Lesson 5
Municipalities

❶ How do municipalities influence their communities?

❷ What actions can be taken to improve my community?

❸ Why it is important for people to engage in civic action?

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 begin with an evaluation of their community and exchange of perspectives. After learning about municipalities, students complete an online scavenger hunt to learn about their their own city, town, village or township. Next, students work in groups to develop a detailed action plan to improve an issue in their community or analyze a recent by-law. In the Consolidation activity, students reflect on why they should care about their community and work with others to create positive change.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- develop an understanding of the structure and function of municipalities (Citizenship Education Framework – Structures);
- use the inquiry process to formulate questions, interpret, synthesize and critically analyze information about their municipality;
- propose and evaluate actions to improve their community (Concepts of Thinking – Political Significance);
- demonstrate positive attitudes towards civic engagement (Citizenship Education Framework – Attributes).

SUCCESS CRITERIA

I can...

- analyze my community's strengths and weaknesses;
- explain the structure and function of municipalities;
- propose and analyze different actions that could be taken to address an issue and improve my community;
- evaluate the importance of being an active and engaged community member.

Curriculum Links

CIVICS – CHV2O

A1. Political Inquiry: use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when investigating issues, events, and developments of civic importance (A1.1, A1.2, A1.4, A.5)

A2. Developing Transferable Skills: apply in everyday contexts skills developed through investigations related to civics and citizenship education, and identify some careers in which civics and citizenship education might be an asset (A2.1, A2.2, A2.3, A2.4)

B1. Civic Issues, Democratic Values: describe beliefs and values associated with democratic citizenship in Canada, and explain how they are related to civic action and to one's position on civic issues (B1.4)

C1. Civic Contributions, Inclusion, and Service: analyse the importance of various contributions to the common good, and assess the recognition of beliefs, values, and perspectives, in communities in Canada and internationally (C1.2)

C2. Engaged Citizenship and Creating Change through Action: analyse a civic issue of personal interest, and propose and assess methods of creating positive change in their community (C2.2)

POLITICS – CPC3O

A1. Political Inquiry: use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when investigating issues of political importance in various communities and ways to address them (A1.1, A1.2, A1.4, A.5)

A2. Developing Transferable Skills: apply in everyday contexts skills developed through investigations related to politics, and identify some careers in which a background in political studies might be an asset (A2.1, A2.2, A2.3, A2.4)

C3. Political Change in Democratic Societies: demonstrate an understanding of factors that facilitate and present challenges to democratic political change (C3.3)

D1. Investigating an Issue: identify and analyse a political issue, with the goal of developing a personal plan of action to address this issue (D1.1, D1.2)

D2. Developing a Plan of Action: identify a goal associated with the selected issue and construct an action plan to achieve that goal (D2.1, D2.2, D2.3)

D3. Considering Outcomes: analyse and reflect on possible outcome(s) of their plan (D3.1)

HISTORY – CHC2P/CHC2D

A1. Historical Inquiry: use the historical inquiry process and the concepts of historical thinking when investigating aspects of Canadian history since 1914 (A1.2, A1.6, A1.7, A1.9)

A2. Developing Transferable Skills: apply in everyday contexts skills developed through historical investigation, and identify some careers in which these skills might be useful (A2.2, A2.3)

FNMI STUDIES – NAC2O

A1. Historical Inquiry: use the historical inquiry process and the concepts of historical thinking when investigating aspects of the history of Indigenous peoples within the boundaries of contemporary Canada from precontact to the present day (A1.8, A1.9)

A2. Developing Transferable Skills: apply in everyday contexts skills developed through historical investigation, and identify some careers in which these skills might be useful (A2.1, A2.2, A2.3)

Starter

1. Ask students to evaluate their community by responding to the statements on Activity 5.1. Alternatively, the data could be collected through an online survey. A template in Google Forms and MS Forms is available on the project website. You can 'create a copy' for your class.

   > **TEACHER NOTE**
   > Consider having both students and their families fill out the online survey in order to analyze findings from the wider community.

2. Divide students into small groups and have them discuss their community's strengths and weaknesses and the reasons behind their choices.

3. Analyze the community evaluation scores as a whole class. Questions to prompt discussion:

   - What was the overall evaluation of our community?
   - Was there consensus about our community's main strengths and weaknesses? Why or why not?
   - How did your discussion with classmates influence your views about the community? (Sample prompt: "I liked hearing _____'s perspective about why _____. It was something that I didn't know about or haven't considered before.)

Activities

1. Use the "Municipalities in Ontario" video and Slide Deck 5 to review basic information about municipalities in Ontario.

   Key questions:

   - What are the features and responsibilities of municipalities?
   - How do municipal councils function?
   - How do municipalities influence their communities?

2. Ask students to complete an online scavenger hunt about their municipality (Activity 5.2). Give students time to complete it independently or in pairs and then share their responses in small groups, allowing students to add to or update their own document.

   - Year of incorporation
   - Population and census data (Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2021)
   - Geographic boundaries and two major landforms or waterways within it
   - Composition of the municipal council (numbers of positions and titles)
   - Description of four services provided to the community
   - Summary of three recent announcements or new programs offered and who is impacted in the community
   - Additional: Photo evidence of neighbourhood attractions, cultural institutions and activities (four pieces)

3. Divide students into pairs or small groups and have them discuss their views about the most important needs and opportunities in their community. Students should reflect on the findings in the *Starter* activity and from their research about their municipality.

   Questions to prompt student thinking:

   - What do you think are the most pressing needs in our community?
   - Do you see any opportunities for improvement or innovation?
   - How could the health of our community be improved?

4. Ask each group to reach a consensus about one issue they want to address through a detailed plan of action. Using Activity 5.3 as a guide, each group should conduct research, design their plan and analyze the possible outcomes. Students should use primary and secondary resources, such as the municipality's website, research studies and media sources.

5. Allow each group to present its plan to the rest of the class.

Consolidation

Through a closing class discussion, have students respond to one or more of the following questions:

- Why is it important for people to engage in civic action?
- Why is it important to collaborate with others when addressing community needs?
- Why is it important to have diversity in government and within groups tackling change in our communities?

Alternative Activity

1. By-laws are the primary legislative instrument of municipalities. Municipal councils make decisions by adopting or amending recommendations from its committees and other government officials contained in reports and communications. Ask students to research a recent by-law passed by their municipal council and complete Activity 5.4. Exemplar 5.5 can be used as a guide.

   Key questions:

   - **Details:** What are the details of the by-law?
   - **Conditions:** What are the underlying conditions?
   - **Objectives:** What are the goals and objectives?
   - **Results:** How can progress be evaluated?
   - **Analysis:** Do you think the by-law will be effective? Why or why not?

2. In small groups or through a whole class discussion, have students share their by-law research and analysis.

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Language Learners	• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance (e.g., municipalities, single-tier municipality, upper-tier municipality, lower-tier municipality, elected council, mayor/reeve, councillor/alderman, county council, warden, regional council, regional chair). • Allow students to research home communities as well as the community in which they now live.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	• Students may have different feelings towards their community. Encourage empathy and foster a safe place for respectful discussion. • 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. • Focus research on programs and services for youth or relevant other groups in the community. • If applicable, encourage students to explore nearby Indigenous communities, and their changes over time, or how these communities fit into the larger community.
Accommodations	• If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative activities and discussion. • The community plan of action presentation can be created and shared in an entirely digital format, using PowerPoint or Google Slides.

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 responsibility 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 the 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.