
APPENDIX B

**Tools and Strategies for Learning about
Municipal Government**

Alberta Municipal Affairs

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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 http://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 <http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/cfml/profiles/index.cfm>.

The Alberta First website, at <http://www.albertafirst.com/profiles/>, 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 http://www.menet.ab.ca/browse_categories.asp. A specific search link is found at http://www.menet.ab.ca/search_practice.asp.

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 <http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/cfml/profiles/index.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 http://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 http://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 http://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 http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/ms_elected_official_inf.htm; provides information on election processes for candidates.

The Alberta Leaders Candidate Information website, found at <http://www.albertaleaders.ca/know/index.htm>, 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: _____

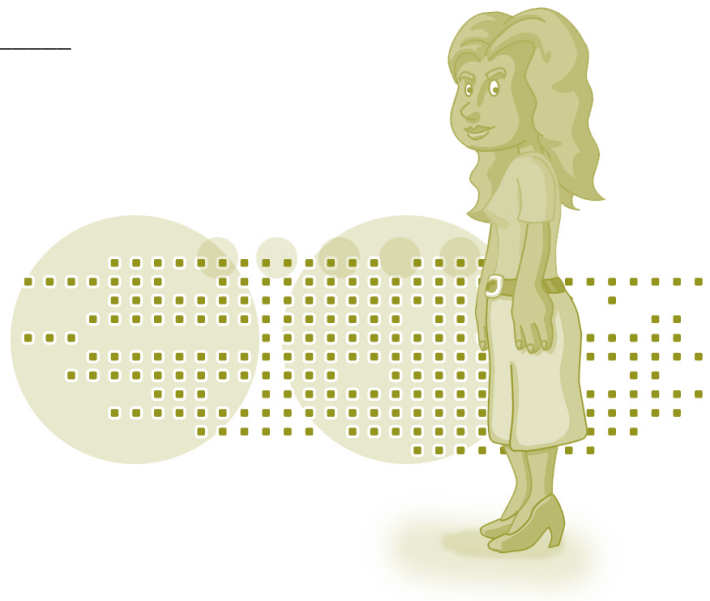
Signature: _____ Print Name: _____

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:

BALLOT

Place an "X" in the box beside the candidate you wish to vote for.

Candidate:

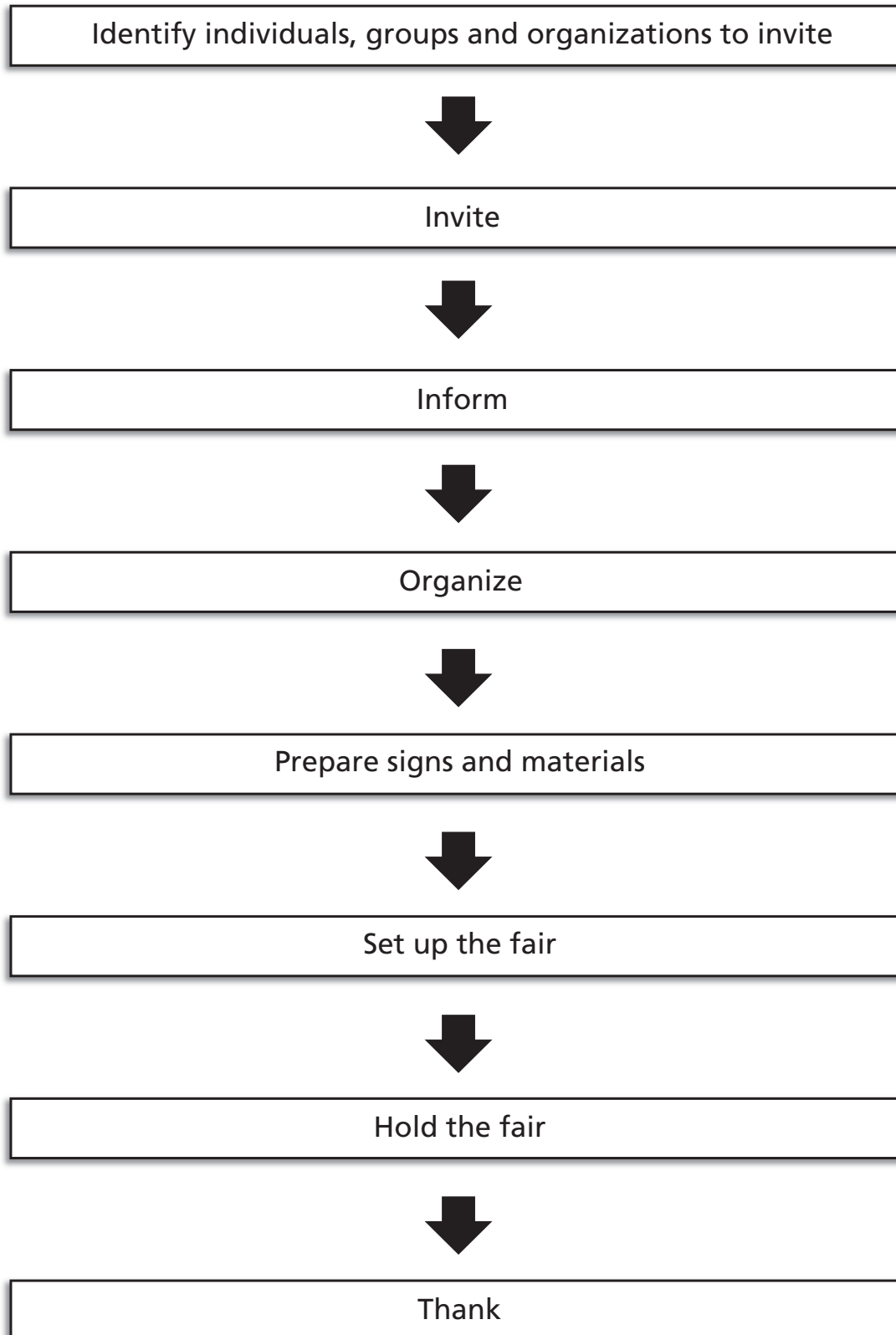
BALLOT

Place an "X" in the box beside the candidate you wish to vote for.

Candidate:

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!

