

Lesson 2: My Municipality

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How do municipalities contribute to the functioning of communities?
- How has the physical environment shaped my community?
- What actions can be taken to improve my community?

OVERVIEW

Municipalities, also known as municipal governments, 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 structure and function of municipalities in Ontario and gather information about their city, town, village or township. Students work independently or collaboratively through a self-directed project to create an action plan to improve their community. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on why it is important to take an active role in their community.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- Describe the features and responsibilities of municipalities;
- Analyze how the physical environment has shaped life and work in our community;
- Describe how our municipality impacts our lives;
- Develop an action plan to improve our municipality and analyze the possible outcomes;
- Explain why it is important to be an active member of the community

STARTER

Using a *Think-Ink-Pair-Share* protocol, invite students to come up with three things they like about their community/neighbourhood. Questions to prompt discussion:

- What makes it unique? 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.

ESSENTIAL LEARNING

1. Watch the '[Municipalities in Ontario](#)' (2:46 min) video and/or review Slide Deck 2 as a class.

- Municipalities are responsible for meeting their constituents' needs and managing the growth and well-being of the community.
- A municipal council manages municipalities.
- Ontario has 444 municipalities, which may be called cities, towns, villages, counties, townships, or regions.
- Every municipality has a specific geographic area and is responsible for delivering local services for the people 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.
- Municipalities may work with other community partners to address complex issues such as homelessness, food security and poverty reduction.
- Municipalities also can charge types of direct tax, such as property taxes.

2. Ask students to investigate their municipality using the municipality's website and other sources. Then, have students complete Activity 2.1 independently or in pairs.

- What are the geographic boundaries of our municipality?
- What are some landforms and waterways in our municipality? (ie. mountains, valleys, hills, plateaus, plains, rivers, lakes)
- How does the physical environment impact where and how people live? How does it influence jobs and businesses?
- What is the composition of our municipal council? (Number of positions, roles/titles)
- What are some recent announcements by our municipality?

ACTIVITIES

1. Pose one or more of the following questions to your students through a whole class discussion.

- Can you identify any problems or challenges in our community?
- Do you see any opportunities for improvement or innovation?
- What actions could be taken to make a positive change in our community?
- How can we share and protect our community's natural resources and create a more sustainable community?

2. Using Activity 2.2, ask students to create an action plan to make a positive change or improve sustainability in the community. This can be completed independently, in pairs or in small groups. Guiding questions:

- What is the issue you would like to focus on?
- What are the underlying factors or causes related to the issue?
- What actions would you suggest and why?
- How could the municipality help? How could community members play a role?
- Which members of the community would benefit from the plan and how?
- Could some members of the community be impacted negatively? If so, how?

5. Have students present their action plan through any format they choose – it could be an op-ed article, poem, poster, video, slide deck or diorama.

CONSOLIDATION

Have a brief closing discussion about your municipality or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions:

- Why do you think it is essential for municipalities to involve community members in planning, decisions or projects? Explain your thinking with specific examples from the lesson.
- Why is it important for community members to actively participate in their municipality?

EXTENDED/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 3.3 to write down things they see on the walk that relate to these areas.

This pilot program was developed through a partnership between CIVIX and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). The mandate of AMO is to support and enhance strong and effective municipal government in Ontario. It promotes the value of the municipal government as a vital and essential component of Ontario and Canada's political system. Through AMO, Ontario's 444 municipalities work together to achieve shared goals and meet common challenges.

As this is a pilot program, if you have feedback on how CIVIX and AMO could improve these resources, please contact: hello@civix.ca