

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



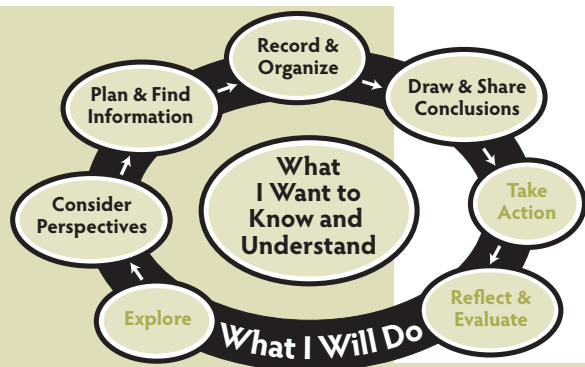
THINK ABOUT

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.S.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.S.5.1, 6.S.5.2, 6.S.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/cfml/profiles/index.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.statcan.ca/english/edu/students.htm. 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, have them discuss and compare the results.



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.

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.

- 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.*)



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.



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/cfml/profiles/index.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

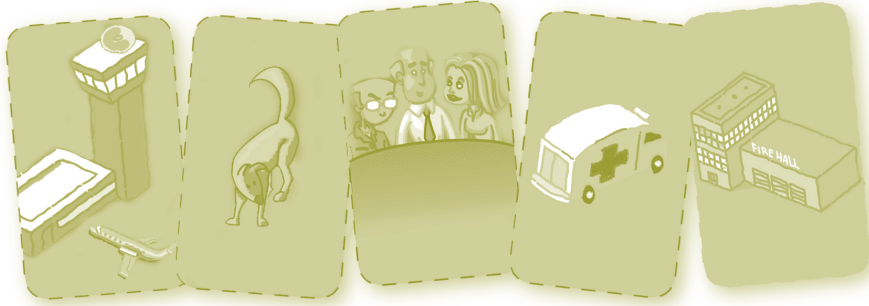
To introduce the research task to students who may need more concrete examples, have students discuss or list the types of responsibilities that are involved in the school or classroom. Discuss the specific responsibilities associated with different roles and jobs in the classroom or school.

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 <http://www.virtualedmonton.com>. The City of Calgary can be visited at <http://www.calgary.ca>. 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

1 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.

2 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.

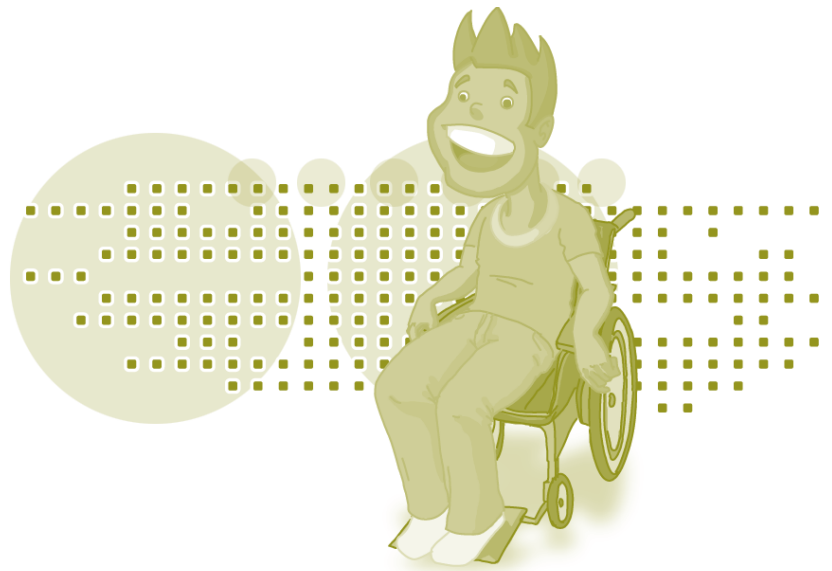


The Task

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?

<p>Who lives in our community and municipality? What is the current population of our municipality?</p>	
<p>Has the population changed recently? How has it changed? Why has it changed?</p>	
<p>What issues or challenges are we facing because of an increasing or decreasing population?</p>	
<p>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?</p>	
<p>In what ways do community members volunteer? Is volunteerism thriving, growing or declining?</p>	
<p>Does our community advertise or promote its social programs and services? How?</p>	
<p>What facilities and services are available for health care in our community? In our municipality?</p>	
<p>What else do you think is important to know and understand about our community and municipality?</p>	

Environmental

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

What important environmental features do we have in our community?
In our municipality?

How do activities in our community and municipality affect the environment?

What environmental programs and services do we have in our community and municipality? *(Look for evidence of programs such as recycling, water quality or conservation, night time lighting rules and protected areas.)*

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?

What is happening outside our community that may affect our environment?

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

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?

<p>How many citizens serve on our municipal council? Is there usually more than one candidate running for elections?</p>	
<p>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></p>	
<p>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></p>	
<p>In what ways can people communicate with the council? Is the council accessible? Is the municipal office easy to find and use?</p>	
<p>What kind of partnerships does our municipality have with other municipalities or organizations?</p>	
<p>What else do you think is important to know and understand about our community and municipality?</p>	

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



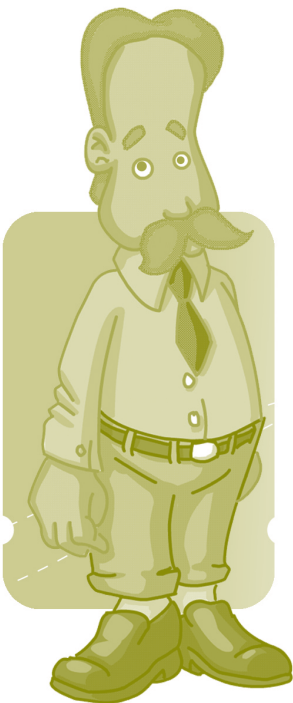
What do you think the municipal government is responsible for in your municipality? Pick what you think are the five most important services or facilities in your municipality. Fill out the chart for each.

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?

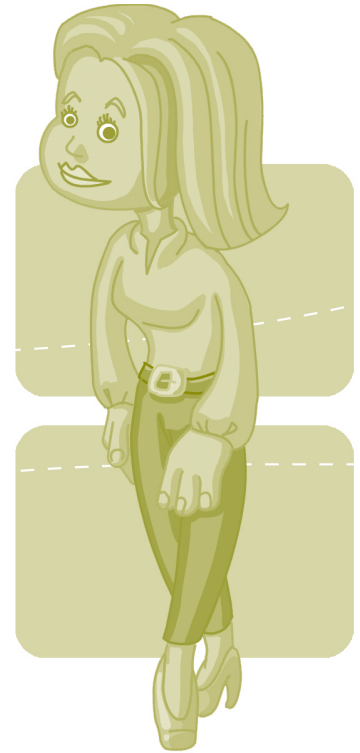
	Advantages	Disadvantages
Appointing		
Electing		

Councillor

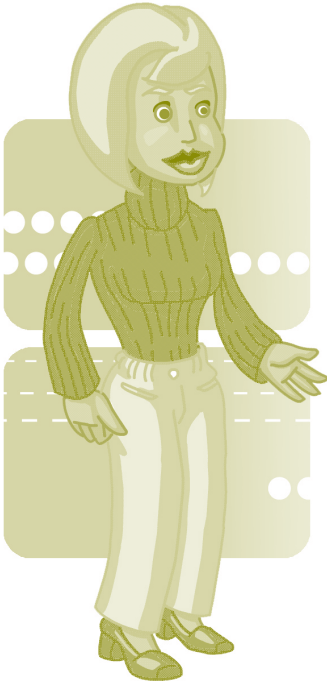
Councillors are elected by citizens who are eligible to vote. The eligible voters are called **electors**. Councillors can be elected **at-large**, which means they are elected by all eligible voters in the municipality. Or they can be elected in a ward by the electors in that ward. A councillor has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

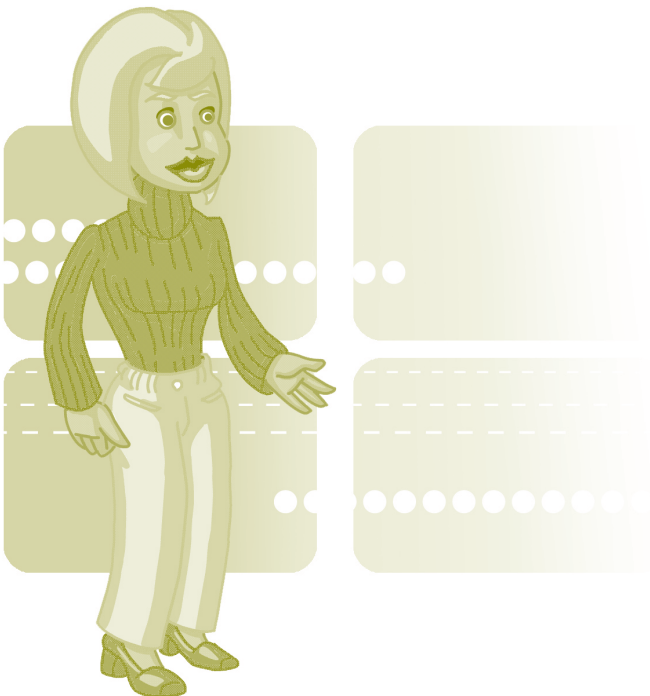
Dear Student Interns,

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



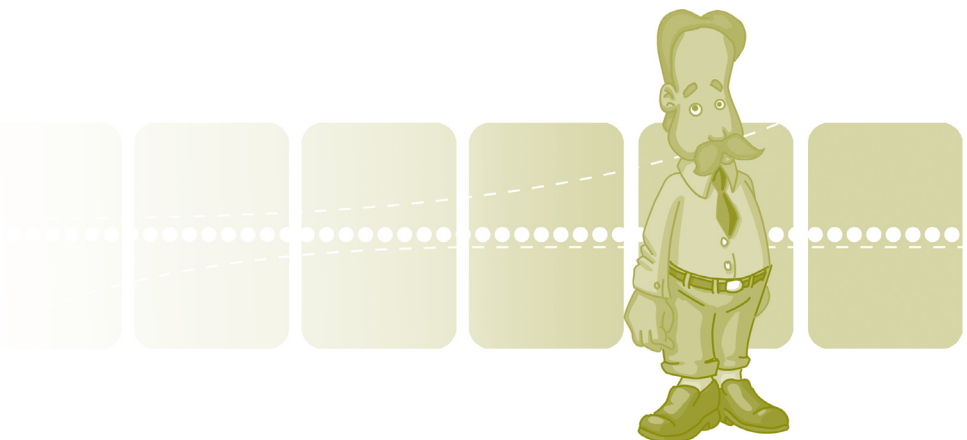
The council of a municipality has to consider information carefully before it makes decisions. Before the council decides whether to build or provide facilities and services, it has to think about the **costs** and the **benefits**.

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 BACKGROUNDER

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.

NOTES

- 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.

Chief Administrative Officer

Every council must establish, by bylaw, a position of Chief Administrative Officer. The council may give the position an appropriate title, such as Town Manager or Administrator. The Chief Administrative Officer is the administrative head of the municipality. The Chief Administrative Officer’s responsibilities include ensuring that the municipality’s policies and programs are implemented, advising and informing the council on the operation of the municipality, performing other duties assigned by the council and ensuring appropriate staffing is in place. All other employees and staff of the municipality are the responsibility of the Chief Administrative Officer, unless otherwise provided by bylaw.

The Chief Administrative Officer:

- Is the administrative head of the municipality
• Ensures that the policies and programs of the municipality are implemented
• Advises and informs the council on the operation and affairs of the municipality
• Performs the duties and exercises the powers and functions assigned to a Chief Administrative Officer by the Municipal Government Act and other enactments or by the council.

The Municipal Organizations and Administration

A vital part of the smooth operation of municipal government is the interaction between the council and the administration. The principal role of council is to develop, evaluate and set the policies and programs of the municipality. The Chief Administrative Officer’s responsibility is to ensure that the policies and programs set by council for the municipality are implemented. The administration exists to take care of the everyday work of running a municipal government. This includes providing a variety of programs and services, based on the priorities that the council has set for the municipality. Residents may ask councillors for information on the municipality’s programs and services. These requests are generally the responsibility of the Chief Administrative Officer. The councillors often work closely with the Chief Administrative Officer to respond to residents’ requests.

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Lined area for taking notes.



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.

Public Works

In most municipalities, public works include:

- Construction, repair and rehabilitation of roads, streets, sidewalks, bridges and culverts
- Provision and maintenance of lighting, including street and traffic lights
- Snow removal
- Management of storm water (i.e., rain)
- Equipment acquisition, management, maintenance and replacement
- Public transit, including transportation for seniors and people with disabilities, and the use and maintenance of buses, along with scheduling and developing service routes
- Engineering design and standards
- Traffic control device placement.

Public works accounts for a significant proportion of budget expenditures in all municipalities and is often the largest budgetary item in rural municipalities. Since this functional area represents a large proportion of the budget, it requires a significant concentration of staff, equipment and materials and sometimes attracts the most attention from council members and the general public. As a result, the administration needs to ensure that policies and procedures pertaining to services, staff and equipment meet the needs of both the council and the community.

A function of public works involves responding to inquiries and complaints from the public about maintenance of public spaces. To be effective, municipalities develop appropriate processes that manage these public concerns. Policies and programs should address the need for quick and effective responses to citizen complaints.

Utility Services

Most municipalities provide some type of utility service. The most common utilities provided by municipalities are water, wastewater and solid waste management. In addition, a few municipalities operate electricity and gas distribution systems. In Alberta, urban municipalities have been responsible for providing water and wastewater services to residents for more than 100 years. In recent years, rural areas have experienced significant population growth. As they have grown, rural municipalities have also assumed responsibility for providing water and wastewater services for some of their hamlets, country residential subdivisions and sometimes for other areas.

Some municipalities have established some of their utilities as separate companies. This may mitigate liability that a municipality may have in operating a utility. The company is a separate accounting entity established within the municipality. It is self-financing, with its own revenues,

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THINK ABOUT

Roads are usually the largest expenditure in rural municipalities. Utilities are usually the largest expenditure in urban municipalities. All or some utilities can be provided through contracts.

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expenditures, assets and liabilities. By forming a separate company, municipalities are able to keep track of the costs and revenues of their utilities.

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.

Some municipalities partner with a larger group of municipalities to create a regional service commission to provide services. This is most common for services such as water, wastewater and garbage.

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.

Municipalities are responsible for ensuring the water they supply to their residents is safe. Health-related standards have always been important in managing water systems, but these standards have come under greater scrutiny in the wake of events in Walkerton, Ontario, and North Battleford, Saskatchewan.

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.

Recently, the Alberta government introduced a new water management approach called *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*. The draft strategy outlines key directions, specific strategies, and actions to manage Alberta's water resources more effectively. Details of this strategy can be found at: www.waterforlife.gov.ab.ca.

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.

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Protective Services

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
- Bylaw enforcement
- Fire
- Ambulance
- Emergency and disaster preparedness.

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.

Bylaw enforcement officers enforce the bylaws of the municipality while peace officers and police enforce provincial and federal laws. Bylaw officers and peace officers may also assist local police in different ways. These officers may also work in cooperation with the municipal police force for such initiatives as check stops and school education programs.

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.

Fire protection can be supplied by the municipality’s own fire department. However, some municipalities contract fire service from neighbouring municipalities. Some partner to provide support and mutual aid to one another when called on. Fire departments may be staffed by volunteers, professional firefighters or a combination of both.

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

Municipalities play a major role in providing and supporting recreational and cultural activities at the community level. Municipalities build and maintain sporting facilities, such as:

- Ball fields
- Soccer pitches
- Outdoor and indoor swimming pools
- Arenas
- Parks, playgrounds and trails.

Municipalities also construct cultural facilities, including:

- Libraries
- Community halls
- Museums
- Performing arts centres.

Many municipalities support the provision of cultural events through grants and organizational assistance.



THINK ABOUT

Disasters and emergencies often affect regions or areas that may include more than one municipality. It is important to be able to coordinate response across municipal boundaries.

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Sport and culture programs only become a municipal responsibility when the community agrees that they should be. Municipalities are not required to provide these services. Municipal councils usually attempt to meet community expectations in this regard by balancing the need for programs and facilities with the ability to raise revenues to pay the costs. In addition to providing facilities and programs, municipalities may support community leaders and volunteers so that programs can be delivered from within the community with reduced costs to the municipality.

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.

The provincial government also supports training and program development. It offers programs in the areas of youth and volunteer development, libraries, sports and recreation, museums, historical sites and heritage resource management. With all the possible demands on a municipal council to provide services, programs and facilities, municipal leaders are challenged to balance the municipal budget with the needs of the community.

Family and Community Support Services

Provincial government social programs respond to the social service needs of residents within Alberta, but not all social service needs can be met through direct provincial government programs. Since 1966, the provincial government, municipalities and Métis Settlements have jointly funded the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program. FCSS projects and services offer a range of support for people of all ages.

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.

The ways that FCSS programs are developed and offered depends on community needs and resources, and often involves volunteers in the management and the delivery of the programs. There is a strong emphasis on partnerships as being fundamental to community building, and on the belief that a community's most valuable resources are its people. Each

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.

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