

5

MY MUNICIPALITY



Municipalities are responsible for meeting their communities' needs and fulfilling duties, such as managing the growth and well-being of the community. Municipalities represent the most local level of government in Canada.

In Ontario, there are 444 municipalities, each of which is often referred to as either a city, town, village, county, township or region. Every municipality has a specific geographic area and is responsible for delivering local services for the people living within its jurisdiction.

Municipalities receive their powers and areas of responsibilities from the provincial government, such as: public transit, social services, garbage and recycling, parks and recreation, water and sewage. They also have the ability to levy specific types of direct tax, such as property taxes.

Municipalities are classified as one of three types; single-tier, lower-tier or upper-tier. A **single-tier municipality** operates on its own, such as Toronto or Thunder Bay. Whereas an **upper-tier** municipality works together to serve the community with its **lower-tier municipalities**. For example, the Region of Peel is the upper-tier municipality for Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, which are all lower-tier municipalities. The Region of Peel handles specific responsibilities and coordinates area-wide services for all three municipalities, such as policing and waste removal.

Each lower-tier and single-tier municipality has an **elected council** composed of a **head of council (mayor or reeve)** and **council members** (councillors or aldermen). Employees of the municipality follow the direction set by the council in managing the municipality.

In the case of upper-tier municipalities, there are two types of councils: **county councils** and **regional councils**. The head of a county council is called a **warden**. The county council is composed of designated elected members from the lower-tier municipalities. The county council itself selects the warden from among its members.

The head of a regional council is called a **regional chair**. The chair is chosen by a vote of the members of regional council or they are directly elected. Other members of a regional council are selected in various ways. Some are elected directly by the voters to sit on regional council. Some are elected to sit on both the regional council and the lower-tier municipal council. In some municipalities, members of lower-tier municipal councils are appointed by their members to serve at the regional level. The head of council of a lower-tier municipality is automatically a member of the regional council.

Council members govern their municipality by listening to the concerns and ideas of their constituents (people living in their community), attending meetings, and creating, discussing, and voting on by-laws they believe will improve their municipality.

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GUIDING QUESTIONS

How do municipalities influence communities? What are some of the issues and challenges associated with balancing human needs/wants and environmental stewardship? How have people responded to the challenges and opportunities presented by the physical environment in your community? What actions would you take to improve your community?

OVERVIEW

Municipalities are responsible for meeting their communities' needs and fulfilling duties, such as delivering local services and managing the growth and well-being of the community.

As an introduction to the topic, students will discuss what they know about their municipality and reflect on what they like about it and what makes it unique. As a class, students review the features and services of municipalities in Ontario, and investigate specific information of their own city, town, village or township. Afterwards, students will complete one activity dedicated to either assessing environmental stewardship, developing a plan of action to improve their community or evaluating developments due to the physical environment. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on why it is important to take an active role in their community.

LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to:

- develop an understanding of the features and responsibilities of municipalities in Ontario and our own municipality (Citizenship Education Framework – Structures);
- engage in the inquiry process to formulate questions, and interpret and analyze issues and developments in our community (Global Competencies – Critical Thinking & Problem Solving);
- develop a plan of action and analyze ways to improve our municipality (Concepts of Thinking – Perspective);
- explain why it is important to be an active member of the community (Global Competencies - Citizenship).

SUCCESS CRITERIA

I CAN...

- describe the features and responsibilities of municipalities in Ontario;
- explain how my municipality impacts the community;
- analyze issues or developments in my community;
- develop an action plan to improve our municipality;
- explain why it is important to be an active member of the community.

CURRICULUM LINKS

JUNIOR GRADES

	Overall Expectations	Specific Expectations
Social Studies	<p>Grade 4 – B2. Inquiry: use the social studies inquiry process to investigate some issues and challenges associated with balancing human needs/wants and activities with environmental stewardship in one or more of the political and/or physical regions of Canada (FOCUS ON: <i>Perspective</i>)</p> <p>Grade 5 – B1. Application: assess responses of governments in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments, to some significant issues, and develop plans of action for governments and citizens to address social and environmental issues (FOCUS ON: <i>Interrelationships; Cause and Consequence</i>)</p>	<p>Grade 4 – B2.1 formulate questions to guide investigations into some of the issues and challenges associated with balancing human needs/wants and activities with environmental stewardship in one or more of the political and/or physical regions of Canada</p> <p>Grade 4 - B2.5 evaluate evidence and draw conclusions about issues and challenges associated with balancing human needs/wants and activities with environmental stewardship in Canada</p> <p>Grade 5 - B1.1 assess the effectiveness of actions taken by one or more levels of government, including Indigenous governments, to address an issue of national, provincial/territorial, and/or local significance</p> <p>Grade 5 - B1.2 create a plan of action to address a social issue of local, provincial/territorial, and/or national significance</p>
Writing	1. generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience	1.5 identify and order main ideas and supporting details and group them into units that could be used to develop several linked paragraphs

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INTERMEDIATE GRADES

	Overall Expectations	Specific Expectations
Geography	<p>Grade 7 - A1. Application: analyse some challenges and opportunities presented by the physical environment and ways in which people have responded to them (FOCUS ON: <i>Spatial Significance; Interrelationships</i>)</p> <p>Grade 8 - A1. Application: analyse some significant interrelationships between Earth's physical features and processes and human settlement patterns, and some ways in which the physical environment and issues of sustainability may affect settlement in the future (FOCUS ON: <i>Interrelationships</i>)</p>	<p>Grade 7 - A1.1 describe various ways in which people have responded to challenges and opportunities presented by the physical environment, and analyze short- and long-term effects of some of these responses</p> <p>Grade 7 - A1.2 compare and contrast the perspectives of some different groups (e.g., <i>Indigenous peoples living on the land, organic versus large-scale farmers, industrial and agrarian societies, owners of resource-extraction companies, environmental organizations, land developers</i>) on the challenges and opportunities presented by the natural environment</p> <p>Grade 8 - A1.3 describe possible features of a sustainable community in the future (e.g., <i>energy-efficient buildings, use of renewable sources of energy, a comprehensive public transportation system, community gardens, roof gardens, green canopy, naturalized parks with native species, programs for waste and water recycling</i>), and analyse some challenges associated with creating such a community (e.g., <i>cost, population growth, increasing urbanization, continued dependence on fossil fuels</i>)</p>
Writing	1. generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience	1.5 identify and order main ideas and supporting details and group them into units that could be used to develop a multi-paragraph piece of writing, using a variety of strategies
Reading	1. read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning	1.1 read a wide variety of increasingly complex or difficult texts from diverse cultures, including literary texts, graphic texts, and informational texts

MINDS ON

Ask students if they know the name of their city/town/village/township and invite them to share any background knowledge, as well as thoughts and opinions. Questions to prompt discussion:

- What do you love most about our community?
- What makes it unique or special?
- What makes it a good place to live?
- Why do people come to live here or visit?

ACTION

1. Use the 'Municipalities in Ontario' video (2:46 min) and accompanying slide deck to discuss the features, responsibilities and composition of municipalities in the province.

2. As a class and/or in groups, review the following information using your municipality's website and other local sources. Have students fill out Activity 5.1.

- What is our municipality type? Are we part of an upper-tier municipality? If so, which one?
- What are the geographic borders of our municipality?

- What are some major landforms in our municipality?
- What are some attractions or landmarks in our municipality?
- What are some services and programs provided by our municipality?
- What are some recent announcements by the municipality?

Suggested Activities (by grade level)

GRADE 4

- Review the concept of **environmental stewardship**. It refers to responsible use and the protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices.
- Remind students that municipalities must think about how to balance human needs and wants with the environmental stewardship of the community.
- Individually or in pairs, have students investigate an example in the community where human needs/wants may have presented a challenge to environmental stewardship. Have students fill out Activity 5.2 to guide their investigation and analysis.
- Give students time to share their work with their peers.

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GRADE 5

- Through a whole class discussion, pose the following questions to your students. Are you satisfied with your community? Can you identify any problems or issues? What actions would you take to make improvements?
- Using Activity 5.3, ask students to create a **plan of action** to address an issue in their community. Guiding questions:
 - What is the issue you want to address?
 - What factors are behind the issue?
 - What actions would you suggest? What is your proposal?
 - How could the municipality help? Could citizens play a role? If so, how?
 - Which members from the community would benefit and how?
- Have students present their plan of action through any format they choose – it could be an op-ed article, poem, poster, video, diorama or slide deck.

GRADE 7

- Review the major landforms and **physical landscapes** in your community.
- Ask students to select one landform or aspect of the physical environment in the municipality and analyze its impact on the community using a concept map. Guiding questions:
 - How have people responded to the challenges and opportunities presented by the physical environment in our community?
 - How have climate and landforms led to the development of certain industries in our community?
 - Who has benefited from this development? Who has not benefitted?
 - Are there various perspectives about this development? What are they? How do they differ?
- Give students time to share their work with their peers.

GRADE 8

- Review the concept of **sustainability**. Brainstorm a few examples as a class (e.g., energy-efficient buildings, use of renewable sources of energy, a comprehensive public transportation system, community gardens, roof gardens, green canopies, naturalized parks with native species, programs for waste and water recycling).
- In pairs or small groups, have students complete a plan of action for making the community more sustainable. This plan should include an assessment of the challenges that may develop as a result of the proposed changes and also look at who in the community would be impacted in a negative way.
- Have students present their plan of action through any format they choose – it could be a poster, diorama, map, slide deck or multi-media piece.

Alternative Activity:

Field trip - Community walk

What does a community need? What does your community/municipality have? Does your community have schools, a library, a grocery store, parks, houses, emergency services, transportation and businesses? Let's go find out!

Take the class out for a walk to discover what you can see in your neighbourhood. Prepare for the walk by looking at the list of municipal responsibilities and have students use Activity 5.4 to write down things they see on the walk that relate to these areas.

CONSOLIDATION

Have a brief closing discussion about your municipality or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions based on which activities were completed.

- Why do you think it is important for governments or municipalities to consult with members of the community? Explain your thinking with specific examples from the unit.
- Why is it important for community members to take an active role in their municipality?
- What are some personal actions you can take to improve your community? What would be the impact?

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- The unit is not necessarily meant to be covered entirely in one period. Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.

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ASSESSMENT

Type	Unit Area	Guiding Questions for Teachers
FOR LEARNING	MINDS ON	Can students explain what they like about their municipality? Can they think critically about what they would change?
AS LEARNING	ACTION	Are students asking questions about their municipality?
	Grade 4	Are students able to grasp the concept of environmental stewardship? Can they identify a decision or development where environmental stewardship may have been challenged?
	Grade 5	Can students identify an issue that needs attention in their community?
	Grade 7	Are students able to see connections between the physical and social aspects of the community?
	Grade 8	Are students able to envision a plan for improving sustainability in the community?
OF LEARNING	ACTION	Are students able to cite specific examples of the features in their municipality?
		Are students able to analyze the impacts and consequences of actions and developments in the community?
	CONSOLIDATION	Are students able to see the importance of the relationship between government and community members when making changes?
		Can students see the value of being an active and engaged community member?

LEARNING FOR ALL

Individual Education Plans	Modifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written work can be presented orally. Guide students and provide extra time when working with primary source documents. Use ability grouping to support students. Enrichment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to bring their plans of action to their local municipal councils or write to their local newspaper.
English Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow students to explore home communities as well as the community in which they now live.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending upon the community, students could choose to focus on a particular ethnic or religious group and research how they have contributed to developments or improvements in the community. Encourage intermediate students to notice patterns and trends of immigration and the growth of particular groups in their communities. Indigenous Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage all students to explore neighbouring Indigenous communities and the issue they face.