

Resources for Learning about Municipal Government

Community Scan



Current activities and issues in your municipality

Instructor Notes:

The purpose of this activity is to help students become more aware of the issues, concerns, activities, and priorities of their local municipal council by conducting an ongoing scan of council happenings. Students may learn to identify trends, current priorities, decision-making processes, and differing views on issues in the community. Municipal councils generally meet bi-weekly or monthly, with other committee meetings occurring at various times during a month. As such, the municipality website and/or local media is likely to provide ongoing new information or updates about council's activities in the community.

Activity:

Have groups of students take responsibility for keeping the classroom informed about opportunities, challenges, issues and decisions that the municipality is involved with on a regular basis over a specified time period.

In the News: What has the local media reported about council's activities?

- Encourage students to check local or online newspapers, newsletters.

In Council Chambers: What have council members been discussing in council meetings?

- Encourage students to look for examples of bylaws that have recently been passed or decisions the council is considering. Students may obtain some of this information from local news or by checking the municipality's website for Council meeting minutes.

In the Municipality: What are events or news that we think council members should be aware of?

- Encourage students to identify school, community, provincial or national events that have an impact on quality of life in the municipality. For example, a national issue such as school safety may be something that students are concerned about in a local context. A school or community celebration may be an event that students would like council members to know about.

Materials:

Access to local newspapers, municipality websites, information on community events (e.g. open house, community information session).

Focus Questions:

- What issues appear to be high priority for the Council at this time?
- Are there any major projects being considered by the Council (e.g. building a new swimming pool, repaving the main street)? What stage are these projects at (e.g. Council is gathering information from the public, work has started on the project)?
- Is Council discussing offering any new service or program in the community?
- Are there any public input opportunities coming up (e.g. survey, open house, town hall)?