

# Lesson 5

## My Municipality



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do we have municipalities?**
- 2 How has the physical environment shaped my community?**
- 3 What actions can be taken to improve my community and why?**

### OVERVIEW

Municipalities provide essential local services and are responsible for the planning, growth and well-being of their community through the adoption of by-laws and policies.

In this lesson, students review the composition and function of municipalities in Ontario, and gather information about their own city, town, village or township. Afterwards, students complete one activity dedicated to either assessing environmental stewardship, developing a plan of action to improve their community or evaluating developments due to the physical environment (grade dependent). In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on classmates' work/projects and the importance of being an active member in the community.

### LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to:

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

### SUCCESS CRITERIA

I can...

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

## Curriculum Links

### GRADE 4 SOCIAL STUDIES

**B2. Inquiry:** use the social studies inquiry process to investigate some issues and challenges associated with balancing human needs/wants and activities with environmental stewardship in one or more of the political and/or physical regions of Canada (FOCUS ON: Perspective)

**B2.1** formulate questions to guide investigations into some of the issues and challenges associated with balancing human needs/wants and activities with environmental stewardship in one or more of the political and/or physical regions of Canada

**B2.5** evaluate evidence and draw conclusions about issues and challenges associated with balancing human needs/wants and activities with environmental stewardship in Canada

### GRADE 5 SOCIAL STUDIES

**B1. Application:** assess responses of governments in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments, to some significant issues, and develop plans of action for governments and citizens to address social and environmental issues (FOCUS ON: Interrelationships; Cause and Consequence)

**B1.1** assess the effectiveness of actions taken by one or more levels of government, including Indigenous governments, to address an issue of national, provincial/territorial, and/or local significance

**B1.2** create a plan of action to address a social issue of local, provincial/territorial, and/or national significance

### GRADE 7 GEOGRAPHY

**A1. Application:** analyse some challenges and opportunities presented by the physical environment and ways in which people have responded to them (FOCUS ON: Spatial Significance; Interrelationships)

**A1.1** describe various ways in which people have responded to challenges and opportunities presented by the physical environment, and analyze short- and long-term effects of some of these responses

**A1.2** compare and contrast the perspectives of some different groups (e.g., *Indigenous peoples living on the land, organic versus large-scale farmers, industrial and agrarian societies, owners of resource-extraction companies, environmental organizations, land developers*) on the challenges and opportunities presented by the natural environment

### GRADE 8 GEOGRAPHY

**A1. Application:** analyse some significant interrelationships between Earth's physical features and processes and human settlement patterns, and some ways in which the physical environment and issues of sustainability may affect settlement in the future (FOCUS ON: Interrelationships)

**A1.3** describe possible features of a sustainable community in the future (e.g., *energy-efficient buildings, use of renewable sources of energy, a comprehensive public transportation system, community gardens, roof gardens, green canopy, naturalized parks with native species, programs for waste and water recycling*), and analyse some challenges associated with creating such a community (e.g., *cost, population growth, increasing urbanization, continued dependence on fossil fuels*)

### Tips for Teachers

- Please use or adapt the activities in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- Choose a main activity based on your grade or class interests.

### Supplies/Needs

- "Municipalities in Ontario" video
- Slide Deck 5
- Access or copies of 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 or 5.4
- Any videos, slide decks, handouts and activity sheets in Word and Google Doc can be found on the project website

### Starter

Using a Think-Ink-Pair-Share protocol, invite students to come up with three things they like about their community.

Questions to prompt discussion:

- What makes it special? What makes it different from other places?
- What makes it a good place to live?
- Why do people come to live here or visit?

Give students four minutes to brainstorm and jot down a response, four minutes to share with a partner and then have each pair share with the rest of the class.

## Activities

1. Use the “Municipalities in Ontario” video (2:46 min) and Slide Deck 5 to review the function of municipalities in the province.
2. As a class and/or in pairs, review the following information using your municipality’s website and other local sources. Have students fill out Activity 5.1.

Key details:

- Municipality type (city, town, village, township)
  - Upper tier municipality (if applicable)
  - Geographic borders and landforms
  - Attractions and landmarks
  - Services and programs
  - Recent announcements/programs
3. Select an activity below based on your grade level or interests.

### GRADE 4

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

### GRADE 5

- Divide students into small groups to discuss community issues and solutions. Questions to prompt discussion:
  - Can you identify any problems in the community?
  - What actions would you take to make improvements or create positive change?
- Using Activity 5.3, ask students to create a plan of action to address an issue in the community. Guiding questions:
  - What is the issue you want to address?
  - What factors are behind the issue?
  - What actions would you suggest? What is your proposal?
  - How could the municipality help? How could citizens play a role?
  - Which members from the community would benefit and how?
  - Have students present their action plan through any format they choose – it could be an op-ed article, poster, video, diorama or slide deck.

### GRADE 7

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

### GRADE 8

- Review the concept of **sustainability**. Brainstorm a few examples as a class (e.g., energy-efficient buildings, use of renewable sources of energy, a comprehensive public transportation system, community gardens, roof gardens, green canopies, naturalized parks with native species, programs for waste and water recycling).
- In pairs or small groups, have students complete a plan of action for making the community more sustainable (Activity 5.3). This plan should include an assessment of the challenges that may develop as a result of the proposed changes and also look at who in the community would be impacted in a negative way.
- Have students present their plan of action through any format they choose – it could be a poster, diorama, map, slide deck or multi-media piece.

## Consolidation

Have students reflect on the work/proposals by their classmates. Either have a class discussion or ask students to write a response to one or more of the following prompts.

- I liked \_\_\_\_\_'s idea or example. It helped me realize...
- It is important to be an active community member because...
- One way I can be an active community member is...

## Alternative Activity

*Field trip – Community walk*

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

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

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

| LESSON SECTION       | GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS  |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Starter</b>       | <p>Can students explain what they like about their community?</p> <p>Can students think critically about what makes their community unique?</p>   |
| <b>Activities</b>    | <p>Are students asking questions about their municipality?</p> <p>Can students analyze how the physical environment in their community influences jobs and way of life?</p> <p>Can students make connections between their community and their own lives?</p> <p>Can students analyze the struggle between needs/wants and environmental stewardship?</p> <p>Can students identify any challenges or opportunities for change in their community?</p> <p>Can they analyze different actions that can be taken to make a positive change in their community or improve sustainability?</p> <p>Can students analyze who would be impacted by these changes and how?</p> |
| <b>Consolidation</b> | <p>Can students evaluate their classmates' work/proposals and provide reasoning?</p> <p>Can students understand why it is important for community members to take an active role in their community and/or how they can?</p>  |

## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Individual Education Plans</b>         | <p><b>Modifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written work can be presented orally.</li> <li>• Guide students and provide extra time when working with primary and secondary resources.</li> <li>• Use ability grouping to support students.</li> </ul> <p><b>Enrichment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge students by asking them to take on a more detailed action plan project, such as a diorama or extensive slide presentation.</li> <li>• Students could also explore the demographics of the community to draw deeper conclusions about industry and daily life, and compare it to another municipality in the province.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Language Learners</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow students to explore home communities as well as the community in which they now live.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on the community, students could choose to focus on a particular ethnic or religious group and see how they fit into the larger community.</li> <li>• Focus municipal government research on programs and services for children and youth in the community.</li> <li>• If applicable, encourage students to explore nearby Indigenous communities, and their changes over time, or how these communities fit into the larger community.</li> <li>• Analyze how Indigenous perspectives on land use have influenced the idea of sustainability.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Accessibility &amp; Accommodations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If working in pairs or small groups is not possible, considering using Google Docs for collaborative discussion/brainstorming.</li> <li>• The artwork/media for the action plan can be created and shared in a digital format.</li> </ul>  |

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

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

There are 444 municipalities in Ontario. Municipalities range in size and are referred to as either a city, town, village, county, township or region. Every municipality has a specific geographic area and is responsible for delivering local services for the people living within its jurisdiction.

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

Municipalities are classified as one of three types: single-tier, lower-tier or upper-tier. A **single-tier municipality** operates on its own,

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

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

In the case of upper-tier municipalities, there are two types of councils: **county councils** and **regional councils**.

The county council is composed of designated elected members from the lower-tier municipalities. The head of a county council is called a **warden**. The county council itself selects the warden from among its members.

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

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