administrative Officer in your municipality?	
What is this person's title?	
What are three jobs that people who work for your municipality have?	
How can your municipal office be contacted?	
Address	
Phone	
E-mail	
Website Address	
Why is the work of people who work for municipal government important?	

Taking Responsibility

The municipal government takes responsibility for many aspects of life in a municipality. It influences the environment of the municipality by making decisions about how land is used and developed. To make these types of decisions, councils look at the future of the municipality. The council also looks at the municipality's relationship with its neighbours. Finally they look at the current needs and concerns of the people who live, own property and run businesses in the municipality.

In what ways do you think the municipal government responds to needs that you may have? At one time or another, you or your family might have asked questions like the following:

- How can I find a place to meet with my hobby club?
- What are the rules about walking my dog in the park?
- How can I find out about soccer teams I can join?
- If I wanted a skateboard park in my area, who do I need to talk to?
- How can we get the street light outside our house fixed?
- When do we have to shovel the snow?
- Where can I take my recycling garbage?

What other questions do you have about using the services and facilities in your municipality?

Brainstorm some!

Services, Facilities and Programs



Some examples of services, facilities and programs provided by municipal governments might include the following:

- Police services
- Fire services
- Emergency and disaster services
- Ambulance services
- Storm sewers and drainage
- Water supply and distribution
- Sanitary sewage and treatment
- Solid waste, or garbage collection and disposal
- Bylaw enforcement
- Roads, streets and walks
- Public lighting
- Airports
- Public transportation
- Agriculture services, such as weed control
- Family and community support services, such as youth leadership development and volunteer programs
- Cemeteries
- Municipal land use planning, such as housing and building development
- Recreation facilities and programs
- Parks and pathways
- Cultural facilities, such as museums and libraries
- Community or convention centres or halls
- Animal control
- Tourism
- Business licences.

These services, facilities and programs are often provided through departments, which can include:

- Financial Services (property taxes, municipal revenue and business licences)
- Protective Services (police services, bylaw enforcement, fire protection, ambulance service, disaster and emergency services)
- Public Works (roads and streets, sidewalks and lighting, storm water management, equipment management, engineering and public transit)
- Utility Services (water, wastewater and solid waste management)
- Land Use Planning (subdivision development and building permits)
- Family and Community Support Services (municipal programs, community groups and seniors' services)
- Recreation and Culture Services (recreation facilities and programs, pathways and parks, cultural facilities, libraries and volunteerism)
- Economic Development (business and community promotion).

Where and how might you find out about some of these services, facilities and programs in your municipality?

Extend: Create a community map, showing where some of these services and facilities are located.

Student Resource 2-4

All in a Day's Work



Congratulations! You have volunteered to work as a **student intern** for your municipal government. An **intern** is a temporary employee or volunteer who is responsible for learning while he or she works at a job.

You will soon be assigned to one of the departments in your municipal government office. During your training, you will learn about the roles and responsibilities of this department. You will be responsible for working with your fellow interns to create an information profile of the department. The information profile will be used to let people in the municipality know about what your department does and why it is important.

The form on this page will help you plan your responsibilities while you are working as a student intern.

My Department: _____

What I Know Now About This Department:

Make a Plan with Your Student Intern Group

Discuss and make decisions with your group about how you will complete the Departmental Information Profile.

1. Identify questions to guide your research.

What do you need to know more about this department? What responsibilities does this department have? Why are they important? Brainstorm other questions!

2. Identify sources of information for your research.

Where will you look to find information about this municipal government department?

Start with the *Building Communities Through Local Government* website, found at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6.cfm. This website will give you some general information about what municipalities can provide. Use this information to help you make an outline.

Then, consult your municipal office. Use different sources of information, such as the Internet or interviews and meetings with municipal officials. What other sources of information could you use?

3. Divide responsibilities among group members. Use the chart below to help you do this.

Our Group Responsibilities	What Has to be Done	Who Will be Responsible	When This Has to be Done

4. Decide on a presentation format.

What can you do to demonstrate what you have learned and to communicate information about your department?

Pamphlet



Multimedia Presentation



Billboard Advertisement



TV Spotlight



Poster



Other Idea: _____

5. Read this letter from the Chief Administrative Officer of your municipality before you start working!

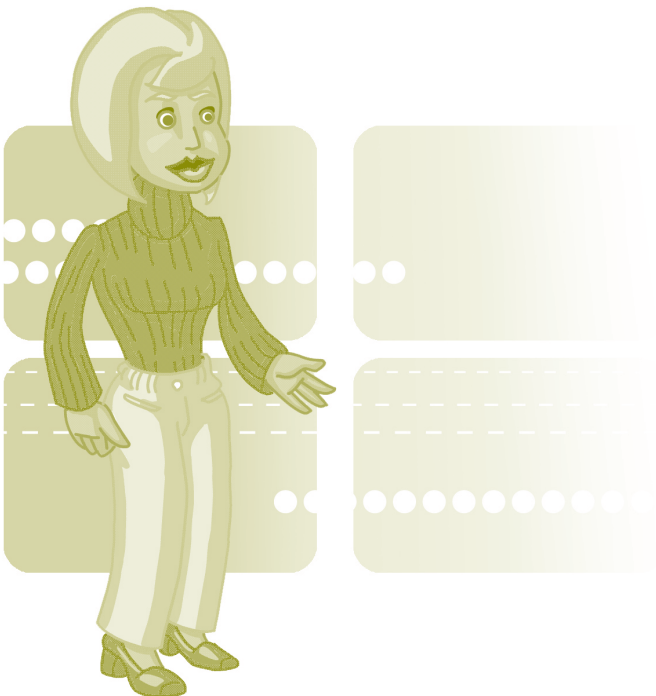
Dear Student Interns,

Thank you for volunteering to help our municipality communicate information about the important work we do. Our department supervisors have suggested that you follow the process below to complete your assignment:

- Make notes to record information about your department.*
- Organize your notes around the research questions you have identified. You may want to use a T-Chart, Mind Map or Bubble Chart to help you organize. Your supervisor can provide you with these graphic organizers.*
- Use the information you have researched to create your final product.*

We are looking forward to seeing your final products and sharing your work with people in our municipality!

*Sincerely,
The Chief Administrative Officer*



Student Resource 2-5

Snapshot of Our Municipal Government

Intern Name _____ Department _____



What have you learned about the roles and responsibilities of municipal government?

1. The Big Picture of Municipal Government

	How does this department benefit the municipality?	What do you think is the most significant challenge this department faces?
Financial Services		
Protective Services		
Public Works		
Utility Services		
Land Use Planning		
Family and Community Support Services		
Recreation and Cultural Services		
Economic Development		

2. How important is your department?

Budget time is coming soon! Please provide **three** reasons why you believe your department is important to our municipality and should be a priority for next year over other departments. Provide support for your reasoning.

- 1. _____

- 2. _____

- 3. _____

If you were asked to reduce or cut services in your department so taxes would not be increased, where could you make cuts that would have the least impact on services and quality of life?

What would be the possible consequences of the cuts that you suggest?

Intern Performance Review

Intern Name _____ Department _____

1. Reflecting on Our Project

What were some of the strengths of your group planning?

Identify any changes you made to your group plan as you researched and worked on your project. Explain why these changes were necessary.

How effective do you think your Department Information Profile will be in sharing information with the people of our municipality? Why?

What advice would you give to the next group of interns as they participate in the municipal government Student Intern Program?

2. Reflecting on my Role as an Intern

How well did I:	A great job!	A good start	Not there yet	I know this because:
contribute to the group planning and research?				
provide information for the Information Profile?				
contribute to the final product?				

How consistently did I:	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not very often	I showed this when:
contribute to the group planning and research?				
provide information for the Information Profile?				
contribute to the final product?				

Student Resource 2-6

Making Choices



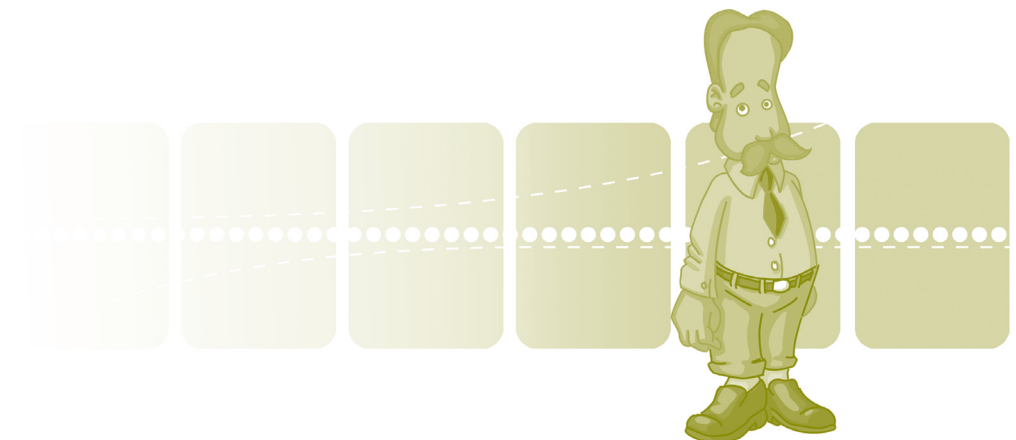
The council of a municipality has to consider information carefully before it makes decisions. Before the council decides whether to build or provide facilities and services, it has to think about the **costs** and the **benefits**.

If a store or a factory is allowed to build on empty land in the municipality, a benefit is that jobs and money will be brought into the municipality. Some of this money will come from the **taxes** that the municipal government will require the business owners to pay. **Property taxes** are **levies**, or an amount of money, charged to property owners in the municipality. The municipal government will have to provide services such as water, roads and sewers to the land. The business owners will have to pay taxes and **user fees**, which are fees for using services. This money is used by the municipality.

The cost, or **consequence**, is that the municipality cannot use this land for anything else. It cannot use the land for recreation or for housing. The way that a municipal government makes decisions about the use of the land depends on the ideas and ideals that are important to its communities. These ideas and ideals are called the municipality's **priorities**.

The following chart provides a list of choices that a municipality believes will improve the quality of life of the people who live there. All of these choices have been identified as important for the growth of the municipality.

Consider the following choices from the point of view of your municipal government department. The community has 100 budget units to spend on projects for the municipality. What recommendations would you make for spending the available budget?



Choices the Municipality is Considering	Cost in Budget Units	Our Priorities and Choices
Service land for subsidized housing for people who have difficulty buying a new home	30	
Build a new community recreation centre	25	
Improve roads	25	
Increase police services to increase safety	15	
Start a recycling program to reduce use of the landfill site	10	
Build stormwater run off lakes to reduce flooding during storms	15	
Construct a new landfill site to replace the current one that is almost full	15	
Add more lighting to subdivisions to increase safety	15	
Build a local airport to make it easier for travel and to increase tourism	50	
Improve public transportation to increase route choices and use more environmentally friendly buses	15	
Subsidize doctors to work in the municipality	15	
Start a recreation program for young people	15	
Create a new subdivision for new housing	15	
Offer a youth support program	5	
Build a new seniors' centre	10	
Build a bridge across the river to reduce traffic congestion	25	
Build a new municipal office to provide more space and easier access	20	
Expand the water treatment facility to improve water quality	10	
Build a new recreation facility for summer games	15	
Build additional baseball diamonds	5	
Build a new indoor soccer facility	10	
Buy a new firetruck with a ladder for higher buildings	10	
Convert municipal facilities to energy saving sources	10	

Prioritize your choices using the third column in the chart. Make sure your choices add up to 100 units. You may select one or more of each service or facility.

Which project was your number one priority? Which was your lowest priority? Why? What is the benefit of this project compared to the cost?

Were there any projects that did not make it on your list of priorities that you thought were important? Which projects were these? Would you recommend raising taxes to add these projects to your list? Why?

Extend: Create a list of your priorities, from highest to lowest. Compare your lists.

MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVES AND OFFICIALS

The Council

The council is the governing body of the municipal corporation and has both legislative and administrative powers. The *Municipal Government Act* provides that councils can exercise the powers of the municipal corporation either by bylaw or resolution. Decisions established by council set the overall direction of the municipality and should reflect the needs and values of the municipality as a whole. The administration is responsible for ensuring the council direction is acted upon and enforced.

The roles of the council are clearly set out in the *Municipal Government Act*. The council is responsible for developing and evaluating policies and programs and carrying out the powers, duties and functions of the municipality. Two of the more visible roles are to set budgets and establish tax rates. With administration responsible for the day-to-day operation of the municipality, councillors can concentrate on their main function of policy making and program monitoring. The council's policies provide the framework for delivering the services residents need and want.

The Chief Elected Official: Mayor or Reeve

The Chief Elected Official, in addition to performing a councillor's duties, must be the chairperson when attending a council meeting, unless a bylaw provides otherwise. The Chief Elected Official must also perform any other duty imposed under the *Municipal Government Act*, any other enactment, or as delegated by council. Often, the Chief Elected Official is also the main spokesperson for the municipality, unless that duty is delegated to another councillor. The title of Chief Elected Official may be changed to one that council believes is appropriate to the office, such as Mayor or Reeve.

The Chief Elected Official of a city or town is elected by a vote of a municipality's electors at-large, unless the council passes a bylaw requiring council to appoint the Chief Elected Official from among the councillors. In a village, summer village or municipal district, council appoints the Chief Elected Official from among the councillors unless it passes a bylaw providing that the official is to be elected by a vote of the municipality's electors.

The Chief Elected Official's roles may include:

- Chairperson of council meetings
- Consensus seeker among members of council
- Ex-officio member on various boards and committees.

The Chief Elected Official's roles may sometimes involve:

- Liaison with senior staff
- Advisor to council



TEACHER BACKGROUND

This teacher backgrounder provides an overview of the responsibilities of municipal representatives and officials. The structure of local government is established by the *Municipal Government Act*, which establishes the responsibilities and duties of:

- The Council
- The Chief Elected Official
- Council Members
- The Chief Administrative Officer
- The Municipal Organization and Administration.

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- Key representative with regard to ceremonial responsibilities
- Liaison with other levels of government
- Advice with regard to policy development.

A Deputy Chief Elected Official (a member of council) will assume these roles if the Chief Elected Official is not available.

Councillors

Councillors are the elected representatives of the municipality. They collectively carry out the powers, duties and functions of the municipality. No authority is granted to any member of council, including the Chief Elected Official (Mayor or Reeve), to make a decision or to act on his or her own unless it is within the corporate body of council.

Council members also debate, bring forward issues and make decisions with other members of council. Most of a councillor's time is spent considering new policies and programs, or reviewing current policies and programs to make sure the municipality's expectations are being addressed.

The *Municipal Government Act* identifies the following duties of councillors:

- To consider the welfare and interests of the municipality as a whole and to bring to council's attention anything that would promote the welfare or interests of the municipality
- To participate generally in developing and evaluating the policies and programs of the municipality
- To participate in council meetings and council committee meetings and meetings of other bodies to which they are appointed by the council
- To obtain information about the operation or administration of the municipality from the Chief Administrative Officer
- To keep in confidence matters discussed in private at a council or council committee meeting until discussed at a meeting held in public
- To perform any other duty or function imposed on councillors by this or any other enactment or by the council.

Councillors concentrate on policy making and program monitoring. Councillors should work with the Chief Administrative Officer to keep informed on what the municipality is doing and will depend on the administration to provide information so that they can make sound decisions.



TEACHER BACKGROUNDER

This teacher backgrounder provides an overview of the structures, responsibilities and functions of municipal governments in Alberta. In municipalities, the elected council and the administration work in partnership to provide good government and services to the municipality's residents. Councillors are responsible for developing and evaluating policies and programs and the administration is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the municipality.

These responsibilities include the following areas, which are covered in this backgrounder:

- **Financial Decision-Making** (pp. 122-124)
- **Land Use Planning** (p. 124)
- **Public Works** (p. 125)
- **Utility Services** (pp. 125-127)
- **Protective Services** (pp. 128-129)
- **Recreation and Cultural Services** (pp. 129-130)
- **Family and Community Support Services** (pp. 130-131).

RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Financial Decision-Making

One of the most important functions of a municipal council and administration involves making good financial decisions in providing the mandatory and discretionary services needed by residents. They are responsible for carefully managing the tax dollars provided by the residents of the municipality.

Operating and capital budgets: At the centre of the municipal finance system are the operating and capital budgets. Through these budgets, the council decides the municipality's priorities for the next one to three years by setting aside money for each program or service. The budget is the single most important policy decision council makes each year. Careful budget planning and control mean better services for the residents. The budget of a municipality reflects its policies.

The *Municipal Government Act* requires that every municipality adopt an annual operating budget and a capital budget. Property and business tax bylaws cannot be passed until both budgets have been adopted. Municipalities are not allowed to budget for a deficit. The total actual revenues over a four-year period must be equal to or greater than total actual expenditures. The operating budget is a detailed estimate of how much the municipality expects to spend to meet its ongoing financial obligations and provide programs and services to the residents. The capital budget is money set aside for buying or building new fixed assets such as buildings, equipment, vehicles, water and sewer facilities, and land.

A long-range capital plan, covering three to five years, sets out what capital expenditures are needed and when, the future cost of maintaining the assets when they have been built or purchased, and how the assets will be financed. The annual budget is a plan of expenditures and revenues over the course of the year. Council needs to review expenditures throughout the year to know what is actually happening and make sure that the municipal operations match the budget. The council should receive regular financial reports from administration that compare actual results of the budget. Financial reports are a good source of information and budget control.

Assessment: An assessment is an estimate of a property's value. Municipalities account for and prepare an annual assessment for each property in the municipality. Land and improvement to land (buildings, structures, and any machinery or equipment affixed to the land) are assessed. The purpose of assessment is to establish the value of all properties and improvements in the municipality so councils can calculate a tax rate. Accurate and equitable assessed values are important so that property owners pay only their fair share of property taxes. Property owners who feel their assessment is inaccurate or inequitable in relation to other properties in the municipality can appeal to the municipality's assessment review board.

Property taxation: Property tax is a main source of revenue for financing municipal operations. Once council completes the budget process, the property tax rate can be set. The tax rate is calculated by dividing the tax levy required by the total property assessment. For example, if a municipality needs to raise \$200 000 and the total assessment is \$25 000 000, the tax rate would be:

$$\$200\,000 / \$25\,000\,000 = 0.008 \text{ tax rate.}$$

Most municipalities express this tax rate in “mills” by multiplying by 1 000. The above example would then produce a tax rate of 8 mills where \$8 of property tax would be paid for each \$1 000 of property assessment. Therefore, a house with a value of \$250 000 would be assessed a tax rate of \$2 000. The tax rate is set once each year. Council may vary the municipal tax rates for each of four assessment classes: residential, non-residential, farmland and machinery and equipment. Once the tax notices are mailed, the property tax rate bylaw cannot be amended unless approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. In addition to the municipal tax rate, the tax notice must include requisitions from other taxing authorities, the most notable being the Alberta School Foundation Fund and seniors’ lodge foundations.

Education tax: In Alberta, education is funded partly through general provincial revenue and partly by property tax. The property tax portion is called the Alberta School Foundation Fund. Although municipalities collect education taxes, the funds go to the province to fund education.

Other taxes and revenues: In addition to the property tax levy, a municipality may impose a business tax, a special tax or a local improvement tax. As well, the *Municipal Government Act* provides for taxes within a business revitalization zone and for a tax on well drilling equipment.

A tax agreement is an arrangement between a municipality and, for example, a natural gas or power company, to collect a payment based on a fixed percentage of gross revenue rather than collecting property tax on the company's machinery and equipment assessment.

There are other sources of revenue available, generally related to user fees. Utility charges for water, sewer treatment and garbage collection are common in Alberta municipalities. In urban areas, they account for a large portion of the municipality's revenue. Council may decide to develop a policy that sets the rates based on the degree of cost recovery considered desirable. User fees can also be set for other services, such as recreational facilities, photocopying or community hall rental.

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[illegible]

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Provincial and federal grants: These are grants provided by the provincial and federal governments which may require that the municipality meets certain conditions. For example, there are conditional infrastructure grant programs for road paving or for building a sewage treatment plant. The conditions usually require that the funds to be expended on particular activities or facilities be established on a cost-shared basis.

Land Use Planning

Land use planning and regulation comprises a significant aspect of a municipality's authority and function. Through a variety of statutory plans, including the municipal development plan and land use bylaw, municipalities control the orderly development of land within their boundaries. Municipalities also use land use planning to establish a strategy for the development of future infrastructure, and zoning for commercial and industrial lands. All of this must be done without infringing on the rights of individual landowners, except to the extent necessary for the greater public interest.

Municipal land use planning responsibilities can be divided into three major components:

- Preparation of plans and bylaws (for example, plans for subdivision development and land use bylaws)
- Administration (for example, dealing with day-to-day applications, processes and approvals)
- Management of complaints, compliance and enforcement. This last component usually takes place after the planning decisions have been made.

Larger municipalities usually have land use planners on staff. Smaller municipalities often contract their planning requirements to an external agency or planning consultants. Without qualified planning staff in the office, inquiries about land use and its regulation are often referred to the Chief Administrative Officer. Therefore, these individuals often have a working knowledge of the municipality's planning documents and processes.

In some municipalities, building and development inspection is an element of the planning and development function, while in other municipalities, private contractors undertake inspections on behalf of the municipality. Regardless of the size of the municipality, a qualified safety codes officer must inspect all new or altered developments.

Safety codes are established by provincial and federal governments to ensure buildings, electrical and gas systems, plumbing and private sewage disposal systems are installed correctly. The municipality may hire staff to inspect safety codes or may contract to a private service provider.

[illegible]

This has resulted in utility rates being set for full recovery of operating costs, as well as capital replacement. In some cases, a municipality may decide to subsidize the cost of a utility. However, more municipalities are recovering full costs through utility rates.

Water services involve accessing a water source and, in some municipalities, the storage of treated and raw (untreated) water. Municipalities obtain raw water from different sources, such as wells, rivers and lakes. Water service also includes the transmission of raw water to a treatment facility, the storage of treated water in a reservoir, and a pipe or distribution system to homes, businesses and industry.

The water source usually influences the type of water treatment required. When Alberta Environment grants an approval to operate, it uses the *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality* to stipulate the type of treatment the municipality's water supplies require. Certified operators are hired to operate water treatment plants and monitor the water supply.

Wastewater management is separate from the management of storm water, although sometimes storm water is connected to the wastewater system in older neighbourhoods. The development of wastewater collection systems and treatment has evolved over time. In the past, wastewater systems simply collected the wastewater and routed it to the nearest discharge point, such as a river. In some municipalities, wastewater is pumped into holding lagoons and allowed to digest and separate until it is acceptable to empty into a watercourse or spread on a field. Another method of disposing of wastewater sludge is composting and using the composted material as an agricultural supplement. Today, older wastewater processes are no longer acceptable. The treatment of

water and wastewater occurs in water treatment facilities and is regulated very closely by provincial authorities.

Solid waste management deals with four types of solid waste: household, commercial, industrial and agricultural waste. Solid waste can also be classified as hazardous.

- Household waste consists of kitchen waste, such as food, plastics and papers, as well as furniture, appliances, cans and bottles. If recycling facilities exist in the municipality, the amount of this type of waste can be reduced. For example, cardboard, milk containers and newspapers can be recycled and yard clippings and leaves are easily composted.
- Commercial and industrial waste consists of remnants of construction and building demolition materials, as well as wastes that cannot be discharged into the normal waste stream, such as dry-cleaning solvents, oils, fats and greases, industrial cleaners and industrial chemicals used in or produced by manufacturing or types of processing.
- Agricultural waste includes manure, spoiled grain, weed killer and silage bags. Wastes that cannot be discharged along with normal solid waste must be disposed of by special methods and in special areas.
- Hazardous waste products such as car batteries and power transformers have to be disposed of through specific facilities, in places like the Swan Hills hazardous waste facility, or used in the creation of products such as reusable oils from used motor oil or rubber products from used vehicle tires.

In more and more municipalities, solid waste management is considered a utility. Services in this area include:

- Waste collection
- Waste reduction programs
- Recycling programs
- Toxic waste collection
- Operation of waste transfer stations
- Transportation of solid waste to land fill sites
- Maintenance of land fill sites (including reclamation of the site when completely filled)
- Organic waste composting programs.

Some municipalities provide solid waste management themselves, while others provide this service under contract, either through the private sector, another municipality, a regional solid waste service commission or by a combination of these options.

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[illegible]

[illegible]

The *Municipal Government Act* states that one of the purposes of a municipality is to “develop and maintain safe and viable communities.” Protective services are, therefore, an important part of municipal operations. The primary goal of these service areas is to respond to an emergency situation as quickly as possible and do what is necessary to deal with the situation. This area, which may also be called emergency services, includes:

- Police service** is provided in a variety of formats. Most municipalities receive their police service from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), either through direct contracting or under an agreement between the province and the RCMP. A number of municipalities provide police service using their own municipal police forces, such as the Town of Taber and the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. In addition, there are First Nation police departments such as the Blood Tribe Police and the Tsuu T'ina Nation Police that provide policing services to their individual communities.

Peace officers who are appointed by the provincial Solicitor General and hired by municipalities, and have very specific and limited law enforcement authority in such areas as liquor, traffic and noxious weeds. They are often used as a supplement to the police service of a jurisdiction, or to back up or support the existing police service. They are also used by the police service and other governmental agencies to perform some specialized peace officer duties.

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The amount and type of firefighting and rescue equipment required depends on the size and location of the municipality. Fire departments can be involved in fire and hazard prevention and awareness. Education programs have been developed and are presented in schools with the assistance of local fire departments. Other forms of community involvement include school visits to the fire hall and the fire prevention programs sponsored by local fire departments each October during fire prevention week.

Ambulance service may also be provided by municipalities. The type of service and how it is delivered varies between municipalities. Some municipalities have their own ambulances and hire their own staff. Other municipalities contract with private ambulance companies, non-profit organizations or with neighbouring municipalities to supply the service, or join together to form a regional service.

Emergency and disaster response preparedness is a responsibility of every municipality. Each municipality must have an emergency plan approved by council. A disaster services agency, which is created through a bylaw of council, relies on an emergency plan as a guide for action when a disaster occurs in the municipality. The province is also involved in this area through Emergency Management Alberta (EMA), which has a key role in coordinating emergency planning. EMA is responsible for developing and coordinating provincial preparedness programs for responding to and recovering from major emergencies, disasters and potential terrorist threats.

Recreation and Cultural Services

[illegible]

To have a balanced recreation program, a municipality will often choose to offer both informal and formal activities. Some examples of informal or unstructured activities include walking or cycling, and using picnic areas and playgrounds. On the other hand, recreation also includes structured and competitive sports, such as hockey, soccer, ringette and baseball. The same distinction can also be made regarding culture. A balanced cultural program with a variety of events, facilities and festivals is an important element of any vibrant community.

Family and Community Support Services

To participate in FCSS programs, municipalities must enter into an agreement with the province stating they will provide local services in accordance with the *Family and Community Support Services Act* and program guidelines. The province provides 80 per cent of the funding, based on a funding formula, and the municipality covers the remaining 20 per cent minimum requirement from the operating budget. Municipalities can spend more than the minimum requirement.

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municipality determines how the dollars it receives should be allocated to best meet the needs of the community.

FCSS may offer programs in a number of different areas:

- Parent–child development activities
- Temporary or occasional parent relief services
- Support services for young school-age children
- Services that enrich and strengthen family life by helping people develop skills to function more effectively within their own environment, including:
 - o Parenting and family life education and development programs
 - o Programs for single parents
 - o Courses designed to enhance self-awareness and personal growth
 - o Individual, family and group counselling services that are educational and not treatment-oriented
 - o Youth development services
 - o Seniors' drop-in programs
 - o Family violence prevention
 - o Volunteer programs
 - o Community partnerships
 - o Community mediation
 - o Literacy
 - o Referral and resource information to agencies or provincial programs to assist with troubled families or individuals
 - o Social issue seminars.



THINK ABOUT

Municipalities are complex entities. They can provide a variety of services, ranging from basic to elaborate. Many have to deal with competing demands and different legislation in making decisions. Consider creating a master list of those services and facilities that your municipality provides and display it in the classroom as students research and explore the roles and responsibilities of local government.

NOTES

Section 3

3. Make Connections

The teaching and learning activities in **Section 3: Make Connections** ask students to consider different ways that municipal government and elected representatives are accountable to their communities. Students also explore how decision-making is a responsibility of citizens in local elections as they decide how to vote.

Students also research different ways that citizens can participate in their municipalities. They extend understandings of what participation means and build understandings of ways they can participate.

This section provides opportunities for students to explore community-based issues and challenges. Students apply strategies that involve interaction with community members, including interviews and a community participation fair. Select those activities that are appropriate for your community and students. Students will build on these strategies in the final section of this resource.

Select, modify and adapt the activities that follow to best meet the needs of your students and to build understandings and skills related to opportunities for participation with municipal government.

Commitment
Commitment
commitment

Preparing for Learning

This section encourages students to explore ways to make connections by considering a number of different options for getting involved with municipal government. Students should understand the **roles, responsibilities, structures** and **functions** of municipal government. Section 2: A Good Place to Live developed these concepts.

There are five critical issues in this section.

Why are municipal representatives elected?

2 to 5 class periods*

How are elected officials accountable to community members?

2 to 3 class periods*

How do local issues in the municipality affect decision-making and participation?

1 to 2 class periods*

How can people influence decision-making?

3 to 4 class periods*

Why is this local issue important?

3 to 5 class periods*

* Based on 50-minute class periods

WHAT YOU NEED

Student Resources

- ☐ Student Resource 3-1: Municipal Elections (pp. 156-157)
- ☐ Student Resource 3-2: Accountability Matters (pp. 158-160)
- ☐ Student Resource 3-3: Make Connections (pp. 161-166)
- ☐ Student Resource 3-4: Local Issues (pp. 167-168)
- ☐ Student Participation Committee (Appendix B: pp. 217-223)

Graphic Organizers

- ☐ Storyboard (p. 210)
- ☐ Cause and Effect Chart (p. 212)
- ☐ Mind Map (p. 207)

Materials and Sources

- ☐ Poster paper
- ☐ Local newspapers and magazines

Teacher Backgrounder

- ☐ The Decision-Making Process (pp. 169-170)

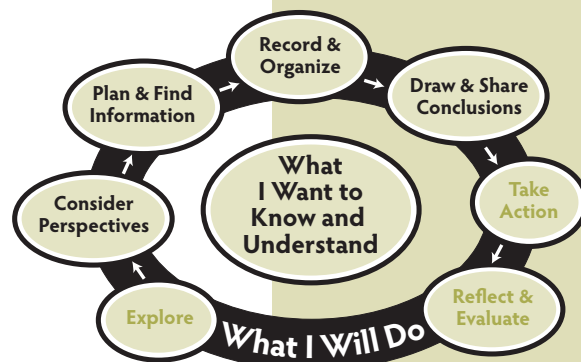
This teacher backgrounder provides a description of the processes involved in decision-making. These processes include the administrative functions of the government. Most decision-making is formalized around a process that includes:

- Setting an agenda to establish the business of meetings. Agendas usually take into account current political issues, the best timing of delegations or groups of citizens wanting to present to council, and the natural order of discussion.
- Developing request for decision documents. The request for decision document usually contains the topic, background or history, financial implications and references to policy.
- Holding meetings. A council meeting is a forum for debate and discussion about municipal matters.

These elements establish the process used for informed decision-making about policies, bylaws, planning and projects.

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND INQUIRY

Section 3: Make Connections encourages students to develop understandings and processes involved in a number of stages of the inquiry process. The five critical issues in this section include a performance assessment task.



Inquiry Steps and Processes	Questions that Guide the Inquiry	Critical Issues that Emphasize the Inquiry Focus
Consider Perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify research questions Identify individuals and groups involved with the question or issue Consider different perspectives and opinions 	What questions do I have? Who is affected and why? What different opinions exist?	Why are municipal representatives elected? How do local issues in the municipality affect decision-making and participation?
Plan and Find Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on research process Identify, locate and organize sources and information Allocate tasks 	How will I find out what I need to know and understand? What type of information do I need? What sources do I need to consult? What is the best way to research? Who can we find out more from?	Why are municipal representatives elected? How are elected officials accountable to community members? Why is this local issue important?
Record and Organize <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record information Organize information collected Analyze the information Make connections and comparisons 	How will we record our research? What similarities and differences do we see? What comparisons can we make? What connections do we see?	How do local issues in the municipality affect decision-making and participation? How can people influence decision-making?
Draw and Share Conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present the information Draw conclusions Assess information Consider solutions, perspectives, alternatives and predictions Make decisions 	How will we share our information? What would happen if...? What conclusions can we make? What evidence supports our conclusions?	Why is this local issue important?

Social Studies Learning Outcomes 6.1:

General Outcome 6.1

Citizens Participating in Decision-Making

Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the dynamic relationship between governments and citizens as they engage in the democratic process.

Local and Current Affairs

In order to allow opportunities for students to engage in current affairs, issues and concerns of a local nature, the program of studies provides the flexibility to include these topics within the time allotted for social studies.

Specific Learning Outcomes Supported and Developed in Section 3: Make Connections

Values and Attitudes

6.1.1 recognize how individuals and governments interact and bring about change within their local and national communities:

- (1) recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada (C, I)
- (4) value citizens' participation in a democratic society (C)
- (5) value the contributions of elected representatives in the democratic process (PADM)

Knowledge and Understandings

6.1.2 demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- (3) What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens living in a representative democracy? (C, PADM)

6.1.4 analyze the structure and functions of local governments in Alberta by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- (1) How are representatives chosen to form a local government (i.e., electoral process)? (PADM)

6.1.6 analyze how individuals, groups and associations within a community impact decision-making of local and provincial governments by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- (1) How can individuals, groups and associations within a community participate in the decision-making process regarding current events or issues (i.e., lobbying, petitioning, organizing and attending local meetings and rallies, contacting elected representatives)? (C, PADM)
- (3) In what ways do elected officials demonstrate their accountability to the electorate (e.g., respond to constituents, participate in local events, represent and express in government meetings the concerns of constituents)? (C, PADM)

Skills and Processes

6.S.1 develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking:

- (1) assess significant local and current affairs from a variety of sources, with a focus on examining bias and distinguishing fact from opinion
- (2) critically evaluate ideas, information and positions
- (3) re-evaluate personal opinions to broaden understanding of a topic or an issue
- (4) generate original ideas and strategies in individual and group activities
- (5) seek responses to inquiries from various authorities through electronic media

6.S.4 demonstrate skills of decision-making and problem solving:

- (1) propose and apply new ideas, strategies and options to contribute to decision-making and problem solving, supported with facts and reasons
- (2) consider multiple perspectives when dealing with issues, decision-making and problem solving
- (3) collaborate with others to devise strategies for dealing with problems and issues
- (4) select and use technology to assist in problem solving
- (5) use data gathered from a variety of electronic sources to address identified problems
- (7) use graphic organizers, such as mind mapping/webbing, flow charting and outlining, to present connections among ideas and information in a problem solving environment

6.S.5 demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building:

- (1) demonstrate the skills of compromise to reach group consensus
- (2) work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal
- (3) record group brainstorming, planning and sharing of ideas, using technology
- (4) extend the scope of a project beyond classroom collaboration, using communication technologies such as the telephone and e-mail

6.S.7 apply the research process:

- (1) determine reliability of information filtering for point of view and bias
- (2) formulate questions to be answered through the research process
- (3) use graphs, tables, charts and Venn diagrams to interpret information
- (4) draw and support conclusions based on information gathered to answer a research question
- (6) formulate new questions as research progresses
- (8) access and retrieve appropriate information from the Internet, using a specific search path or form given uniform resource locations (URLs)
- (11) reflect on and describe the processes involved in completing a project

6.S.8 demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy:

- (1) express opinions and present perspectives and information in a variety of forms such as oral or written presentations, speeches or debates

6.S.9 develop skills of media literacy:

- (1) detect bias present in the media
- (2) examine and assess diverse perspectives regarding an issue presented in the media
- (3) analyze significant current affairs
- (4) identify and distinguish points of view expressed in electronic sources on a particular topic

ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

Ongoing Assessment

Choices can be made about assessing student work in this section. The criteria checklist provided in this section can be used to:

- Observe student work in group and classroom settings
- Develop checklists for assessment of student work in the activities in this section.

Performance Assessment Task

The performance assessment task, *Accountability Matters*, involves students in reflecting on the importance of accountability in elected officials and gathering evidence of what accountability looks like in a local context. Students gather information through interviewing community members from a variety of age groups as well as from available media resources, including websites. Students communicate their information in a newspaper article format.

A *Student Reporter Tip Sheet* helps students organize and prepare to conduct interviews to gather information. Additional support for asking questions can be found on the Alberta Education Online Guide to Implementation: www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6_external_resources.cfm.

Criteria for Evaluation

Students provide evidence of their learning in this performance assessment task as they:

- explain the importance of accountability (6.1.1.5, 6.1.4.1)
- provide evidence of accountability (6.1.6.3)
- formulate interview questions (6.5.7.2)
- communicate information (6.5.8.1).



Assessment Tip: Cross-Curricular Assessment

This performance task has been written for the purpose of gathering evidence of student learning in social studies. However, it can also be used to gather evidence of student learning in language arts. When working with cross-curricular assessment tasks, care must be taken to clearly identify which evidence applies to social studies and which evidence applies to language arts.

In social studies, the communication outcomes refer in a broad sense to the way in which students communicate their message related to the content of social studies. While we always want students to demonstrate their best work, detailed marking of spelling and other conventions is more appropriate in a language arts context where learner outcomes are specifically related to those skills. The content of the message remains important in language arts and should not be overpowered by detailed marking of conventions and mechanics.

Teachers wishing to use this assignment as a language arts assessment might consult the Alberta Education Functional Writing Scoring Guide 2005 for assessment descriptors:

www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6_external_resources.cfm.

Section 3: Make Connections

Checklist

Criteria Students provide evidence of their learning as they:	Yes	Almost	Not Yet
Listen and respond respectfully to understand (6.1.1.1, 6.1.2.3)			
Describe the electoral process (6.1.4.1)			
Explain the importance of accountability (6.1.1.5, 6.1.4.1)			
Provide evidence of accountability (6.1.6.3)			
Describe and assess ways to participate in decision-making processes (6.1.1.4, 6.1.6.1, 6.S.4.1, 6.S.4.2)			
Examine, evaluate and assess sources of information (6.S.1.1, 6.S.1.2, 6.S.7.1, 6.S.7.3, 6.S.7.4, 6.S.7.8, 6.S.9.1, 6.S.9.2)			
Access and organize information from different sources (6.S.1.5, 6.S.4.5, 6.S.7.8)			
Discuss and share original ideas, strategies and options with others (6.S.1.4, 6.S.4.1)			
Express and support opinions (6.S.1.3)			
Participate in problem solving and decision-making processes (6.S.4.1, 6.S.4.4, 6.S.5.3)			
Identify different points of view and perspectives (6.S.4.2, 6.S.9.4)			
Analyze current affairs (6.S.9.3)			
Use graphic organizers to make connections between ideas (6.S.4.7, 6.S.7.3)			
Formulate interview questions (6.S.7.2, 6.S.7.6)			
Communicate information (6.S.8.1, 6.S.5.4)			
Work collaboratively and cooperatively in a group setting (6.S.4.3, 6.S.5.2)			
Contribute to group processes (6.S.5.1, 6.S.5.2)			
Reflect on processes used (6.S.7.11)			

Section 3: Make Connections

Rubric: Accountability Matters!

Level Criteria	4 Excellent	3 Proficient	2 Adequate	1 Limited *	Insufficient / Blank *
Explains the importance of accountability (6.1.1.5, 6.1.4.1)	Provides a comprehensive explanation of the importance of accountability.	Provides a thorough explanation of the importance of accountability.	Provides a basic explanation of the importance of accountability.	Provides a superficial explanation of the importance of accountability.	No score is awarded because there is insufficient evidence of student performance based on the requirements of the assessment task.
Provides evidence of accountability (6.1.6.3)	Provides pertinent evidence of accountability.	Provides relevant evidence of accountability.	Provides suitable evidence of accountability.	Provides irrelevant evidence of accountability.	
Formulates interview questions (6.5.7.2, 6.5.7.6)	Formulates purposeful questions that would likely encourage a pertinent response.	Formulates meaningful questions that would likely encourage a focused response.	Formulates routine questions that would likely encourage a general response.	Formulates superficial questions that would likely encourage a sketchy response.	
Communicates information (6.5.8.1, 6.5.5.4)	Communicates information in a memorable manner to engage the audience.	Communicates information in an effective manner to interest the audience.	Communicates information in a straightforward manner that generally holds the attention of the audience.	Communicates information in an ineffective manner that does little to sustain attention of the audience.	

* When work is judged to be limited or insufficient, the teacher makes decisions about appropriate intervention to help the student improve.

GLOSSARY

The following terms and concepts are developed in the activities and student resources of Section 3: Make Connections. Although they are grouped under the critical issue in which they are introduced, many recur and are used throughout the entire section. Definitions and explanations are presented in the context in which they appear in the teacher and student information.

Critical Issue 1: Why are municipal representatives elected?

A candidate for election is elected by **acclamation** when there are no opponents running against him or her.

The **electoral process** is an important aspect of the democratic system and refers to the manner in which voters elect representatives from those nominated as candidates.

Electors of municipalities can **elect**, or vote for, representatives who are responsible for making decisions and representing the people who live and work there.

The people who are eligible to vote are called the **electorate** or **electors**.

If an elected municipal official has to step down or resign part way through his or her three-year term of office, then a **by-election** may be held to elect someone else. A by-election is an election held to fill a vacant position at a date other than the general election date.

Critical Issue 2: How are elected officials accountable to community members?

Accountability involves situations in which people are expected to be responsible for their actions and may be required to explain them to others.

Decisions that councils and councillors make are often seen in the **policies** and bylaws of a municipality. Policies are made by councils to set guidelines that the administration follows. The guidelines can describe how services and programs will be provided by the municipality.

A **bylaw** is a law or a policy passed by the council. Bylaws that are regulatory in nature are enforced by bylaw enforcement officers, police and constables in the municipality.

Councils are also responsible for passing **budgets**. A budget looks at **revenue**, or money that comes into the municipality as well as **expenses**, or money that needs to be spent or saved.

Elected representatives are responsible to the electors in the municipality. Electors are sometimes called **constituents** or **voters**.

Critical Issue 4: How can people influence decision-making?

A **lobby group** is a group that tries to change or influence policy or legislation towards its interests.

A **special interest group** has an interest in a specific area and works to promote its views.

Critical Issue 5: Why is this local issue important?

A **controversy** can occur when there is strong disagreement. Debates, discussions and disagreements can be part of a controversy.

In some cases, groups who disagree try to reach a **compromise** to deal with the choices that have to be made. Each side gives up some of its demands so the groups can come to an agreement that everyone can live with.

Collaboration occurs when people work together to make a decision.

Critical Issues and Activities

Why are municipal representatives elected?

2 to 5 class periods

① Although the electoral system is not the only method of participating in the democratic system, it is one of the most often referenced as a symbol of political participation. Municipal government representatives are an important aspect of the democratic process. Have students revisit what they know about their municipal representatives by responding to questions such as:

- How do you know about your representatives – from parents, family, community or the media?
- What work do they do?
- What issues are they involved with?

Revisit the concepts of **democracy** and **representation**, introduced in Section 1: Get Personal, with students. Ask students to consider the question:

- What are the qualities of an effective representative?

② Invite students to use sources such as local newspapers or magazines to find stories about their municipal representatives. Have students work with a small group to create a character poster that identifies the qualities of an effective representative.

- Groups can draw a silhouette outline of a person, and identify the qualities of an effective representative on the poster.
- Have groups consider how they can use analogies to identify both the quality and a reason for why it is important. (*For example, the heart can signify “commitment to the community” or “caring about citizens.”*)

③ Have students use **Student Resource 3-1: Municipal Elections** (pp. 156-157) and a graphic organizer, such as the **Storyboard** (Appendix A: p. 210) to explore the electoral process. This student resource:

- Provides information about the electoral process
- Asks students to create a comic strip, game or storyboard that addresses one or all of the following questions:
 - Who can vote?
 - Who should be able to vote?
 - How and when do elections take place?
 - Should all citizens be required to vote?
 - Is voting a right or a privilege?
 - Should citizens take responsibility for knowing what candidates stand for on issues and community concerns before they vote?



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can be asked to explore and research the municipal electoral process in Alberta individually, with a partner or in a small group. Have students select the questions they are most interested in, or negotiate the assignment of different questions to different groups.



WEBSITE

The *Building Communities Through Local Government* website provides students with the opportunity to explore the views and opinions of three candidates who are running for council. Each candidate will influence different decisions about policy and actions if they are elected. The candidate's views and opinions apply to each of the three different municipalities on the website.

Students can access the **Vote for a Representative!** interactive activity through the **Participate** feature on the website. Information and instructions for the activity are provided when students click on the ☺ icon beside the character with the voting booth. When students vote, their votes will be added to a running tally for the day, and the result will be displayed. The votes will be reset daily. Election results are displayed for the current and previous days. Students can see their vote added to the running tally for today's results. The elected representative's views are reflected on the landscape of each of the three municipalities.

- Have students use a graphic organizer, such as a **Cause and Effect Chart (Appendix A: p. 212)** to analyze what effects they think each candidate's views could have in a municipality if he or she was elected.
- Suggest that students develop an election campaign slogan, based on each candidate's messages.
- Discuss what happens when there is only one candidate for a council position in an election. Introduce the term "acclamation" to students. A candidate for election is elected by **acclamation** when there are no opponents running against him or her.

Have students discuss questions such as the following:

- How important is it that people know what candidates stand for? *(Reinforce the idea of making informed decisions by finding out what candidates represent and value. Encourage students to make links to the types of changes that governments have influenced in the municipality, for example choosing to build new recreation centres, implementing recycling programs, rejuvenating older areas of the municipality or establishing financially conservative policies.)*
- How do you think each candidate's views and opinions would affect the municipality? *(Revisit the values and priorities that each candidate discusses and make connections to new programs or facilities that may be established. Encourage students to revisit the website to see what the election of different candidates may result in for each municipality.)*
- What current examples can you find in the local media of the impact your mayor, reeve or council members have had on bringing change to the municipality?



THINK ABOUT

Remind students that an election involves serious consideration of current issues and is not a popularity contest. Spend time discussing fair, reasonable and safe criteria for conducting student campaigns.



THINK ABOUT

The Student Vote website, found at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6_external_resources.cfm, provides information and resources for involving students in voting simulations that run parallel to federal, provincial and some municipal elections.



ASSESS

Look for evidence of cooperative group work and students' abilities to share and discuss original ideas as well as present supported opinions, as they campaign and conduct their election.



PARTICIPATE: Student Participation Committee Election

Discuss the procedures involved in holding local elections across the province, and the fact that most municipal elections in Alberta are held on the third Monday in October. The exception is summer villages, where elections are held in August. How can students be involved in an electoral process that is meaningful and relevant to them? Invite students to form a Student Participation Committee for their classroom or school.

Have students go through the process of electing representatives to this group:

- Nominate candidates for election
- Prepare statements of candidates' views and opinions
- Share statements in a "public" classroom meeting
- Hold the election
- Establish responsibilities for the group.

Students may be asked to create their own list of qualifications, modeled on the qualifications for voters listed in Student Resource 3-1: Municipal Elections (pp. 156-157). **Appendix B: pp. 217-223** provides information, templates and forms for the Student Participation Committee election.

The Student Participation Committee should be established in an authentic context. This group can provide representation for the classroom and school in the following types of settings:

- Representing students in the classroom. Set a bi-weekly or monthly meeting that the Student Participation Committee can use to discuss questions and suggestions. Follow through with these in the classroom.
- Representing students in the school. Consider working with other grade 6 classrooms to hold an election for a Student Participation Committee that represents all grade 6 students, or all students in the school.
- Providing leadership for school or community projects. Have the group consult with students in the class or school to identify a project that would benefit all students, a community or the municipality.



INTERACT

Have the Student Participation Committee take responsibility for keeping the classroom informed about opportunities, challenges, issues and decisions that the municipality is involved with. The group may be asked to present a brief information session every two or three weeks, in a format such as:

- In the News: What has the local media reported about council's activities? *(Encourage students to check local or online newspapers and newsletters.)*
- In Council Chambers: What have council members been discussing in council meetings? *(Encourage students to look for examples of bylaws that have recently been passed or decisions the council is considering. Students may obtain some of this information from local news. They may also be encouraged to check the municipality's website for minutes of meetings.)*
- In the Municipality: What are events or news that we think council members should be aware of? *(Encourage students to identify school, community, provincial or national events that have an impact on quality of life in the municipality. For example, a national issue such as school safety may be something that students are concerned about in a local context. A school or community celebration may be an event that students would like council members to know about. Have students revisit their community scans to identify issues and events.)*

The Student Participation Committee can also be encouraged to work with other students in the classroom or school to create a one-page newsletter that presents information and student perspectives. The newsletter can be mailed or e-mailed to the municipal office. Students may also be encouraged to invite a municipal official to the class to listen to a presentation they prepare on issues that affect quality of life in the municipality.



DIFFERENTIATE

As an alternative to having students conduct family discussions, ask them to find examples of ways that municipal representatives demonstrate accountability. Have students consult various sources, including local newspapers, newsletters, council minutes and websites.



ASSESS

This student resource provides the performance assessment task for this section. A rubric is provided in the assessment notes and should be shared and discussed with students prior to beginning the task.

How are elected officials accountable to community members?

2 to 3 class periods

1 What does **accountability** mean? Introduce students to the idea that there are many situations in which people are expected to be responsible for their actions and may be required to explain them to others. Invite students to share examples of contexts in which they have to demonstrate accountability (*for example, home, school and community*).

Have students work in small groups to create questions for a family “dinner time” discussion, focused on questions related to the following ideas:

- Why and how should municipal representatives be accountable to the residents of a municipality? (*Provide students with examples of questions related to accountability that they can use for their discussion, such as “Have you ever contacted a councillor? How did he or she respond? Were all of your concerns addressed?”*)
- How should municipal representatives communicate with and get ideas and input from the residents they represent? (*Provide students with examples related to ways that municipal representatives communicate and request input, such as “Have you ever attended a council meeting or public consultation? How were you able to communicate your views? What other strategies encourage you to communicate with representatives and share your views?”*)

Have students prepare their questions in advance and bring their results back to class for a whole class discussion.

2 Student Resource 3-2: Accountability Matters (pp. 158-160) provides students with information on ways that councils make decisions and provide direction – through policy and bylaws. This student resource also:

- Presents students with the task of writing an article for the local newspaper, focused on the following questions:
 - o What is the most important role that council has in our municipality?
 - o How important is it for council members to consider the perspectives and opinions of residents of the municipality when they make decisions about policies and bylaws?
 - o Why should councillors be accountable to the residents of the municipality?
- Provides suggestions for constructing interview questions that ask why and how municipal representatives should:
 - o Respond to different community members (citizens, businesses, interest groups and newcomers)
 - o Take part in local events
 - o Represent and express in council meetings the concerns of constituents
 - o Participate in community and municipal initiatives.

How do local issues in the municipality affect decision-making and participation? 1 to 2 class periods

1 Student involvement with municipal government is most effective if it is centered on real issues that are relevant to the municipality and to students. Students need to believe that they can participate and make a difference.

Work with the class to identify issues that are of current interest in the municipality.

- Conduct a class discussion, asking students to brainstorm issues that are of current interest to them.
- Use local media sources to help identify some of these issues.
- Ask students to talk to family or community members to identify issues that they are concerned about.
- Check the municipal government's website for any issues that are currently being dealt with by the council. Look for any upcoming public consultation events.
- Create a list of these issues and post it in the classroom. Explore what each of the issues means and involves.
- Ensure that issues are acceptable and appropriate to the community.



INTEGRATE: Language Arts: 4.1 Enhance and Improve

Have students analyze the messages in media sources about an issue. Chart facts, inferences and supported opinions.

Facts	Inferences	Supported Opinions
A curfew bylaw will be discussed by the municipal council.	A curfew would work in our municipality, because in other municipalities with a curfew young people are not out late in the streets.	I think we need a curfew to keep young people at home late at night. Police say this would help prevent fighting and vandalism.

- Have students identify key words or phrases that are used to denote fact or opinion, e.g., I think, I believe, it seems to be, the report says, from the statistics.
- Have students write a newspaper article, their own letter to the editor, or create a community newsletter or newspaper about a current issue. Students can be asked to focus on facts, opinions or both.

Adapted from: Alberta Education (2000). *English Language Arts (K-9) Illustrative Examples*. Grade 6: p. 15.



ASSESS

Students' mind maps can be assessed for evidence of understandings and appreciation of multiple perspectives and the opinions and points of view of others. Look for evidence that students can identify bias in research sources.

2 Invite students to use a graphic organizer, such as a **Mind Map (Appendix A: p. 207)** to brainstorm questions, ideas, perspectives and topics that relate to the issue. Students' discussion and brainstorming can be structured around questions such as the following:

- What issues are people currently concerned about in our municipality?
- What are people doing to deal with these issues?
- Has this issue been in the newspapers or in local news reports on television or radio? What perspectives are presented in the media? What evidence of bias might there be?
- What more could be done?
- In what ways can and should residents of the municipality get involved?



INTEGRATE: Health

The Health and Life Skills Guide to Implementation (K-9) (Alberta Education: 2002) provides Student Activity Master 12 for analyzing bias. The student master is available online, at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6_external_resources.cfm, by clicking on Curriculum by Subject, then Health and accessing the online guide. The activity master is in Appendix C, p. C.12.



INTERACT

There are a variety of ways that you and your students can identify examples of issues that a municipality is facing. Start by looking in local newspapers or by trying to obtain council minutes from the municipal office. If your students live in different municipalities, consider which issues the class may be most interested in focusing on for their research.

- Identify whether there are any initiatives in the municipality that will have public input, such as decisions about new developments or the placement of a new facility. Contact the municipal office to ask about any upcoming public consultations. Provide students with a description of the initiatives and discuss the issues or decisions that are associated with these initiatives.
- Have students use the municipality's website to find out if there are issues that the council is facing. The municipality's website may provide insights and information about decisions they are facing. Budget information and financial reports may provide additional information about decisions and priorities. Alternatively, if the municipality does not have a website, look for information in local newspapers. Issues common to many municipalities in Alberta may be discussed in provincial contexts. Check the Alberta Municipal Affairs website at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca.
- If appropriate, invite a councillor to come to the class to discuss a current decision made by council. Ahead of time, inform the councillor about the issues that students have identified.
- Invite the Chief Administrative Officer to the class. Ask that any information regarding council decision-making be brought to the classroom.
- Check for any programs in your municipality that may provide students with opportunities to gain a better understanding of the types of decisions that are made. Examples of these programs may include:
 - o Job shadowing
 - o Councillor "for a day" programs
 - o Open houses.



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can alternatively be asked to consider how community members can participate with local government by revisiting the community murals created in Section 1: Get Personal. Students can be given choices to:

- Create a character who lives in the community and describe ways that this character is involved with the community and local government
- Add places to the community mural that facilitate involvement with the local government – volunteer and community centres, media offices, community meeting places and community organizations.



THINK ABOUT

A “sufficient” petition requires signatures of electors and other legal criteria to be officially recognized.

How can people influence decision-making?

3 to 4 class periods

1 Citizen’s participation and interest in local issues translates into active involvement and commitment to the community. There are a number of ways that citizens become involved with local issues, and evidence of many of these strategies can be seen in local media, volunteer activities and community events.

Invite students to consider ways that people, including adults and kids, can voice their opinions and perspectives. Brainstorm a class list of these ideas. Encourage students to consider strategies that people can use, such as the following:

- Staying informed about what is going on in your municipality
- Reading local newspapers
- Asking for information
- Communicating with municipal offices
- Participating in public meetings
- Responding to requests from the municipality for their opinions or input
- Attending or hosting community meetings or dialogues
- Volunteering with groups that are involved with programs in the municipality
- Presenting research briefs to municipal councils or officials
- Writing letters or e-mails to council members or community organizations
- Participating in local phone-in radio or television shows
- Organizing or participating in a rally
- Organizing or presenting informal petitions that express points of view
- Having a press conference or preparing a press release
- Preparing public service announcements that inform the municipality about issues
- Joining a **lobby group** that tries to change or influence policy or legislation towards its interests
- Supporting a candidate for election who would do a good job as a councillor
- Running for council.

2 Have students work in pairs or small groups to research the actions and “how-to’s” that are involved with one action strategy. Students can be provided with **Student Resource 3-3: Make Connections (pp. 161-166)**. This student resource provides information on different strategies for action and participation.

Use this information to construct a page for a “Yellow Pages” action directory for the classroom. To construct each page, invite groups to consider the following questions:

- What do people do when they use this strategy? *(Create an action word bank that reflects the options for participating with municipal government, such as talk together, write letters, share opinions, attend meetings, organize meetings, walk in rallies, contact government, join a group, volunteer and research.)*
- Why do people use this strategy? How effective is it? When is it most effective? *(Encourage students to consider how proactive, involved strategies that encourage sharing and voicing opinions, listening to others, getting involved with volunteer and community groups, participating in public meetings and responding to requests for input can often be more effective than confrontational types of strategies, such as rallies and demonstrations. Ask students to consider whether strategies encourage people to become part of a solution to an issue or contribute to an existing problem. Many municipalities consider strategies that involve effective and proactive communication the most effective strategies for participation with municipal government. Students can be encouraged to consider the pros and cons of their strategy.)*
- What roles do people have in using this strategy? *(Consider individuals who work with municipal government, community members, volunteers, community organizations and the media. Discuss what their responsibilities are when implementing a strategy, and whether these responsibilities are similar or different, depending on their role. For example, a news reporter may use the media to present many points of view, while a community organization may use the media to write a letter that promotes one point of view. Individuals can communicate directly with council members about their personal opinions while community organizations may have to ensure their communication represents the views of their members. Some strategies may require a strong leader to organize a group successfully while other strategies can be used by individuals. Encourage students to consider how roles involve active participation.)*



WEBSITE

The *Building Communities Through Local Government* website provides students with the opportunity to research different strategies for participating with local government. Students can access this information in the **Participate** feature of the website. This information repeats what is provided in **Student Resource 3-3: Make Connections (pp. 161-166)**.

When students enter the **Participate** feature, they can click on the ☺ icon beside each character. Text windows provide information on different participation strategies. This information provides students with the opportunity to explore different perspectives on, and strategies for, community participation and involvement.

- 3 Compile the pages into a “Yellow Pages” directory. Each group can summarize its information on a yellow sheet of paper for inclusion in the directory. The pages can be bound or placed in a small binder.



INTERACT

Plan to hold a Community Participation Fair in your classroom or school.

- Work with students to identify individuals and organizations that are involved with municipal government and decision-making in your municipality.
- Invite individuals or representatives in municipal offices, and selected volunteer groups, clubs, non-profit agencies or community-based organizations to participate.
- Set up table areas around the classroom for the fair and have each invited participant provide insights, ideas and information to student groups. Have students prepare questions for each group in advance of the fair.
- Use a **carousel sharing strategy** to have groups visit each table to add to their research on community action and participation Yellow Pages.
- A flow chart and template for organizing the Community Participation Fair can be found in **Appendix B (pp. 224-225)**.

Students may also be asked to develop and hold a local government fair for their school. Invite students to work in small groups to research a volunteer group, club, non-profit agency or community-based organization. Some groups may also take on municipal government roles. Have each group set up a display and invite other classrooms to participate. Alternatively, displays could be posted or set up around the classroom, and a **walking gallery tour** organized for parents or invited municipal officials. Encourage students to develop one question for individuals who view their display. Responses could be recorded on a poster paper by each display or taped on an audiotape.

If it is difficult to plan a fair in the classroom or school, consider asking students to write a class letter to different individuals and organizations, requesting information about ways they participate. Use the information in the Classroom Participation Fair in a format such as the following:

- Set up centres or stations and use the carousel strategy to have groups explore the information
- Gather the information in pizza boxes and use them as a research resource in the classroom
- Have students create their own pizza box centres that they use as a repository of information they collect.



DIFFERENTIATE

A **walking gallery tour** asks students to travel through a series of displays, much like they would in an art gallery or museum. Students can travel through the displays individually, with a partner or in a small group. As they visit each display, they can collect information, respond to focus questions or provide a response to the creator of the display.

Why is this local issue important? 3 to 5 class periods

❶ Organize students into small groups and have each group select an issue from the class issue list created in the previous activity. Alternatively, have the class select one issue that all groups will research.

Discuss a process for researching and collecting information on the issue. Help students identify sources of information such as the following:

- Newspaper articles
- Resources (print and website) that provide background information on the topics connected to the issue
- Personal interviews with individuals or groups involved with the issue.

❷ Work with students to investigate whether any **lobby groups** or **special interest groups** are concerned about the issue. A special interest group has an interest in a specific area and works to promote its views.

- If appropriate, help students contact people who are part of a lobby or special interest group on a particular issue and use a telephone interview to find out about their stand on the issue.
- Encourage students to look for lobby or interest groups on all sides of the issue.
- Discuss with students how **controversy** is often part of dealing with an issue.
- Consider inviting an individual or group who has campaigned for change to visit the class to talk about the experience.

Student Resource 3-4: Local Issues (pp. 167-168) provides a discussion about lobby groups and controversy. This student resource helps students organize their research into five sections:

- What this issue is all about
- What the media says
- What citizens and lobby or interest groups say
- What the controversy is
- What our group thinks.



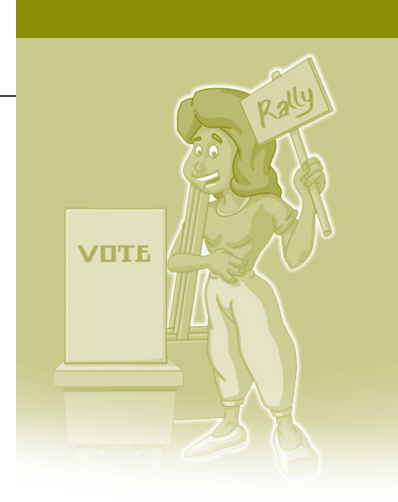
ASSESS

Look for evidence that students can locate, organize and analyze information from a variety of sources.

Student Resource 3-1

Municipal Elections

Talk and write about the following questions:



1. When have you been asked to vote on something to make a decision?

2. Did the majority of votes determine the decision? Or did all the voters have to agree on a decision together?

3. Which do you think is the most effective method of making a decision? Why?

4. Which do you think is the most efficient method of making a decision? Why?

Electing Representatives

The **electoral process** is an important aspect of the democratic system and refers to the manner in which voters elect representatives from those nominated as candidates. Citizens of municipalities can **elect**, or vote for, representatives who are responsible for making decisions and representing the people who live and work there. The people who are eligible to vote are called the **electorate** or **electors**. A person can vote in municipal elections if the person meets all of the following criteria:

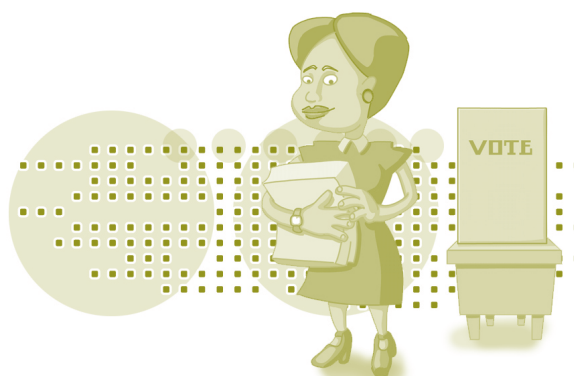
- Is at least 18 years old
- Is a Canadian citizen
- Has lived in Alberta for six months before the election day
- Resides in the area on election day.

Local elections are one of the most important elements of a democratic government. In the election, citizens of the community vote for individuals who will represent their interests and will work to make decisions about services and facilities that will help build a good quality of life. Local general elections are held every three years, and councillors are expected to serve their communities during this three-year term. Councillors take an oath of office to guarantee that they will carry out their powers, duties and functions.

If an elected municipal official has to step down or resign part way through his or her three-year term of office, then a by-election is held to elect someone else. A **by-election** is an election held to fill a vacant position at a date other than the general election date.

Use classroom and community resources to create a storyboard or comic strip that responds to one of the following questions.

- Who can vote?
- Who should be able to vote?
- How and when do elections take place?
- Should all citizens be required to vote?
- Is voting a right or a privilege?
- Should citizens take responsibility for knowing what candidates stand for on issues and community concerns before they vote?



Student Resource 3-2

Accountability Matters

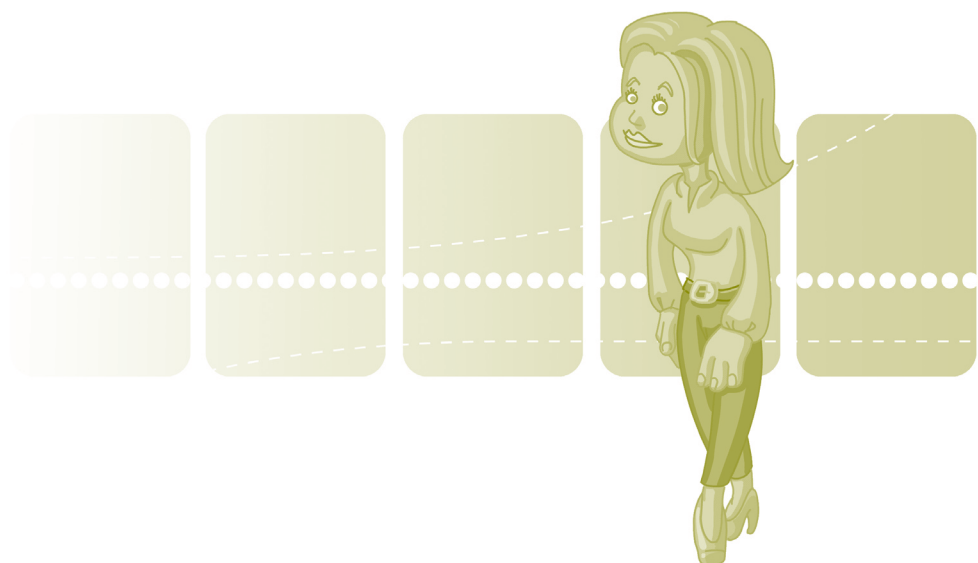


Decisions that councils and councillors make are often seen in the policies and bylaws of a municipality. **Policies** are made by councils to set guidelines that the municipalities follow. The guidelines can describe how services and programs will be provided by a municipality. The Chief Administrative Officer and his or her staff are responsible for following these policies.

A **bylaw** is a law or a policy passed by the council. Bylaws can be enforced by bylaw enforcement officers, police and constables in the municipality. If people in the municipality do not follow the rules set out by a bylaw, they can be fined or given penalties.

Councils are also responsible for passing budgets. A **budget** looks at **revenue**, or money that comes into the municipality, as well as **expenses**, or money that needs to be spent or saved. Councils can develop long-term plans that help them make decisions about what is best for the municipality. They plan what they will do for the municipality over a period of time. Councils or departments often create an action plan that describes the goals and processes they will use.

Elected representatives are responsible to the electors in the municipality. These people are called **voters** or **constituents**.



Accountability Matters!

The local newspaper is doing a series of feature articles on municipal government. Since grade 6 students are learning about municipal government, the newspaper editor has invited your class to submit articles for possible publication. The upcoming feature article is based on the following questions:

Why should elected representatives be accountable to the citizens?

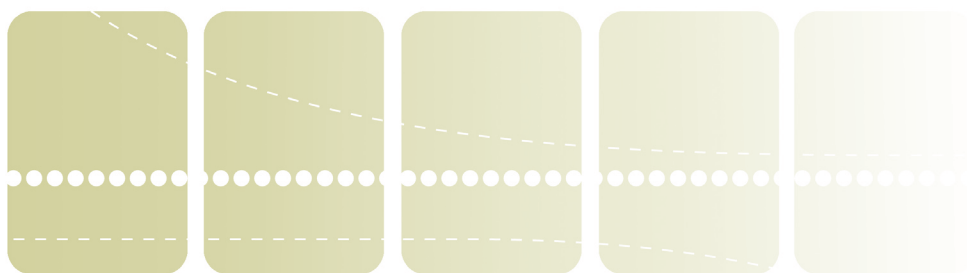
- How is accountability part of the electoral process?
- Why is accountability important from our elected representatives?

How do our elected representatives show that they are accountable?

- What evidence can you find that our elected representatives:
 - Respond to residents
 - Consider the views and perspectives of residents
 - Participate in events in the municipality
 - Represent and express the concerns of residents in council meetings?

As you research this topic, gather information by interviewing community members from a variety of age groups. You might also gather information from local media (newspaper, radio and television) and websites. Use the *Student Reporter Tip Sheet: Interview Strategies* to help you with your research.

You will need to present your findings in a well written article suitable for publication in the local newspaper. Perhaps your ideas will be published in the next special edition. What do you have to say about accountability in our municipality?



Student Reporter Tip Sheet: Interview Strategies

Successful reporters plan their interviews. The tips below will help you plan and conduct effective interviews.

1. Plan your interview.

What do I need to find out?	Who should I contact to be interviewed?
What questions should I ask?	What do I need to say when I make appointments for the interviews?

2. Conduct the interviews.

3. Remember to thank the persons you interviewed and share something you learned from their responses.

4. Record and organize the information you gather. Create a chart such as the one below to help you organize your interview results. Ask your teacher for a T-chart to create your chart.

Interview Questions	Responses

Student Resource 3-3

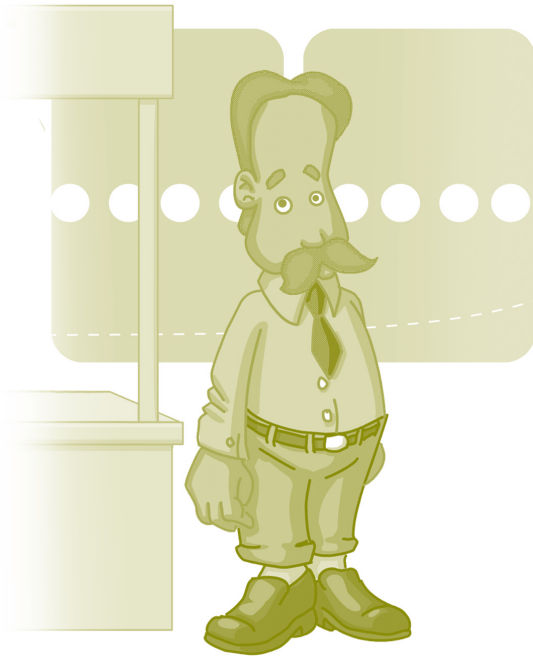
Make Connections

How have you expressed your opinion or tried to convince someone to make a decision that was important to you? There are many different ways to get involved in issues and decisions. Each of the individuals below share some examples of ways that you and others can participate with your municipal government. Think about each strategy by talking or writing about the questions in each box.

Hi, my name is Aaron. I believe that individuals can bring about positive change in their communities, but it helps if you do not try to do it alone. One of the best ways to get involved with issues and decisions in your community is to find other people or groups who want the same thing. There are other ways to get involved too.

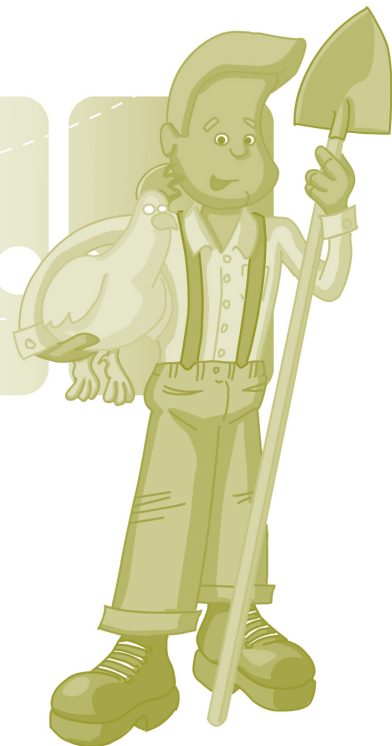
Have you ever attended a council meeting or talked to a councillor or Chief Administrative Officer about an issue? Do your research and work with the people in the municipal office to help find a solution. Volunteer for something that will help your municipality. What are some ways you and your friends can work together to make your opinions known on an issue? What could you do to act on your opinions? What opportunities are there for you to volunteer in your community?





It is important to the candidates who run for municipal offices that they have opportunities to share their positions and opinions on how they will represent the citizens of the municipality. This often happens in local media, such as newspapers, television and radio news programs and community magazines. It also happens during election time through campaign materials, debates and forums. When is the next general election or by-election in your municipality? What do you know about the views or positions of the people who represent you?

Last year, our community held some community dialogues about changing from a volunteer to a full-time fire department. A community dialogue gets people from as many parts of the community as possible to share information, stories and experiences face-to-face, express our perspectives and develop solutions to community concerns and opportunities. A community dialogue is not like a debate. It emphasizes listening. A community dialogue encourages people to find out what they have in common. It can involve as little as five people around a kitchen table to five hundred people in a large community hall. What could be done with the information and perspectives that might come out of a community dialogue? When and how could community dialogues be used to participate with municipal governments?





Meetings are a necessary part of planning and decision-making. How should a community meeting be organized? How do you think community meetings can be used to encourage participation in local decision-making and government?

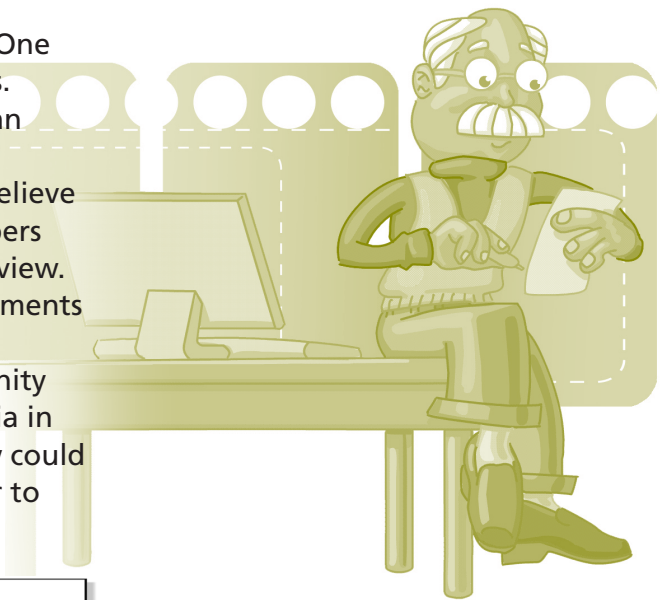
Organizing a Community Meeting

- Fix a time, date and place to meet. Meeting places can include libraries, community centres, some churches, neighbourhood houses and schools.
- Decide on a regular monthly meeting time, or think of another way of staying in touch.
- Use an agenda to identify the meeting place, starting time, time for each item, ending time, goals for the meeting and what should be discussed.
- When you hold the meeting, work through the agenda items.
- Record the actions that were decided, who will carry them out and what should be accomplished before the next meeting.

Making Decisions in a Community Meeting

Quick decisions can be made by asking for a show of hands to see how the group feels about a particular issue. Voting is also a decision-making method that can be used with large groups. Decide how many votes will determine the decision – do you need half or two-thirds of the total vote to determine the decision? Or should consensus be used to try to make a decision? A consensus tries to bring a group to a mutual agreement. Consensus tries to address all concerns of the group. It can take longer than voting, but it can encourage more creativity and cooperation in making decisions.

I am a feature columnist for the local newspaper. One of my jobs involves reporting on community issues. I often interview people to get their opinions on an issue. I usually write about my own opinion in my column too. Not everyone agrees with me, but I believe that this is a healthy way to get community members talking about and considering different points of view. I think the media is one of the most important elements of a democratic community. My column provides information on issues and the opinions of community members. What do you think? How does the media in your community deal with issues and events? How could you use a local community column in a newspaper to participate in your community?



Press Releases

Did you know that anyone can send a press release to the local media? A press release informs the media about an event, a report or an issue. A press release gives reporters all the information they need to write a news story. Here is how to create one.

- Start with a headline that grabs people's attention.
- Put the most important information in the first paragraph.
- Describe your point of view.
- Suggest actions that people can take.
- Keep paragraphs short and to the point.

When do you think a press release would be most effective?

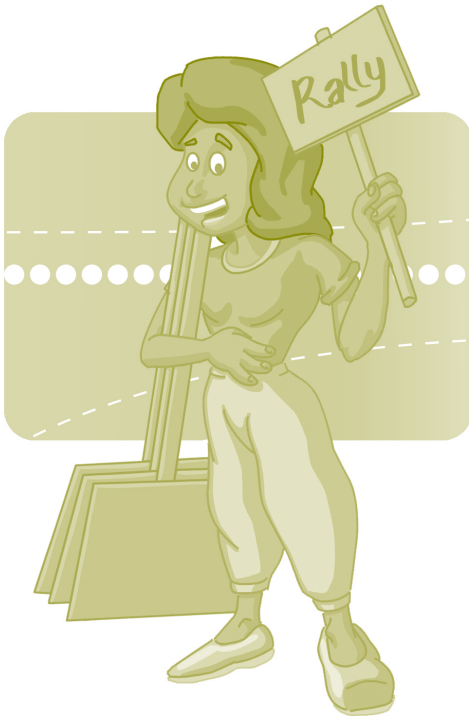
People often value different things. Some people like to see things kept the way they are. Some believe that change is necessary. Some people or organizations **lobby**, or try to influence and put pressure on, representatives from different levels of government to make their opinions known through strategies such as media campaigns and petitions. People or organizations who lobby for their interests are often called **special interest groups**. Special interest groups can use strategies such as:

- Letter writing
- Using local media such as phone-in radio or television shows
- Rallies or demonstrations
- Personal conversations with officials
- Press conferences.





Our organization, Strong Communities, attends council meetings to ensure that our council hears the views of ordinary people in the community. We take the time to express our opinions and help in decision-making. We talk with our councillors and work with them to bring about change. We sometimes use informal petitions to communicate our point of view to our municipal government. A **petition** is a document that presents a point of view on an issue. The more signatures we obtain on our petitions, the stronger our message is. Why do you think this is so? When do you think it can be effective to use a petition?



Demonstrations and rallies are used to gather support around a position or action. Individuals and groups organize demonstrations or rallies by creating a message, setting a date and publicizing the event. Demonstrations and rallies are often very public events and can take place near government offices or in a public place. Why do you think holding a rally near government offices or in a public place could be more effective?

Student Resource 3-4

Local Issues

Often change and development can be good for a municipality because it can strengthen and enhance the quality of life for people who live and work there. New projects, neighbourhoods, buildings, facilities and services can create more jobs. This type of development can bring more resources into the municipality. It can provide services that people believe are important, and can improve the ways that needs are met.

However, some changes can also decrease the quality of life for people in the municipality. A new development or building could harm the environment or things that people value. Ways of life might be affected by changes such as an increase in the noise or activity level, or the loss of important environmental features, such as open space and trees.

Many people get involved while a decision is being made that may change the municipality. When a **controversy** occurs, debates, discussions and disagreements can take place. People have to decide what is more important to them. Sometimes those changes involve making a choice between the environment and jobs. Other times, the changes involve making choices that involve people's values and attitudes. People may choose to work together **collaboratively** to make a decision. In some cases, groups who disagree try to reach a **compromise** to deal with the choices that have to be made. Each side gives up some of their demands so that they can come to an agreement that everyone can live with.

How would you define controversy in your own words?

What do you think the benefits of collaborative decision-making would be?

How would you define compromise in your own words?

What do you think happens when a compromise cannot be reached?

Use the chart on the following page to investigate an issue that is currently facing your community.



The Issue: _____

Questions to Consider	What We Found Out
What is an issue that has resulted from a decision that your community has to make? Describe what the issue is all about.	
What does the media say about this issue? Collect different articles from newspapers in your community. Listen to news broadcasts. Make a list of the media sources you find and summarize what they say.	
What do local citizens have to say about this issue? What do special interest or lobby groups say? Check the letters to the editor in the local newspaper. Make a list of people or groups you have consulted and summarize their positions on the issue.	
What is the controversy? What are the points of disagreement? Why do people and groups disagree?	
What do we think? What opinions do our group members have on this issue? Why?	

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Policies and Bylaws

Policies provide a way of ensuring that consistent decisions are made on similar matters. Policies are set by council to establish general guidelines for the administration to follow. The administration provides programs and services to the residents and community according to those policies. Bylaws are legislative in nature. They are the laws of the municipality passed by council under the authority and rules established by the *Municipal Government Act*, such as snow removal schedules, parking, traffic and land use.

Strategic Planning

Another aspect of governance is long-term planning. Planning determines an organization's direction over a period of time. The planning process includes planning, implementing, evaluating and adjusting. The process itself can be as important as the planning document created.

Typically, the planning process includes the whole organization, but it can be focused on a major functional area such as a division or department. Strategic planning may be conducted once a year with specific action plans reviewed quarterly. Most municipalities work from some kind of plan, even if it is only the annual budget. A plan can be a living document that requires reviewing, assessing and updating.

Bylaw Readings

Every proposed bylaw must have three distinct and separate readings. No more than two readings may be made at a council meeting unless the councillors who are present unanimously agree to consider a third reading.

Bylaws must be signed and are not considered passed until they are signed.

A bylaw comes into force at the beginning of the day that it is passed unless otherwise provided in the *Municipal Government Act*, any other enactment or within the bylaw.

Procedure Bylaw

Councils should adopt a procedure bylaw to provide a standard format for council meetings and make it easier for members of council, staff, the media and the public to understand the process by which decisions are made. In general, a procedure bylaw will name and describe the responsibilities of council members, provide for the order of business and method of distributing the agenda of the council meetings, set rules regarding the proceedings at regular meetings of the council and describe the manner in which items may be put on the council agenda.



TEACHER BACKGROUNDER

This teacher backgrounder provides a description of the processes involved in decision-making. These processes include the administrative functions of the government. Most decision-making is formalized around a process that includes:

- Setting an agenda to establish the business of meetings. Agendas usually take into account current political issues, the best timing of delegations or groups of citizens wanting to present to council and the natural order of discussion.
- Developing request for decision documents. The request for decision document usually contains the topic, background or history, financial implications and references to policy.
- Holding meetings. A council meeting is a forum for debate and discussion about municipal matters.

These elements establish the process used for informed decision-making about policies, bylaws, planning and projects.

[illegible]

Council members are on council to make decisions, and that means voting on all resolutions and bylaws unless they are required or permitted to abstain from voting. Council must ensure that each abstention and the reason for it are recorded in the minutes of the meeting. If there is a public hearing on a proposed bylaw or resolution, councillors must abstain from voting on the bylaw or resolution if they were absent from all of a public hearing, and they may abstain if they were absent for a part of a public hearing. Council members must also abstain from voting on matters in which they have a pecuniary (monetary) interest.

Council creates council committees and appoints committee members. Council may decide to create a temporary committee to look at a specific issue. There may also be "ad hoc" or standing committees that run from year to year to deal with ongoing issues.

Committees can play a bigger role in making decisions on issues for council. If council wants a committee to make decisions, council may delegate some of its powers to the committee. Then, if a committee makes a decision delegated to it by council, it is as if the council itself made the decision. Some council decisions, such as adopting a budget, cannot be delegated.

If council acts as the disaster services committee, council members may have some specific responsibilities in case of a local emergency. Councillors need to know what those responsibilities are and how they are to be carried out. The system of emergency response is described in the *Public Safety Services Act*, administered by Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation.

Section 4

4. Participate

The teaching and learning activities in **Section 4: Participate** encourage students to develop skills and strategies for taking action. Students explore the meaning of participation and social action and create an action plan to respond to a local issue. They then construct a planning statement that describes their ideas and predictions for the future of their municipality.

Select, modify and adapt the activities that follow to best meet the needs of your students and to build understandings and skills related to opportunities for participation with communities and municipal government.

Action

Action

Action

Preparing for Learning

This section encourages students to take action and participate within the school and municipality. Students should have completed research on a local issue in preparation for developing an action plan. Section 3: Make Connections provides activities for this research.

There are three critical issues in this section.

What does it mean to participate?

1 to 2 class periods*

How can kids participate as citizens?

3 to 4 class periods*

To what extent should people and organizations work together to build a vision for the future?

3 to 4 class periods*

* Based on 50-minute class periods

WHAT YOU NEED

Student Resources

- ☐ Student Resource 4-1: Plan to Participate (pp. 192-193)
- ☐ Student Resource 4-2: Building a Vision for the Future (pp. 194-196)

Graphic Organizers

- ☐ Storyboard (p. 210)
- ☐ Flow Chart (p. 211)
- ☐ Cause and Effect Chart (p. 212)

Materials and Sources

- ☐ File folders
- ☐ Information about the community
- ☐ Community photographs
- ☐ Local newspapers and magazines

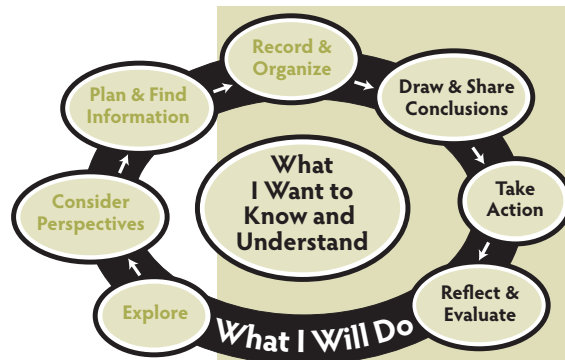
Teacher Backgrounder

- ☐ Municipal and Provincial Governments (pp. 197-198)

This teacher backgrounder provides a description of the relationship between provincial and municipal levels of government and a brief historical context for the development of municipalities.

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND INQUIRY

Section 4: Participate encourages students to develop understandings and processes involved in a number of stages of the inquiry process. The three critical issues in this section include a performance assessment task.



Inquiry Steps and Processes	Questions that Guide the Inquiry	Critical Issues that Emphasize the Inquiry Focus
Draw and Share Conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present the information • Draw conclusions • Assess information • Consider solutions, perspectives, alternatives and predictions • Make decisions 	How will we share our information? What would happen if...? What conclusions can we make? What evidence supports our conclusions?	What does it mean to participate?
Take Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify actions • Implement actions 	What will we do with what we have learned? What would happen if...? How can we contribute? How can we make a difference? What should we do next?	How can kids participate as citizens?
Reflect and Evaluate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on actions • Consider effectiveness • Assess learning • Identify further research • Start the inquiry process again 	How effective were our actions? What should we change? What should we do next? What do we need to find out about?	To what extent should people and organizations work together to build a vision for the future?

Social Studies Learning Outcomes

General Outcome 6.1

Citizens Participating in Decision-Making

Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the dynamic relationship between governments and citizens as they engage in the democratic process.

Local and Current Affairs

In order to allow opportunities for students to engage in current affairs, issues and concerns of a local nature, the program of studies provides the flexibility to include these topics within the time allotted for social studies.

Specific Learning Outcomes Supported and Developed in Section 4: Participate

Values and Attitudes

6.1.1 recognize how individuals and governments interact and bring about change within their local and national communities:

- (1) recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada (C, I)
- (4) value citizens' participation in a democratic society (C)
- (5) value the contributions of elected representatives in the democratic process (PADM)

Knowledge and Understandings

6.1.2 demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- (3) What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens living in a representative democracy? (C, PADM)

6.1.4 analyze the structure and functions of local governments in Alberta by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- (1) How are representatives chosen to form a local government (i.e., electoral process)? (PADM)
- (2) What are the responsibilities of local governments (i.e., bylaws, taxes, services)? (PADM)

6.1.6 analyze how individuals, groups and associations within a community impact decision-making of local and provincial governments by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- (1) How can individuals, groups and associations within a community participate in the decision-making process regarding current events or issues (i.e., lobbying, petitioning, organizing and attending local meetings and rallies, contacting elected representatives)? (C, PADM)
- (3) In what ways do elected officials demonstrate their accountability to the electorate (e.g., respond to constituents, participate in local events, represent and express in government meetings the concerns of constituents)? (C, PADM)

Skills and Processes

6.S.1 develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking:

- (2) critically evaluate ideas, information and positions
- (3) re-evaluate personal opinions to broaden understanding of a topic or an issue
- (4) generate original ideas and strategies in individual and group activities
- (5) seek responses to inquiries from various authorities through electronic media

6.S.4 demonstrate skills of decision-making and problem solving:

- (1) propose and apply new ideas, strategies and options to contribute to decision-making and problem solving, supported with facts and reasons
- (2) consider multiple perspectives when dealing with issues, decision making and problem solving
- (3) collaborate with others to devise strategies for dealing with problems and issues
- (5) use data gathered from a variety of electronic sources to address identified problems
- (6) use graphic organizers, such as mind mapping/webbing, flow charting and outlining, to present connections among ideas and information in a problem solving environment
- (7) solve issue-related problems, using such communication tools as a word processor or e-mail to involve others in the process

6.S.5 demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building:

- (1) demonstrate the skills of compromise to reach group consensus
- (2) work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal
- (4) extend the scope of a project beyond classroom collaboration, using communication technologies such as the telephone and e-mail

6.S.6 develop age-appropriate behaviour for social involvement as responsible citizens contributing to their community, such as:

- (1) demonstrate commitment to the well-being of their community by drawing attention to situations of injustice where action is needed

6.S.7 apply the research process:

- (4) draw and support conclusions based on information gathered to answer a research question
- (11) reflect on and describe the processes involved in completing a project

6.S.8 demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy:

- (1) express opinions and present perspectives and information in a variety of forms such as oral or written presentations, speeches or debates
- (2) express reasons for their ideas and opinions, in oral or written form
- (3) use skills of informal debate to persuasively express differing viewpoints regarding an issue
- (5) listen to others to understand their perspectives
- (7) communicate effectively through appropriate forms, such as speeches, reports and multimedia presentations, applying information technologies that serve particular audiences and purposes

ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

Ongoing Assessment

Choices can be made about assessing student work in this section. The criteria checklist provided in this section can be used to:

- Observe student work in group and classroom settings
- Develop checklists for assessment of student work in the activities in this section.

Performance Assessment Task

The performance assessment task, *Building a Vision for the Future*, builds on a previous performance task, *All in a Day's Work*, from Section 2: A Good Place to Live. Students continue in a real-life scenario where they participate as student interns in a municipal government department to create a vision statement that outlines their vision for the future of their municipality. As they consider how citizens and municipal government work together to contribute to the quality of life in the municipality, students will demonstrate what they value about citizen participation in a democratic society.

Although students are working in groups for this task, it is recommended that the work be divided so that teachers will be able to collect evidence of individual student attainment of the outcomes. Students will complete a self-reflection on their contribution to the both the group process as well as the product. Teachers use their observations of individual student work combined with data from the student self-reflection when determining student scores on the rubric. The final product is the vehicle through which students demonstrate their understanding, but it is not marked.

Criteria for Evaluation

Students provide evidence of their learning in this performance assessment task as they:

- value citizen participation (6.1.1.1, 6.1.1.4)
- identify roles and responsibilities of:*
 - o citizens (6.1.1.1, 6.1.6.1, 6.1.2.3)
 - o local government (6.1.4.2)
 - o elected officials (6.1.1.5, 6.1.6.3)
- collaborate with others (6.S.5.1, 6.S.5.2).

**Will vary depending on individual assignments within the group*



Assessment Tip: Values and Attitudes Outcomes!

Values and attitudes outcomes in social studies focus on the affective domain. They provide support and bring balance to the knowledge and understanding outcomes. During previous lessons, students have learned about the roles and responsibilities of local government. In this task, the companion values and attitudes ask students to value the role of citizen participation in a democratic society. As students contribute to a plan for their municipal government department, they reflect on how citizens work together with municipal governments and elected officials to improve quality of life. Students demonstrate what they value through the use of respectful language along with the level of insight they bring to the task.



Assessment Tip: Reminders!

Assessment must always be based on individual contributions, even within group projects. In this task, students are assigned discrete portions of the task so it will be possible to look at individual student work within the group task. The final product is not part of the evaluation but rather is the vehicle through which students share their information. For more information see the *Assessment Tip* in Section 2: A Good Place to Live (p. 74).

Even though the product is not part of the marking criteria, students should be encouraged to consider the qualities of an effective product relative to their selected presentation format. *The Checklist for Differentiated Products* from Section 1: Get Personal (p. 28) could be used any time students work to communicate information to an audience.

This involves students in the discussion of what quality looks like and helps them evaluate their work in progress and make adjustments to improve the quality. For more information see the *Assessment Tip* in Section 1: Get Personal (p. 26).

Student use of the rating scale provides a perspective on their contribution to both the content of the task as well as their role as a group member. Teachers use the student self-reflection as well as their own observations to determine student placement within the rubric descriptors. For more information, see the *Assessment Tip* in Section 2: A Good Place to Live.

Section 4: Participate Checklist

Criteria Students provide evidence of their learning as they:	Yes	Almost	Not Yet
Listen and respond respectfully to understand democratic principles (6.1.1.1)			
Value citizen participation (6.1.1.1, 6.1.1.4)			
Identify roles and responsibilities of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • citizens (6.1.1.1, 6.1.6.1, 6.1.2.3) • local government (6.1.4.2) • elected officials (6.1.1.5, 6.1.6.3) 			
Demonstrate understandings of the electoral process (6.1.1.5, 6.1.4.1, 6.1.6.3)			
Examine, evaluate and assess sources of information (6.S.1.2)			
Access and organize information from different sources (6.S.1.5, 6.S.4.5)			
Discuss and share original ideas, strategies and options with others (6.S.1.4, 6.S.4.1)			
Express and support opinion (6.S.1.3, 6.S.8.2)			
Participate in problem solving and decision-making processes (6.S.4.1, 6.S.7.4)			
Identify different points of view and perspectives (6.S.4.2, 6.S.8.5)			
Use graphic organizers to make connections between ideas (6.S.4.6)			
Communicate with others to discuss and solve issue-related problems (6.S.4.7, 6.S.8.3)			
Communicate information (6.S.8.1, 6.S.5.4, 6.S.8.7)			
Collaborate with others (6.S.5.1, 6.S.5.2, 6.S.4.3)			
Demonstrate commitment to participate with community issues (6.S.6.1)			
Contribute to group processes (6.S.5.1, 6.S.5.2)			
Reflect on processes used (6.S.7.11)			

Section 4: Participate Building a Vision for the Future

Level Criteria	4 Excellent	3 Proficient	2 Adequate	1 Limited *	Insufficient / Blank *
Values citizen participation (6.1.1.1, 6.1.1.4)	Describes purposeful ways that citizens can work together with municipal governments and elected officials to improve quality of life.	Describes meaningful ways that citizens can work together with municipal governments and elected officials to improve quality of life.	Describes appropriate ways that citizens can work together with municipal governments and elected officials to improve quality of life.	Describes trivial ways that citizens can work together with municipal governments and elected officials to improve quality of life.	No score is awarded because there is insufficient evidence of student performance based on the requirements of the assessment task.
Identifies roles and responsibilities (6.1.1.1, 6.1.6.1, 6.1.2.3, 6.1.4.2, 6.1.1.5, 6.1.6.3)	Provides a comprehensive description of roles and responsibilities of citizens, municipal government and elected officials.	Provides a thorough description of roles and responsibilities of citizens, municipal government and elected officials.	Provides a partial description of roles and responsibilities of citizens, municipal government and elected officials.	Provides a superficial description of roles and responsibilities of citizens, municipal government and elected officials.	
Collaborates with others (6.S.5.1, 6.S.5.2, 6.S.4.3)	Makes a skillful contribution to final product and consistently engages in appropriate group behaviours.	Makes an effective contribution to final product and frequently engages in appropriate group behaviours.	Makes a reasonable contribution to final product and occasionally engages in appropriate group behaviours.	Makes a haphazard contribution to final product and seldom, if ever, engages in appropriate group behaviours.	

* When work is judged to be limited or insufficient, the teacher makes decisions about appropriate intervention to help the student improve.

GLOSSARY

The following terms and concepts are developed in the activities and student resources of Section 4: Participate. Although they are grouped under the critical issue in which they are introduced, many recur and are used throughout the entire section. Definitions and explanations are presented in the context in which they appear in the teacher and student information.

Critical Issue 1: What does it mean to participate?

An **analogy** is a comparison that is made between two ideas to show a similarity.

Critical Issue 3: To what extent should people and organizations work together to build a vision for the future?

A **vision** or **mission statement** can be described as a vision, guidelines, recommendations, rules and principles that can be used to guide decisions for the future.

A **strategic plan** is used to set the direction for the future of the municipality. It is a statement of beliefs, principles or guidelines that guide the work of an organization. It considers the roles and responsibilities of the people involved.

Critical Issues and Activities

What does it mean to participate?

2 to 5 class periods

❶ There are many ways to describe attitudes toward government. One way to think of government is to ask “What will government do for me?” However, for effective participation to take place, many believe citizens should consider the question “What can we do to support our government?”

Invite students to create an **analogy**, a comparison between two ideas to show a similarity, for the concept of participation by following this process:

- Present the analogy of a vending machine and a barn-raising to students by writing each term on the board and asking students to visualize each, or by displaying a picture of each.
- Ask students how a vending machine works – putting money in to get something in return.
- Ask students what they learned in previous grades about how barns were built in the past – everyone in the community worked together to build the barn. Alternatively, students could compare this process to that used by Habitat for Humanity, with a number of people working together to build a home.
- Discuss how each model compares to the ways that individuals can choose to participate with municipal government and their communities.
- Have students brainstorm other ideas or concepts that could be considered similar to participating with municipal government. *(Students can be provided with examples such as teamwork on a sports team, a partnership, or working together to harvest a crop to start their thinking about participation and the model of working together. Students can also be provided with examples of things such as a bus or train, a recipe or a playground to use to create their analogy. The picture book Stone Soup (August House Publishers) also provides a story that students can use to discuss analogies and comparisons to participation with municipal government. An online version is available at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6_external_resources.cfm.)*



DIFFERENTIATE

Illustrate analogies to communicate a positive message about participation with municipal government in one of the following products:

- Poster
- Web blog
- Advertisement
- Story
- Poem
- Role play or freeze-frame theatre presentation.



INTEGRATE: Language Arts: 2.2 Respond to Texts

Have students revisit the meaning of similes and metaphors to help them develop their analogies.



WEBSITE

The *Building Communities Through Local Government* website addresses social participation skills through the **Participate** feature. Students have the opportunity to explore different perspectives on an issue and vote on a decision, similar to the ways that residents in a municipality may be asked to vote on a bylaw or a question posed by council. Students can access the **Express Your Opinion** interactive activity through the **Participate** feature. The issue applies to each of the three different municipalities on the website.

In this interactive activity, students follow a decision-making process.

- **Get the Facts:** A summary overview of the facts involved in the issue.
- **Consider the Issue:** A discussion of the different choices involved with making a decision on the issue.
- **Explore the Opinions:** Excerpts from letters to the editor on the issue that present different perspectives on the issue.
- **What Do You Think:** An opportunity for students to register their own opinion on the issue.

Information and instructions for the activity are provided when students click on the ☹ icon beside the student character with the sign, *All for One and One for All*. When students vote, their votes will be added to a running tally for the day, and the result will be displayed daily. Students can see their vote added to the running tally for today's results.

2 Invite students to discuss how sharing opinions and making decisions on community issues is part of the process of many strategies for action – including talking with municipal officials, using the media and attending community meetings. Consider questions such as the following to focus discussion:

- Why is it important to find out as much as possible about the different perspectives and opinions involved in making a decision on an issue?
- What do you think are some of the most effective strategies for participating in an informed way?
- What might happen if people in a democratic society do not participate or get involved with local government decision-making?

3 Ask students to develop an overview of an issue facing a municipality in Alberta, using the decision-making process in the website feature that is described above. Apply the inquiry model in developing the issue.



DIFFERENTIATE

Have students work individually, with a small group or as a class to develop the issue and decision.



INTERACT

The class may choose to work together on one issue facing the municipality and share it with the community by posting it on the classroom or school website. If the website has the capability, a running tally of Yes-No votes can be displayed.

How can kids participate as citizens?

3 to 4 class periods

1 Have students group themselves according to the local issues they have researched and/or their opinions on the issue. Ask each group to select and prepare a plan for taking action on this issue.

Invite groups to review the various strategies that individuals can use to influence the decisions of local government. Ask students to discuss reasons why getting involved with an issue while a decision is being made can be more effective than getting involved after the decision is made. *(Brainstorm a class list of various ways to take action, such as:*

- *Attend a local, community or municipal meeting*
- *Invite a councillor to the school or a community gathering to talk about the issue*
- *Attend council meetings when the issue is under discussion or consideration*
- *Visit the municipal office to talk to municipal officials and staff about the issue*
- *Provide input when the municipality is making a decision, for example by participating in an opinion survey or attending an open house*
- *Volunteer to sit on a municipal committee that has the job of providing a recommendation to council*
- *Write a letter to a municipal representative or the editor of a local newspaper*
- *Have discussions with community members*
- *Organize a public awareness campaign to inform others about the issue*
- *Join or form your own community or interest group*
- *Make a presentation to the council, a committee or community members*
- *Organize a petition*
- *Create a press release or public service announcement*
- *Create displays for the community or municipality.*

Invite students to discuss examples of strategies they have seen in action in their municipality. Discuss how involvement in issues after a decision is made can sometimes result in confrontational rather than cooperative strategies for participation. Invite students to consider this when judging the effectiveness of their proposed action plans.)

2 Provide each group with **Student Resource 4-1: Plan to Participate (pp. 192-193)** and a file folder with which to create their plan. Have groups discuss their opinions and list the supporting evidence. Revisit the difference between fact and opinion with students. Discuss examples of the types of recommendations that students may include in their file folder action plans, depending on the issues they select. (*Consider exploring examples such as ways to increase safety in the community, initiating new youth activities or ways to provide input on bylaws.*)

This student resource provides:

- An outline for planning group responsibilities for the project
- A format for creating the file folder action plan:
 - A cover design on the front of the file folder that states and explains the issue
 - Supporting evidence on the inside of the file folder such as:
 - Position statements that provide their stand on the issue
 - Visuals or photographs that support their opinion
 - Statements or quotations from other individuals or media that supports their opinion
 - Related facts and information from their research that supports their opinion or counters opposing viewpoints
 - Options for action on the back cover of the file folder
- Criteria for reflecting on the effectiveness of their action plan.



DIFFERENTIATE

As students work on their file folder action plans, have them reflect on the process they use to develop their action plans. Provide each group with the option to:

- Map the process they use with a graphic organizer
- Complete a group reflection at the end of the process, with group comments and feedback on how effectively they worked to develop their action plans and how they could have improved.



ASSESS





Look for evidence that students can apply and use the inquiry process in the development of their file folder action plans.



WEBSITE

The *Building Communities Through Local Government* website provides students with the opportunity to explore the decision-making process with three “virtual” students who live in each of the municipalities. Each decision-making storyline:

- Introduces a challenge
- Follows the students as they visit various places in the municipality to act on the challenge
- Provides an opportunity for your students to input their opinion on what the “virtual” student should do
- Models a decision-making and inquiry process – each action the “virtual” student takes illustrates a step in the inquiry process
- Randomizes the decision, with weighted choices, so that your students’ input has an effect on the final decision
- Allows your students to add a visual to the Scrapbook for each step and print the results.

Students can access this interactive storyline by clicking on the  icon in a location in each of the three municipalities. Students can then **ENTER** the storyline. Students use the  and  arrows to read all the information in the window that appears. They follow the clues in the text to find the next location to visit. These places are indicated with the  icon.

The Field

What can happen when everyone does not agree with a decision made about land use? This story encourages you to think about the importance of gathering perspectives and information when making a decision that involves diverse opinions.

The Old Pawluk House

What can happen when residents have different perspectives about the importance and use of a place in the community? This story asks you to explore how community members can participate with municipal officials to consider the choices and effects involved in making a decision.

Speed Zone

What can students do to take action on an issue that concerns them? This story shares an example of ways that students can participate in the decision-making process in a municipality.

Have students use a graphic organizer, such as a **Flow Chart** or **Cause and Effect Chart** (**Appendix A: p. 211 and p. 212**), to analyze the process that each “virtual” student used to get involved and become part of a decision-making process in their municipality. Have students consider the similarities and differences in each process. Compare the process used by the “virtual” students in each municipality to the process being used in their action plans. Alternatively, use this website interactive activity to introduce the file folder action plans to students.



PARTICIPATE: Get Involved

Have students consider ways that they can act on their position on a local issue. Consider a variety of options and have students select one to address. Options can include the following strategies.

Establish a Student Participation Centre

Have students set up a Student Participation Centre in the school to collect students' ideas, initiatives and actions for improving the school. The Student Participation Centre can be a box and bulletin board in the classroom or school that is used to collect opinions, perspectives and questions. Responses and ideas can be posted, brought to the attention of the school community or used to establish projects and initiatives.

Discuss and clear this project with the school's administration before implementing it. Consider having students write a persuasive letter to the school's administration and staff, outlining the reasons for establishing the Participation Centre.

Have students develop a plan for establishing and maintaining the Participation Centre. Establish clear guidelines and criteria with students around ideas such as:

- Constructive suggestions and ideas for strengthening and building the school community
- Questions that pose appropriate and realistic options or possibilities
- Ideas and questions that focus on positive options or possibilities for change in the school.

Form an Interest Group

Have students research and prepare a presentation and present their opinions on the local issue. Discuss with students how each group could form an interest group to influence the municipal government's decision about the issue.

Attend a Public Meeting

If possible, have students attend a public meeting to watch how issues are dealt with in this type of setting. Have students use a graphic organizer, such as a **Flow Chart (Appendix A: p. 211)** to map the process used in these meetings.



INTERACT

Investigate options for having students share some of their file folder action plans with the municipal office:

- Have the class work together to select one or two of the file folder action plans to share with the municipal office.
- Invite someone who works in the municipal office to visit the classroom and work with students as they construct their file folders or listen to group presentations of their action plans.
See **Appendix B (pp. 214-216)** for ideas on contacting a municipal office.



INTERACT

Attend a Town Hall, Council or Community Meeting

If possible and realistic in your municipality, consider checking with the municipal office for dates and times of town hall, community or council meetings. The different types of meetings that the class may attend could include:

- Committee meeting (those open to the public)
- Council meeting
- Community or town hall meeting
- Public information session
- Public input session.

Some municipalities also request public input on their municipal website. This may also provide an opportunity for students to share their opinions with municipal officials.

You may also be able to obtain a video or audio tape of a meeting. Check with your local cable channel if you cannot arrange to have students attend in person. You may also check your municipality's website. Some municipal councils may post council meeting packages on their websites.

After students attend or view the meeting, invite a municipal official into the class to discuss it with them. Use questions such as the following to help students compare the meeting to the one they held in the classroom:

- What was the purpose of the meeting? Are these types of meetings held on a regular basis?
- Did this meeting deal with a specific concern or issue? What was this issue?
- Who was present at this meeting? What were their roles?
- How were decisions made at this meeting?
- What was the outcome of the decisions made at the meeting?
- Are there any opportunities to have further input? What might these be?

Ask the municipal official to take part in the discussion, both answering and asking questions. After the meeting, have the class write a letter to their municipal government office, expressing their thanks and talking about what they have learned about local government.

To what extent should people and organizations work together to build a vision for the future?

3 to 4 class periods

1 Many people who work with and for municipalities look to the future when they are planning the work of their department or area. They establish a vision and goals for the future of the municipality and develop projects and initiatives that further that vision.

Invite students to develop a vision for the future of their municipality:

- Have students rejoin the local government department groups they worked with in Section 2: A Good Place to Live activities and revisit the community murals they created.
- Discuss and brainstorm ways that citizens' involvement with local government in their municipality can be strengthened.
- Introduce students to the concept of a **vision** or **mission statement**, which can be described as a vision, guidelines, recommendations, rules and principles that can be used to guide decisions for the future. Use the concept of a vision or mission statement to discuss the types of planning principles that a municipality might use to guide future decisions and actions.

Discuss how municipalities can use a **strategic plan** to consider and plan what they would like to work towards for the future of the municipality. Tell students that they will be working again as municipal government student interns to help develop a strategic plan that describes their vision for the future of the municipality.

2 Have each group revisit the different types of places on their community murals and in their own municipality:

- Places where people live
- Places where people buy goods and obtain services
- Places where people work
- Places where people play
- Places where community activities happen
- Places where natural areas are protected.

Encourage students to also review the results of the community scan they completed in Section 2: A Good Place to Live. Discuss what these results indicated about conditions, challenges and issues in the municipality.



DIFFERENTIATE

Students can be provided with different options for creating their strategic plans:

- Developing a website by creating a series of HTML web pages
- Creating a videotape that presents the strategic plan and enacts examples
- Creating a series of public service announcements that outline the vision for the strategic plan (textual, visual and audio)
- Constructing a poster.



THINK ABOUT

Students can also be introduced to, or revisit, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Use the core textbook resources to provide an overview of the purpose of the *Charter*.

3 Consider how municipal government influences and shapes quality of life by reviewing the responsibilities of municipalities that they have learned about. Provide students with **Student Resource 4-2: Building a Vision for the Future (pp. 194-196)**. This student resource asks each group to create a strategic plan that provides:

- A vision for the future in their municipality
- What is important in the municipality and why – the values and attitudes that the department wants to encourage and strengthen
- What can be changed to improve quality of life in the municipality
- Suggestions and recommendations for ways that citizens can be encouraged to support and be involved with decision-making in the municipality.



ASSESS

This student resource provides the performance assessment task for this section. A rubric is provided in the assessment notes and should be shared and discussed with students prior to beginning the task. The student resource also provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their contributions to the process.

Encourage groups to include drawings, photographs, graphs and charts to support their vision and recommendations. Have students use a visual organizer such as a **Storyboard (Appendix A: p. 210)** to develop their strategic plans.

Students can create their strategic plan as a brochure or poster. Encourage students to share their strategic plans in different settings and contexts:

- Brochures can be combined into a class binder that presents the whole vision for the community's future. The binder should include an overview of the school and students who created it. The binder can be sent to community facilities, such as the local seniors' centre or recreation centre, with a comment sheet inviting feedback and responses.
- Brochures can be laminated and shared with parents, school staff, other students, neighbours or community-based organizations in the municipality.
- Other student projects can be placed online with a visitor's page for comments and responses.



INTERACT

Students can be asked to investigate whether their municipality has a vision and mission statement, slogans or guiding principles by exploring the municipality's website. Look for evidence of principles that guide the governance of the municipality in the messages and information on the website. If appropriate and available, students may be asked to look at the strategic plans of their municipal government.

Invite students to work in groups to create a poster that reflects their learning about local government in their municipality, focused on the question:

- To what extent should people and organizations work together to build a vision for the future?

Students can be encouraged to revisit some of the products they created during their study of local government, including:

- Community murals
- Community scans
- File folder action plans.

Submit posters to your municipality or plan to display them in the school or community facilities. If the timing is appropriate, check with your municipal office to find out if there is an opportunity for students to participate in Municipal Week in October.

- 4 Have students revisit the KWLH Charts that they completed at the beginning of their study of local government. Provide time to discuss and reflect on what has been learned and how students' understandings and perspectives on local government have changed and been informed by what they have done.



THINK ABOUT

If your municipality does not have a vision or mission statement, slogans or guiding principles, consider having students submit their ideas for developing them to the municipal office.



Student Resource 4-1

Plan to Participate

Make It Happen

How will your group work together to create your action plan? Organize your responsibilities.

What is the issue?

What do we want to accomplish in our plan for action?

How will we accomplish it? *(Consider actions and jobs such as watching the news, reading newspapers and magazine articles, consulting the Internet, taking or finding pictures, conducting interviews, making advertisements or posters, talking to council members or setting up meetings to create your action plan.)*

Jobs We Have to Do	Who Will Do Each Job	When Each Job Will be Done

Back

Describe the action that you want to take:
What do you recommend doing about this issue, dilemma or decision?

Front

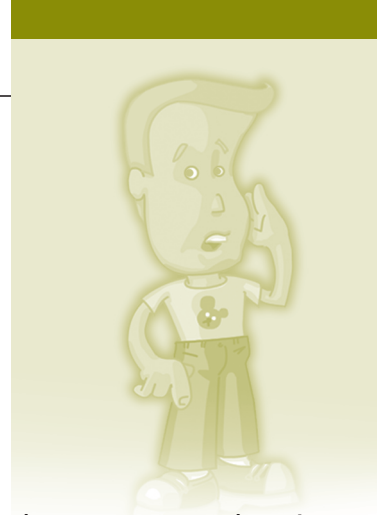
Identify and explain the issue:
What is the issue, dilemma or decision?

Inside

provide supporting evidences on the perspectives and opinion.
issue, dilemma including:
Consider statements that
• position on the issue that your stand on photograph
• Visuals or quotations from support your opinion that support your opinion or media that
• Statements or information other individuals or information
• support facts and information support
• Related research that supporting from your opinion or counter opposing your opinion or viewpoints.

Student Resource 4-2

Building a Vision for the Future



You are now in the final portion of your municipal government department student intern program. Your Chief Administrative Officer has asked each department to help develop a strategic plan for your municipal government. A **strategic plan** is a statement of beliefs, principles or guidelines that guide the work of an organization. It considers the roles and responsibilities of the people involved.

Your strategic plan should include:

- A vision for the future in your municipality
- What should be important in your municipality and why – the values and attitudes that your department wants to encourage and strengthen
- What can be changed to improve quality of life in your municipality
- Suggestions and recommendations for ways that citizens can be encouraged to support and be involved with decision-making in your municipality.

As you create your **strategic plan**, consider the ways that citizens, municipal government departments and elected officials work together to contribute to the quality of life in your municipality. What should their roles and responsibilities be? Think about the questions below. Ask your teacher for a graphic organizer to record your ideas.

Citizens

- What do citizens value in your municipality?
- What rights do citizens have in your municipality? How does municipal government support those rights?
- What responsibilities do citizens have in your municipality? How can citizens become more involved with decision-making in your municipality?

Municipal Government Departments

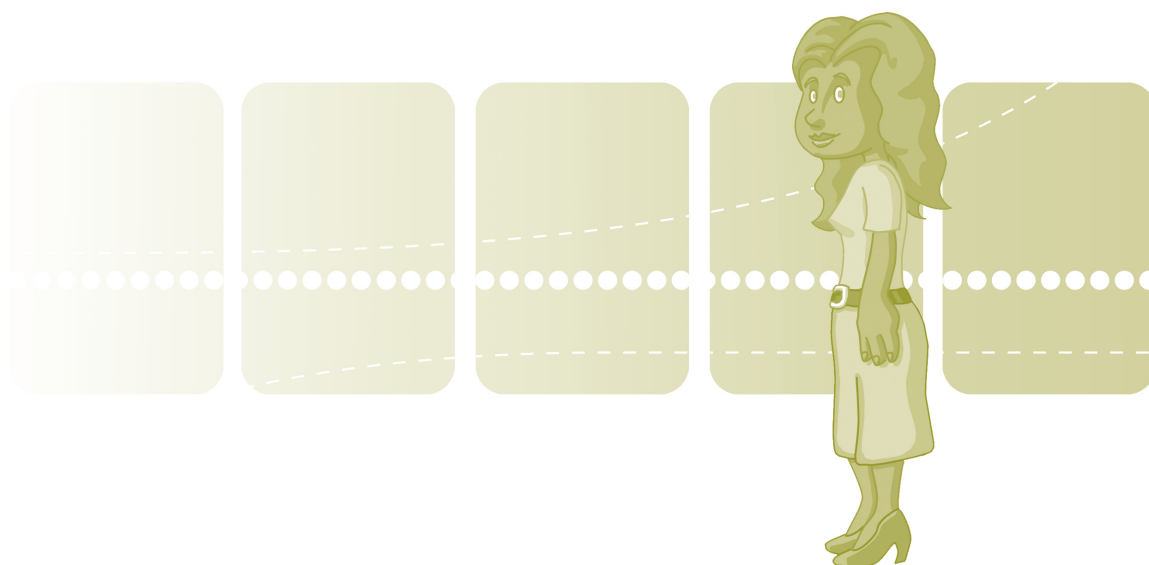
- How does your department contribute to the quality of life in your municipality?
- What concerns do citizens have that relate to your department?
- How can your department help improve quality of life in your municipality?
- What should the department plan for in the future?

Elected Officials

- Why are elected officials an important part of the democratic process?
- How do elected officials demonstrate their accountability to the citizens in your municipality? What else could they do?
- How can elected officials encourage citizens to be more involved in your municipality?

Meet with your fellow interns to brainstorm, make a plan, divide the work and collaborate to create a finished product. Think about how you want to present your strategic plan: a brochure, poster, public service announcement or website page.

Above all, your strategic plan should show what you value about citizen participation in a democratic society. Thank you for helping to **Build a Vision for the Future!**



Reflecting on My Contribution to Our Department Strategic Plan

[illegible]

Municipalities are delegated their powers by the provincial government. In Alberta, the provincial government supports local government through Alberta Municipal Affairs. The ministry is responsible for:

- The province is run by elected officials that are known as Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). MLAs have constituency offices within their ridings, where residents can meet with their provincial representatives. MLAs also meet with local municipal councils in both formal and informal environments. The MLA and council can obtain details about specific policy decisions and actions from each other and therefore communicate government information that is affecting the area for which they share responsibility. In some cases, one MLA may have multiple municipal councils in his or her constituency. In other cases, usually in larger urban centres, there is a need for a number of MLAs to represent the constituents in one municipality.

The first local government election in what is now Alberta was held in 1883 under the Northwest Municipal Ordinance. Rural local government began with herd districts in 1883, fire districts in 1886, and statute districts in 1887, all of which were combined into local improvement districts in 1897. Urban local government began with unincorporated town ordinances in 1888. The village ordinance followed in 1895.

In 1995, a major consolidation of municipal legislation took place that established a more permissive style of governance. The current *Municipal Government Act* gives municipalities greater autonomy in local decision-making and is the primary statute governing the affairs of your municipality. The *Municipal Government Act* also incorporates the provisions of the former *Planning Act*. The *Municipal Government Act* is subject to amendment to meet new needs and demands.



This teacher background provides a description of the relationship between provincial and municipal levels of government and a brief historical context for the development of municipalities.

[illegible]



THINK ABOUT

Since the adoption of the *Municipal Government Act*, all rural and urban municipalities are treated the same.

NOTES

Source:

Walchuk, Walter. (1987)
*Alberta's Local Governments:
People in Community Seeking
Goodness*. Edmonton, AB:
Alberta Municipal Affairs.

European Influences

The form of local government we have in Alberta today reflects our ties with Britain. Canada was governed as a colony and our early immigrants from England and Scotland brought with them customs and forms of local governance that remain here today. The French system of government tended to have considerable power in the central government, with field administrators supervising local government. All forms of local government – small or large, rural or urban – were treated alike. The British system, however, distinguished between rural and urban. It gave the urban more freedom and power. Elected officials acting as local councils had the power to govern as compared to the strong mayoral approach of the French. In the late 1800s, pressure started to build for some form of locally elected councils. It was eventually decided that the responsibility of establishing local governments would best be left to the legislatures that were about to be created in what are now the provinces.

APPENDIX A

Graphic Organizers

KWHL Chart

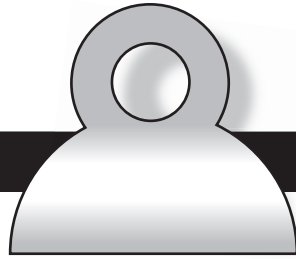
What I Know	What I Want to Know	How I Will Find Out	What I Learned

[illegible]

Triple T-Chart

	1	2	3
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Clipboard

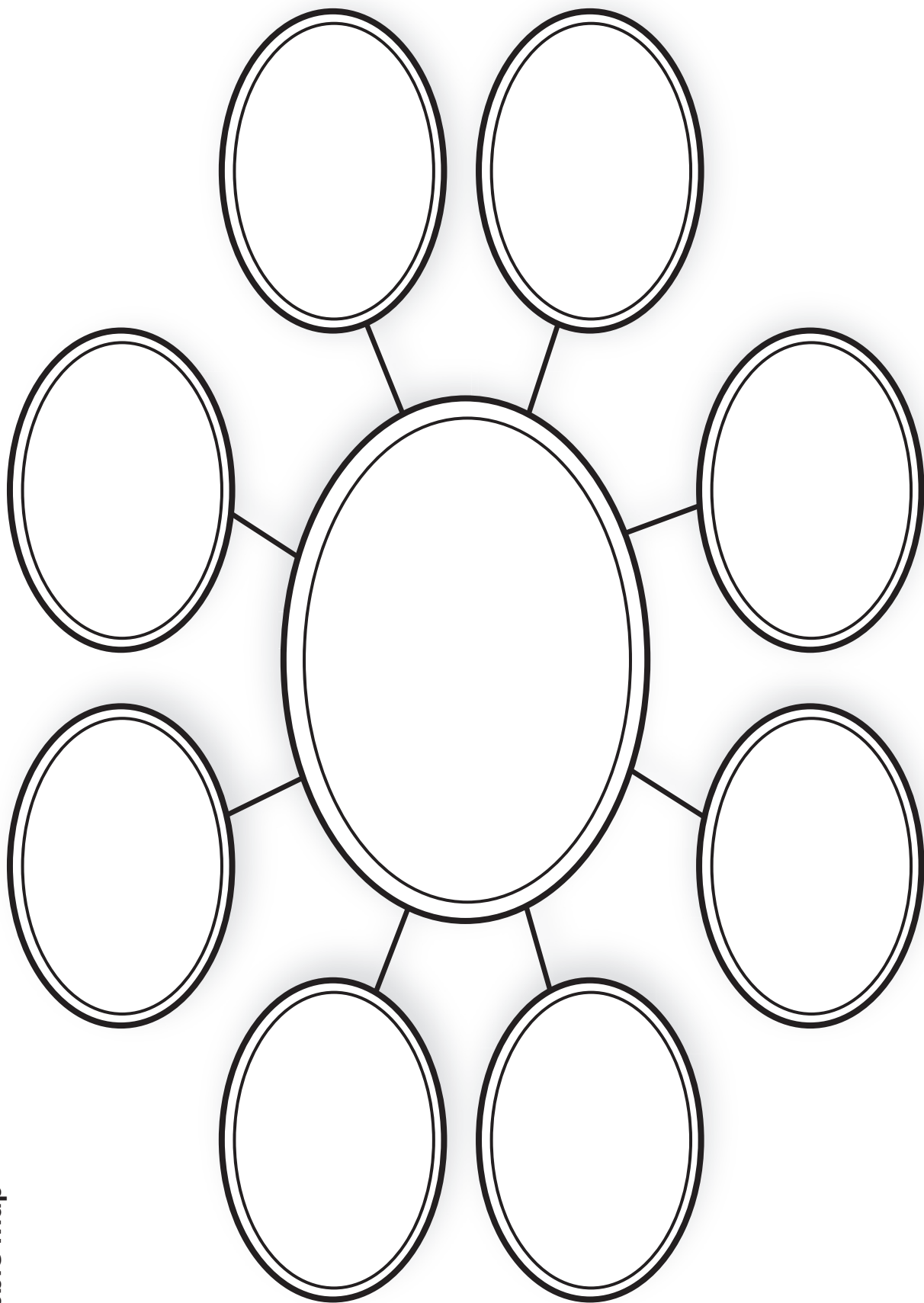


The Facts

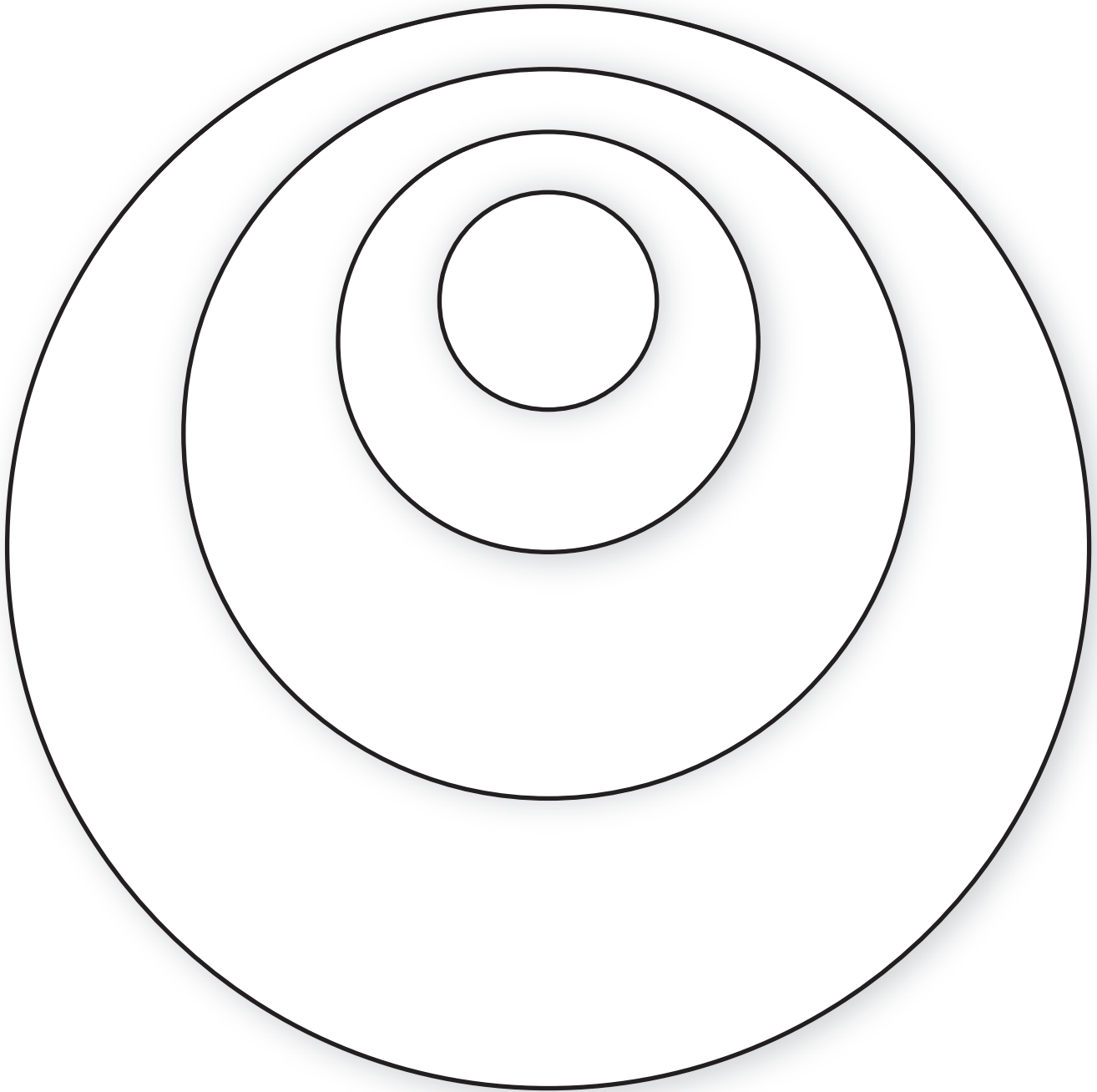
A large, empty rectangular box for writing the facts.

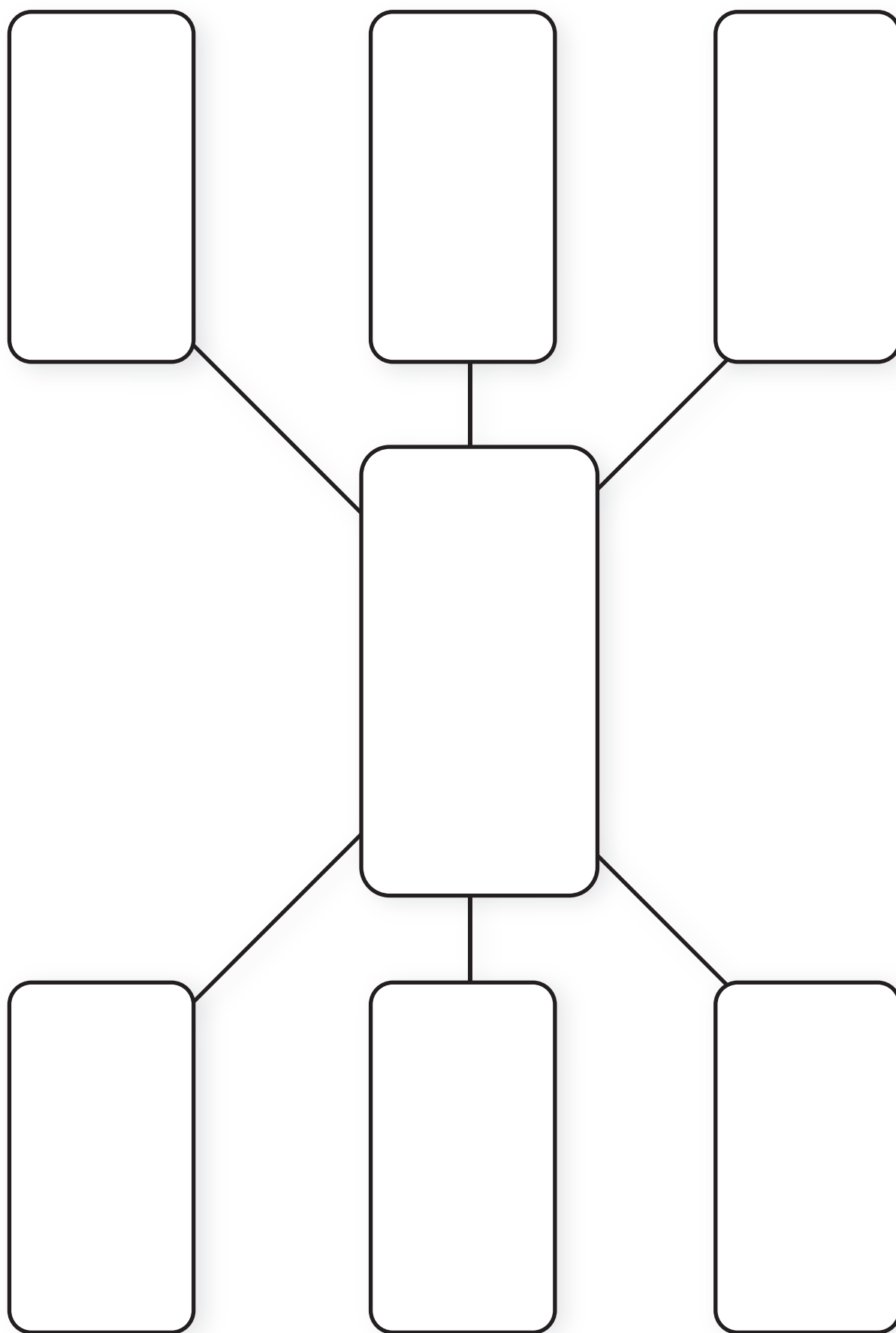
What I Think and Feel

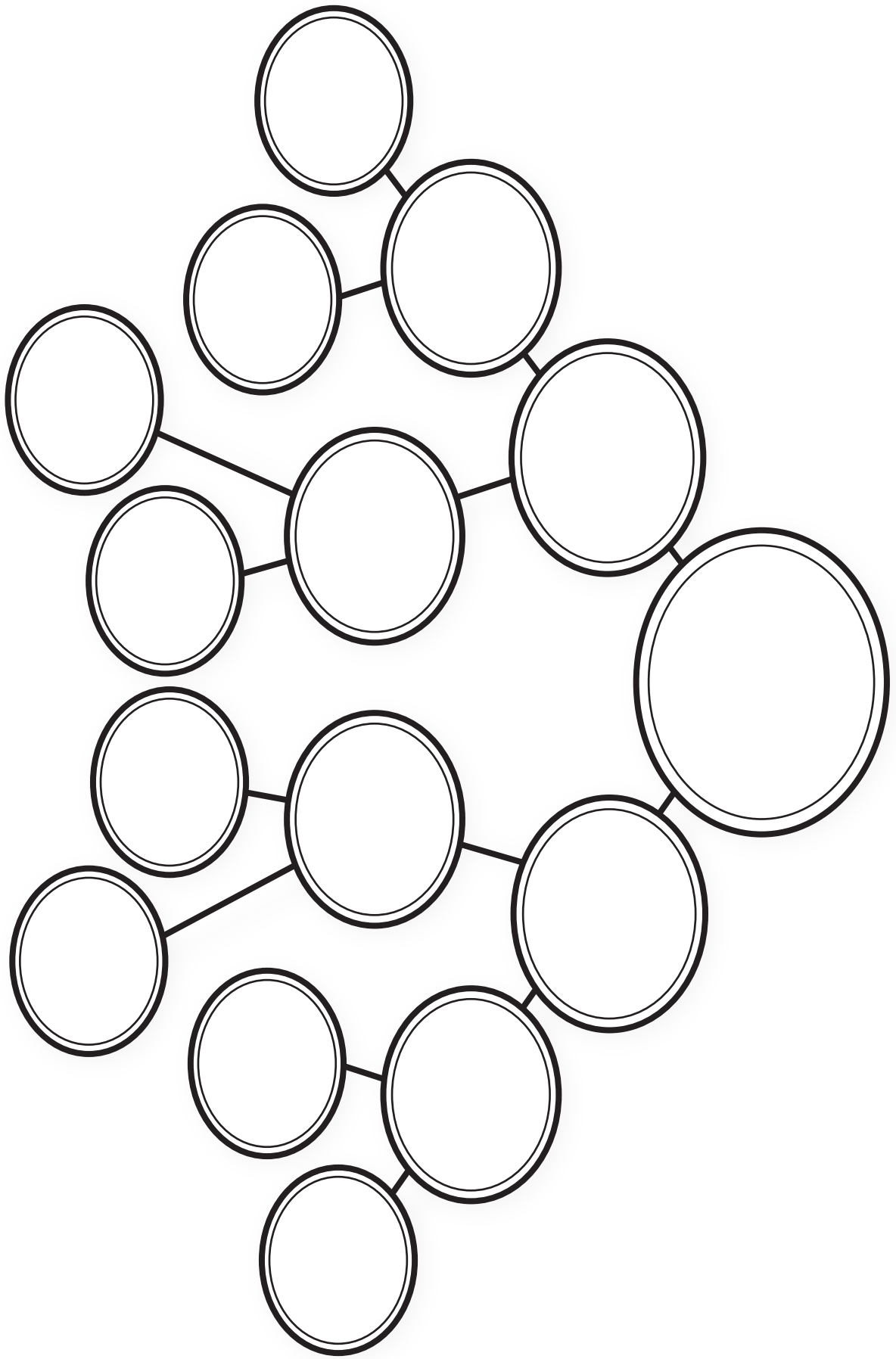
A large, empty rectangular box for writing thoughts and feelings.



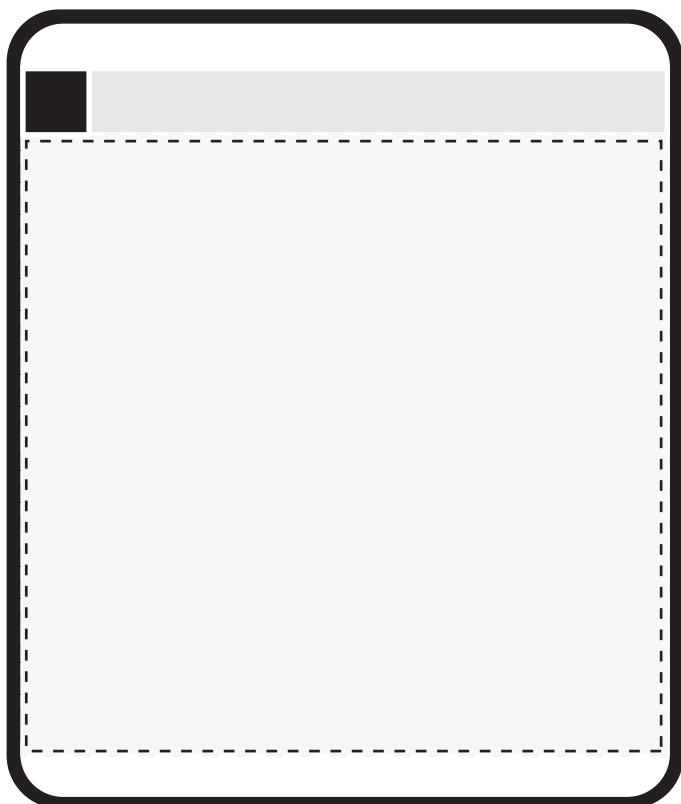
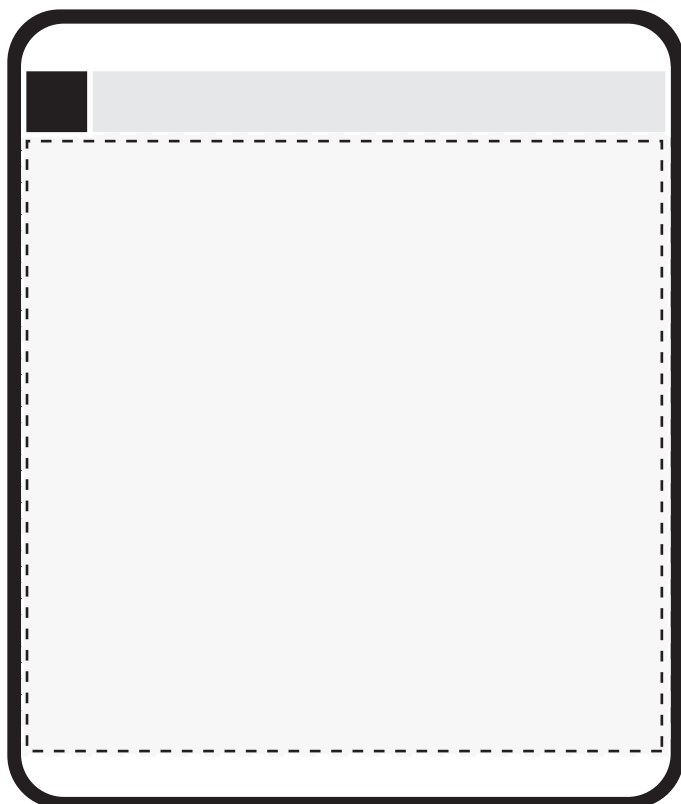
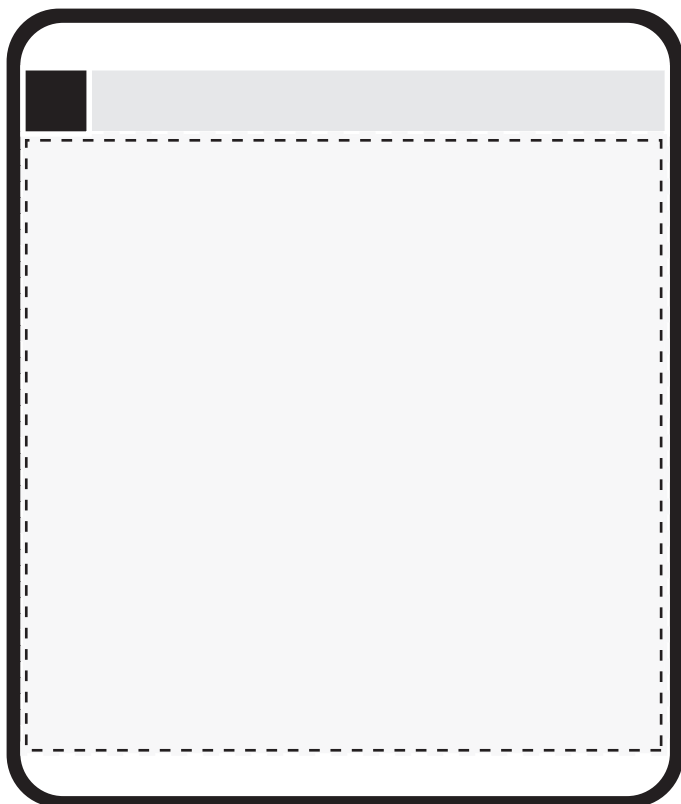
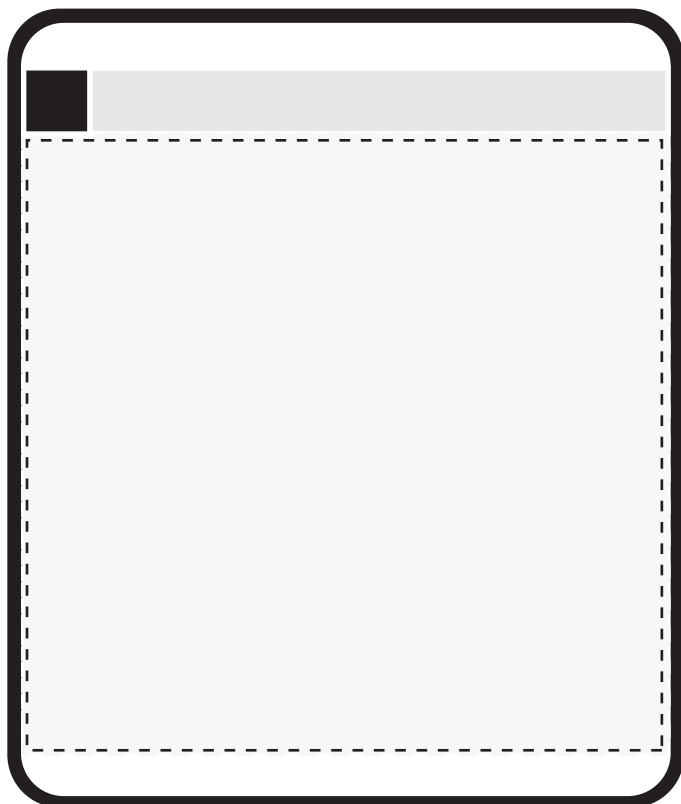
Sphere of Influence Chart

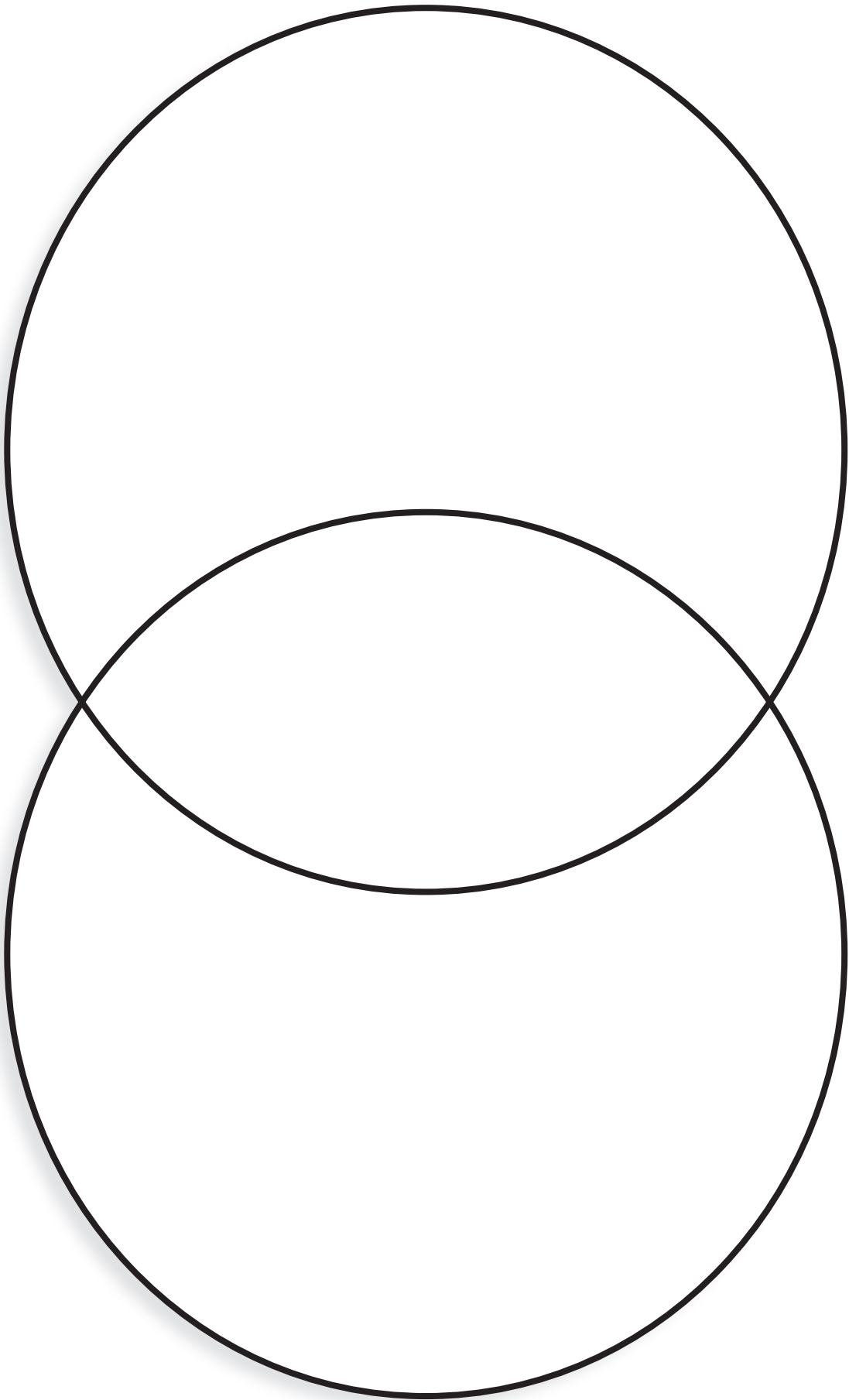






Trading Card Template

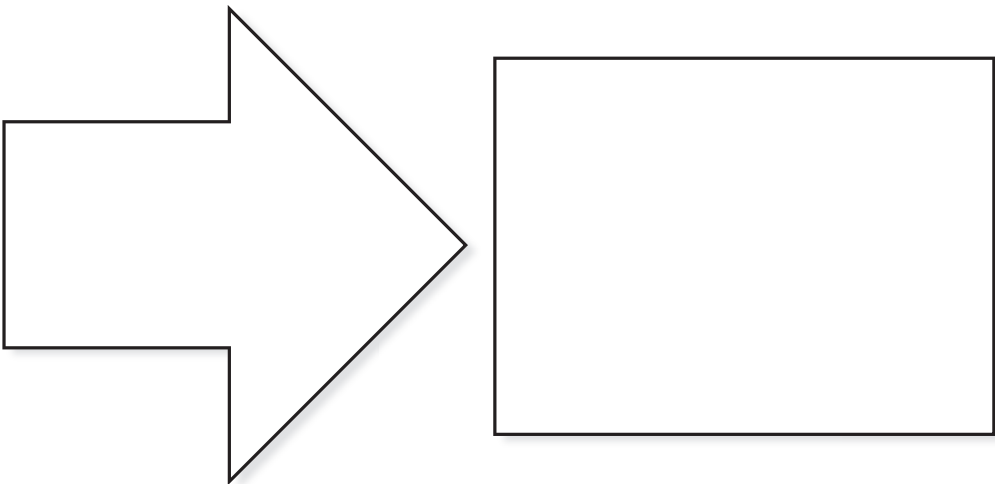
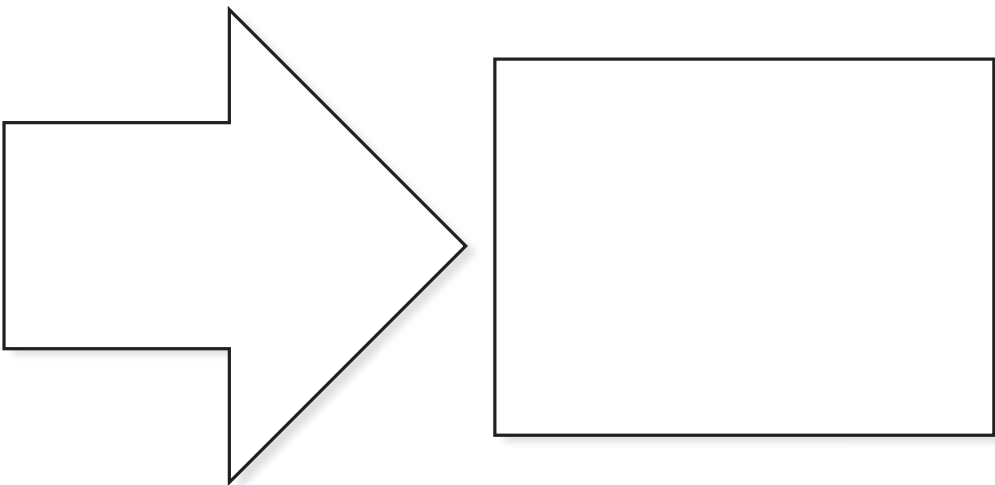
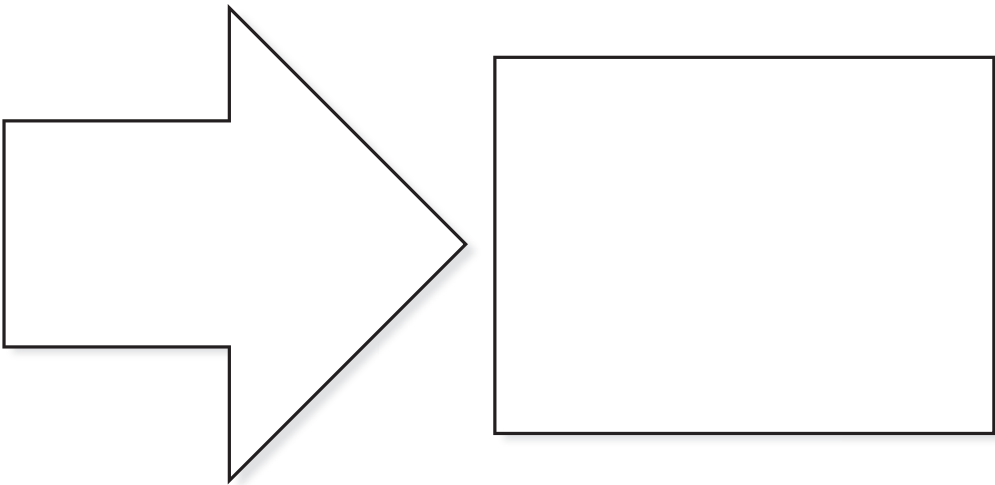




Flow Chart



Cause and Effect Chart



APPENDIX B

**Tools and Strategies for Learning about
Municipal Government**

Alberta Municipal Affairs

Phone: (780) 427-7495

Fax: (780) 422-9133

E-mail: lgs.update@gov.ab.ca

Frequently Asked Questions about Municipal Government

Q: Do you have a complete list of all municipalities in Alberta?

A: For a complete list, please use our Municipal Profiles Search at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/mc_municipal_officials_search.cfm.

Q: Where can I find detailed information about municipalities in Alberta?

A: The Municipal Affairs website provides a number of links with information on municipal government. Municipal profiles are available at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/mc_municipal_profiles.cfm.

The Alberta First website, at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6_external_resources.cfm, also provides detailed profiles on many Alberta municipalities.

The Municipal Excellence Network provides a practice catalogue with a number of examples and some online documents that can be accessed regarding practices developed by Alberta municipalities at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6_external_resources.cfm.

Q: Do you have a map showing the municipalities in Alberta?

A: Yes, Municipal Affairs has a map of Alberta that shows municipalities. Start with the Municipal Profiles screen at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/mc_boundary_maps.cfm and then click the "View Map" icon in the upper right corner of the screen.

Q: Where can I find population statistics for the Province of Alberta broken down by municipalities, cities or regional districts?

A: You can access this information on the Municipal Affairs website at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/mc_offical_populations.cfm. The municipalities are listed in alphabetical order. Under population history, you can access population figures for Alberta since 1960.

Q: How can I find out how the different municipality types (e.g., city, town and village) are defined?

A: Under the *Municipal Government Act (MGA)*, a municipality means a city, town, village, summer village, municipal district or specialized area. The legislated requirement for the formation of a municipality can be found in sections 77 through 84 of the *MGA*. The *MGA* can be accessed on the Municipal Affairs website at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/am_acts_&_regulations.cfm. Other acts related to local government can also be accessed on this link.

Q: Where can I find the Municipal Officials List?

A: Click on Municipal Officials Search at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/mc_municipal_officials_search.cfm and then click where indicated to download the Municipal Officials List.

Q: How can I contact municipal offices to request the participation of municipal officials with students?

A: Start by contacting your municipal office and sharing information about your students' inquiry into local government. Ask about an appropriate contact person who would be willing to participate in students' learning experiences. Possible contacts may include:

- The Mayor or Reeve
- A councillor
- The Chief Administrative Officer
- Executive assistants to the Mayor or Chief Administrative Officer
- Departmental Directors or Communications Officers.

Provide details about the context of the experiences you would like to invite municipal officials to share with your students well in advance. Ask if information should be confirmed with a letter or e-mail.

Q: How should I submit student work to municipal offices?

A: Individuals involved in municipal government welcome interest in local government from students. However, be sensitive to the number of responsibilities these individuals have and consider submitting a class or school project instead of individual student projects. Contact the municipal office by telephone or e-mail to request permission to send projects, identify a contact person in the municipal office and obtain information on how the projects should be submitted.

Q: How might students become involved with the municipal government?

A: Some municipalities may provide opportunities for students to be involved with municipal government. These opportunities may include participating in student or youth surveys, being a youth representative on a committee or presenting student opinions to the council. Contact the municipal office to inquire about any opportunities that may exist.



THINK ABOUT

Use the following format to address your letter or e-mail if you are sending it to the mayor or reeve of a municipality.

Mayor or Reeve
(full name)

Mayor or Reeve of (name)
(Address)

Dear Sir/ Madam: or

Dear Mayor (name): or

Dear Reeve (name):

Corresponding with Municipal Offices

Contacting the Municipal Office

Our grade 6 students are currently studying local government in Alberta. They will be researching different aspects of municipal decision-making and governance and developing understandings of, and commitment to, their communities as well as their sense of empowerment and ability to participate in democratic processes. Students will learn about the structures, functions and processes of municipal government and will investigate the similarities and differences between different municipalities, including urban and rural, large and small. They will also be encouraged to participate in their local community through current affairs that are related to municipal government.

There are many opportunities for municipal officials to be involved with students and support their learning about local government. We would appreciate it if you would indicate ways that the municipal office might be willing to participate with our students. You can contact me at (telephone, return address or e-mail). Thank you for your willingness to be involved with our students' learning.

Yours sincerely,

Submitting the Community Scan Project to a Municipal Office

As you may know, our (class/school) has recently been exploring and researching local government. We have been focusing on the roles and responsibilities of municipal government and its impact on our quality of life. We are interested in learning more about how we can participate effectively with our municipal government.

We have recently undertaken a project that involved completing a community scan. We have identified some topics and issues that we think affect the quality of life in our municipality. We are interested in sharing the results of our community scan with you. As we discussed in our (telephone, e-mail) correspondence, we are enclosing our students' work with this letter.

We would be interested and appreciative of any feedback you might provide to, or discuss with, our students. Thank you for your willingness to be involved with our students' learning.

Yours sincerely,

Student Participation Committee

Electing a Student Participation Committee

The electoral process for the Student Participation Committee has been developed to follow a simplified process modeled on that used in local elections. Electoral processes in Alberta are established by the *Local Authorities Election Act*. The electoral process is an important aspect of the democratic system and refers to the manner in which citizens elect representatives from those nominated as candidates. The individuals involved in the electoral process include the candidates, election officials and the voting public.

The Nomination Process for Municipal Elections

All candidates who run for election for municipal councils must be nominated by eligible voters. To become a candidate, individuals must be at least 18 years of age on nomination day, a Canadian citizen and, except in summer villages, a resident of the municipality for six consecutive months preceding the nomination day. In municipalities with ward systems, except cities, a candidate must be a resident of the electoral division or ward in which they intend to run for the same six-month period. In the case of a city, a candidate must be a resident of the city for six months preceding the nomination day. In a summer village, a candidate must meet the six-month residence requirement or be a property owner or the spouse of a property owner.

Nomination papers must be submitted to the municipality on the nomination day, which is four weeks before the election day, and must state the candidate's intention to run for office. Nomination papers must be signed by at least five electors who are eligible to vote at that election unless changed by bylaw. In some cases, where the number of nominated candidates is less than the number to be elected, the nomination deadline may be extended by up to six business days. If there are a number of candidates equal to the number to be elected, the candidates may be declared elected by acclamation.

The *Local Authorities Election Act* also requires the appointment of a returning officer and election officers who oversee the electoral process, including preparing a list of eligible voters, preparing election forms and providing a notice of election.



PARTICIPATE

Alberta Municipal Affairs website, at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/am_roles_and_responsibilities_of_officials_in_a_local_government.cfm; provides information on election processes for candidates.

The Alberta Leaders Candidate Information website, found at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6_external_resources.cfm, provides information on the local election process in Alberta.



PARTICIPATE

A nomination form is provided in this appendix. You may wish to have students go through the process of establishing the number of positions on the Student Participation Committee and nominating candidates to run for election. Part of this process should include outlining the responsibilities that the Student Participation Committee will have and establishing the process and rules for nominating candidates.



THINK ABOUT

As an individual member of council, councillors do not have the power to commit their municipality to any expenditure or to direct the activities of the municipal employees. Any promise candidates make as part of their election campaign that involves municipal expenditures or the activities of employees, can only be carried out if a majority of council agrees that it is a good idea.

Campaign Rules

Many candidates participate in campaigning activities after they have been nominated to run for office. Candidates often try to match their campaigning activities to their municipality, resources, beliefs and stance on issues. The purpose of campaigning is to convince the electors that the candidate is the best choice for the position. They often campaign by talking to people, preparing brochures or posters or advertising in the media. The *Local Authorities Election Act* establishes guidelines for campaigning. Some of these guidelines include:

- It is an offence to give or promise to give money or any other valuable consideration (such as an office or job) to anyone in return for their voting or refraining from voting at an election. It is also an offence for anyone to accept a **bribe**, money or any other valuable consideration in return for voting or not voting.
- It is an offence to use or threaten violence, injury, damage or intimidation to compel a person to vote or refrain from voting at an election or to obstruct a person from voting.
- An elected authority may by bylaw, passed prior to April 15 in a year in which a general election is held, require that candidates prepare and disclose to the public audited statements of all their campaign contributions and campaign expenses.
- On election day, it is an offence to canvass or solicit votes in or immediately adjacent to a voting station. It is also an offence to display or distribute campaign material inside or on the outside of a voting station.
- Candidates are entitled to have one agent at each voting station. An agent must be at least 18 years of age. The agent represents the candidate's interests and can observe the vote at the voting station. Agents are not allowed to interfere with the voting process.



PARTICIPATE

A student resource that provides suggestions for campaigning is included in this appendix. Establish campaign rules with the class and fill them in on the form before providing it to students. All students may be involved with the campaign by having them work with a nominated candidate on his or her campaign or by playing different roles such as election officials, media and organizers for a candidate's forum. You may wish to discuss how campaigning rules are part of the accountability that elected representatives have to the people they represent.

Election Day and After

The administration of the electoral process is the responsibility of the returning officer in each municipality. The returning officer takes responsibility for the administration, process and reporting of the election as well as advertising the location of the voting stations and hours of operation. The council appoints the returning officer.

The ballot boxes are kept in the control of the deputy returning officer in each voting station until the voting closes. The ballot boxes are sealed after the ballots are counted and then stored in a protected area. Unofficial results may be made available during and following the counting. The official results are announced at noon on the fourth day after the election.



PARTICIPATE

A student resource with ballots is provided in this appendix. Candidate names may be filled in on the ballot and photocopied for the class election. Appoint a returning officer to monitor and administer the electoral process and announce the results of the election.

Review the electoral process and who is eligible to vote. **Student Resource 3-1: Municipal Elections (pp.156-157)** provides this information. Work with students to develop requirements for eligible voters in the classroom. For example, age and attendance may be used to establish voter eligibility.

Nomination

This form certifies that _____ has been nominated and is eligible to run in the election for a position on the Student Participation Committee.

Name: _____

Class: _____

Signatures of Eligible Voters who Support this Nomination

Signature: _____ Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Print Name: _____

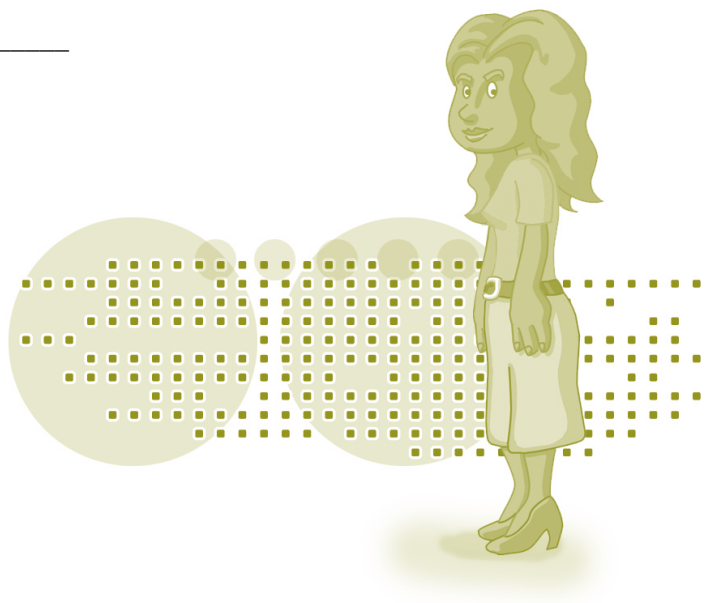
Signature: _____ Print Name: _____

This nomination must be submitted to _____ by _____, the Nomination Day.

I certify that I am eligible to run for election and that, if elected, I will accept the position and responsibilities of the Student Participation Group.

Signature of Nominee: _____

Date: _____



Campaign

What are your opinions, views and positions on issues and decisions?

How will you let your classmates know about your ability to contribute as an elected representative?

Plan Your Advertising Campaign

Advertising campaigns can include many different approaches:

- Talking to classmates
- Posters and signs
- Interviews with the media
- Debates and discussions
- Community meetings or forums.

A **forum** provides an opportunity for the public to hear from individuals running for office. In a forum, candidates often present their opinions and positions on issues and decisions facing the municipality. A discussion is often part of a forum. It can include a question-and-answer session where people can ask questions of the candidates who are running for office. Forums are not a necessary part of the electoral process, but can often be hosted by the community or special interest groups.

What methods will you use to let people know who you are and what you stand for?

Prepare Your Position Statement

The media can be an important part of the electoral process as it can be used to get news of an election to citizens. Media can provide:

- News about election dates and events
- Special features on the candidates and issues
- Interviews with candidates and citizens
- Information about who the candidates are.

It can be useful to have a short biography prepared as part of an election campaign. Create a short biography to tell your classmates about yourself.

Rules to Know

Here are the rules that you need to be aware of in conducting your campaign.

Ballot

BALLOT

Place an "X" in the box beside the candidate you wish to vote for.

Candidate:

_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

BALLOT

Place an "X" in the box beside the candidate you wish to vote for.

Candidate:

_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

BALLOT

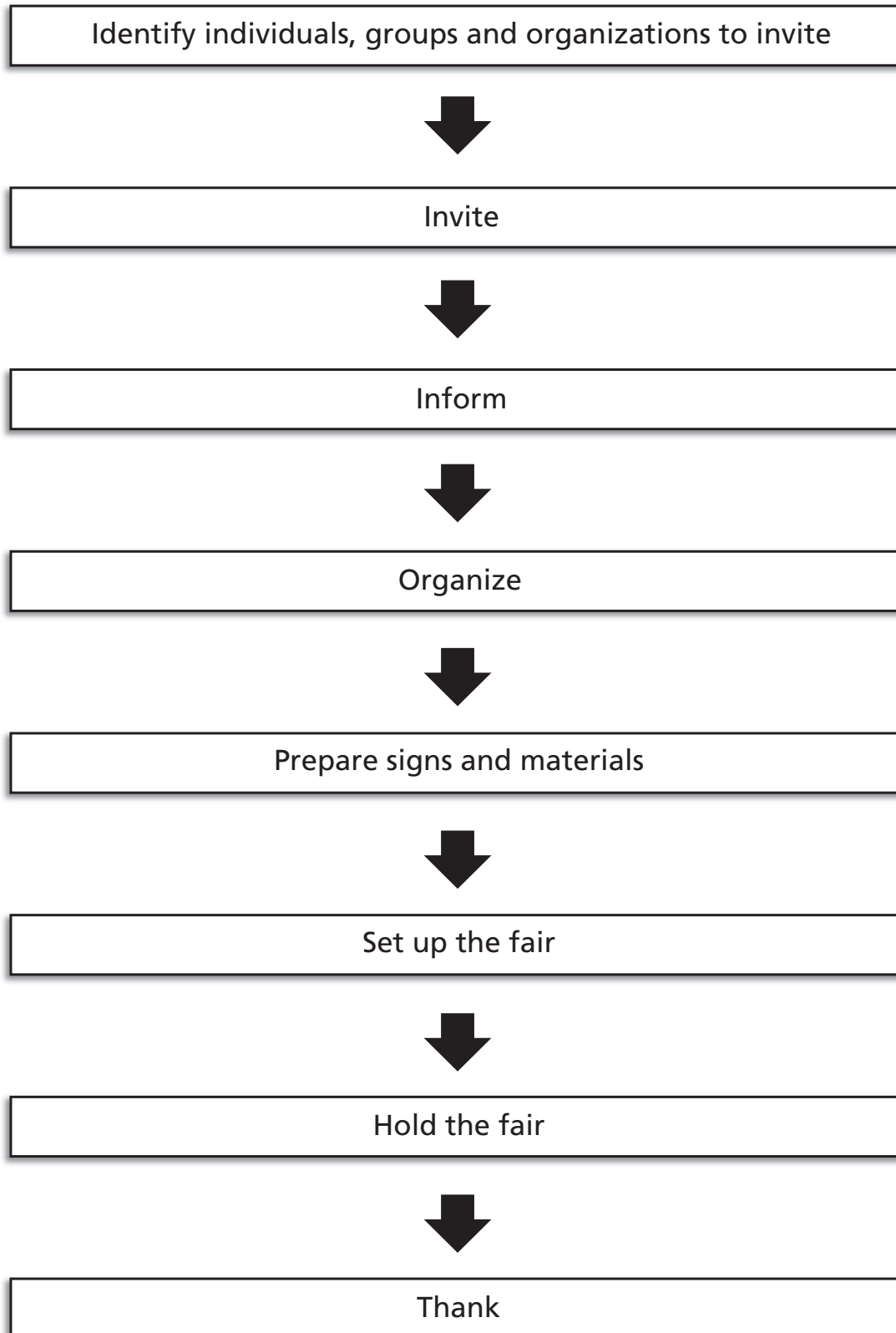
Place an "X" in the box beside the candidate you wish to vote for.

Candidate:

_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

Community Participation Fair

What do you need to do to plan for your Community Participation Fair? Follow the flow chart below to help you make a plan. Make your own flow chart with details and “to do’s.”



Make a Plan!

```
graph TD; A[ ] --> B[ ]; B --> C[ ]; C --> D[ ]; D --> E[ ]; E --> F[ ]; F --> G[ ]; G --> H[ ]
```




www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca
www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/edu_grade6.cfm