

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

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+ Chief of Police

The Chief of Police leads the work of police services in a municipality. His or her main responsibilities include making sure that the police service meets the needs of the people and keeps the community safe. In municipalities served by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the leader of the police services is called the Detachment Commander.

+ Mayor or Reeve

The Mayor or Reeve is the chairperson of the council meetings and can be assigned to act as the main spokesperson for the municipality. This may include representing the municipality at special events. The Mayor or Reeve may also represent the council in meetings with provincial or federal levels of government. The Mayor can be elected by all the voters who live in a municipality that is a city or a town. The council can also pass a bylaw so that the council appoints the Mayor from among the councillors. The Mayor or Reeve in a municipal district, village or summer village can be appointed from within the council. The council can also pass a bylaw so that all voters can elect the Mayor or the Reeve.

+ Councillor

Councillors are elected representatives of the municipality. Councillors can be elected to represent a **ward** or **electoral division**, which is a particular area of the municipality. They can also be elected **at-large**, which means they can be elected by all the electors in the municipality. Either way, they must consider the interests of the whole municipality when making decisions. The number of councillors can vary and can be changed through a bylaw as long as the number of councillors is an odd number and no lower than three. The **members of council** of the municipality are responsible for carrying out the powers, duties and functions of local government.

+ Fire Chief

The Fire Chief takes responsibility for leading and running the fire department, and sometimes for safety and emergency services. The Fire Chief is responsible for making sure the fire department considers different issues that may affect a resident's safety, such as the types of materials used in buildings and how public places are entered and exited.

+ Council Meetings

Have you ever been to or watched a council meeting? At council meetings, members of council debate, discuss and vote on community concerns, issues, policies, projects and actions. Council meetings are held on a regular basis and can be held weekly, or once or twice a month. Council meetings can be held during the day or the evening. Councils discuss and debate most issues in meetings that are open to the public. To prepare for meetings, councillors research the issues to make an informed decision. As the issue is debated, members of council may revise or change their opinions before they vote.

+ Chief Administrative Officer

The council of a municipality must appoint a person to be in charge of carrying out many of the responsibilities of the municipal government. This person is known as the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), and can use a variety of titles, such as City Manager or Commissioner, depending on what the council decides. This person is responsible for making sure that the decisions of the council are put into place and must carry out the day-to-day functions of the municipality. The council depends on the CAO to provide information so it can make informed decisions.

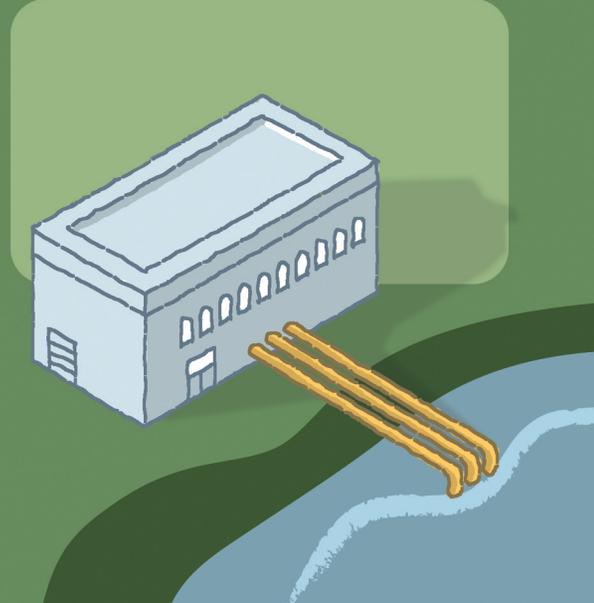
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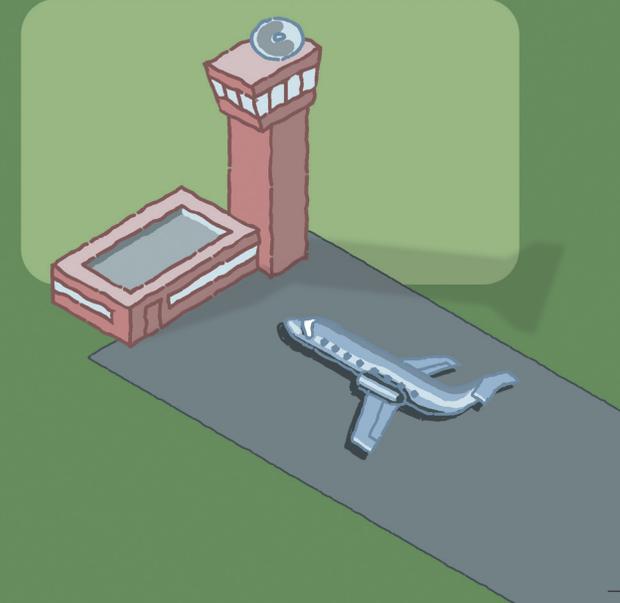
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+ Airports

Many municipalities have local airports that serve transportation needs of the people in the municipality, as well as people in nearby communities. The airport may be owned and operated by the municipality, operated with another municipality or operated by a separate organization or authority. Calgary and Edmonton both have international airports that are operated by a separate authority.

+ Water Services

Municipalities may provide a water supply to their residents. Water can come from a variety of sources, such as a lake, river or wells. Rural municipalities may provide water services or residents may provide their own water systems. Municipalities are responsible for where and how municipal raw, or untreated, water is stored, and for transporting raw water to a treatment facility. Municipalities may store treated water in a reservoir, a storage facility that can be enclosed, an underground or aboveground man-made lake, or a water tower. They develop and build pipe systems to transport treated water to homes, businesses and industrial sites.

+ Bylaw Enforcement

Bylaws are rules passed by a municipal council for a number of different purposes. Bylaw enforcement officers enforce the bylaws of the municipality while special constables and police enforce provincial laws. Bylaws may include controlling traffic as well as weed and animal controls. Bylaw officers and special constables may also assist local police in different ways. Some work with the police in school education programs.

+ Property Assessment

The land and property in a municipality goes through an assessment process, which involves placing a dollar value on land and property developments. This value is used when calculating the amount of property taxes that will be charged to the owner of this land or property. The amount of the tax is affected by how much the land or property is worth. The council determines the amount of money needed to operate the municipality for the year. Then the council decides on the amount of property tax money it needs. The municipality collects the taxes from property owners. Property taxes are a large source of revenue that municipalities use to pay for the services they provide to residents.

+ Weed and Pest Control

Weeds can be a nuisance in public and private areas. A municipality makes decisions on how it will control weeds and other pests in parks, playgrounds and other public areas. Weed control is also important in many rural municipalities, as they can be concerned about weeds that are harmful to crops. Municipalities must decide whether to use pesticides or herbicides, how often and where they should be applied. Municipalities may have bylaws that require property owners to keep weeds and other pests under control.

+ Land Use Planning

Planning how land is to be used is an important responsibility of the council. Land is developed for a variety of uses in municipalities, and decisions about land use often depend on the location of communities, resources and economic activities. Municipalities may have planning staff or hire consultants to plan how the land is developed and buildings are designed, built and used. Municipalities develop land use plans and bylaws that best meet the needs of the people who live, work and play there. These plans have to be approved by council. Land use planners have to balance the needs of all individuals and groups, while thinking ahead and considering how their decisions will impact the future. Land use plans can set land aside for parks, environmental areas, and for schools, hospitals, roads and other public uses.

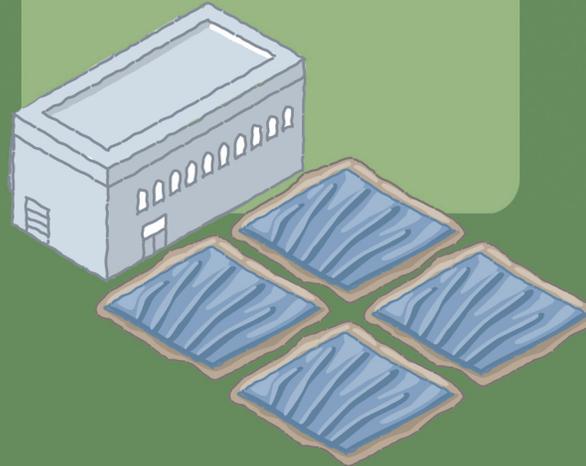
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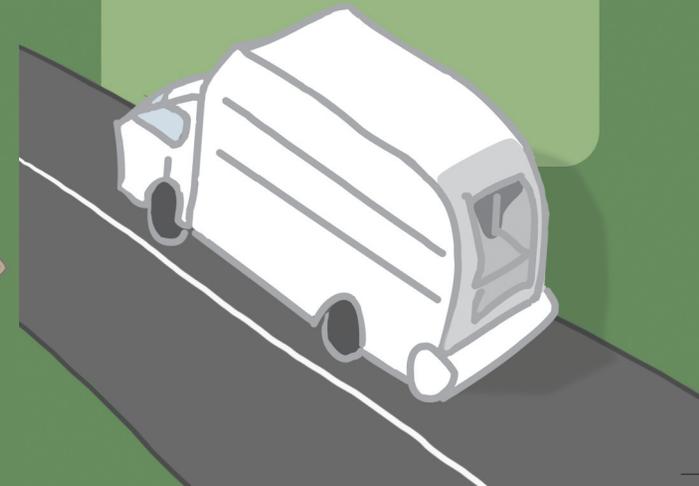
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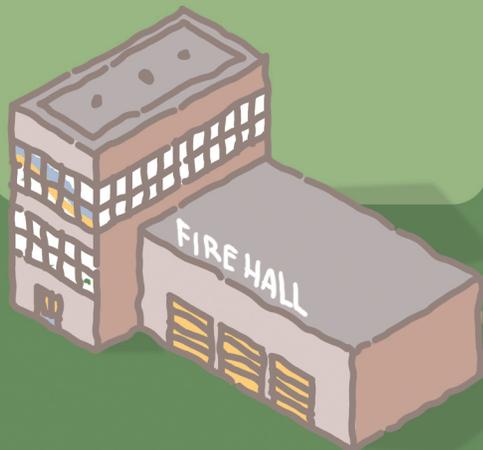
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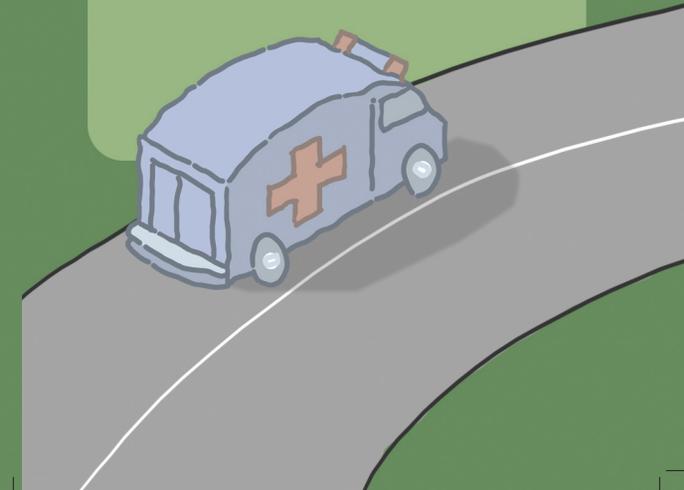
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+ Solid Waste Management

Municipalities may provide for the collection and disposal of solid waste or garbage. Rules and policies can establish the type of container used for waste, how often waste will be collected, what can be recycled and the management of different types of waste. Some municipalities collect and dispose of all the solid waste that is generated. Some may hire private companies to collect and dispose of commercial, agricultural and industrial waste. Municipalities may provide their own collection service, contract a private service or work in partnership with neighbouring municipalities to provide a regional solid waste management service. Usually, municipalities dispose of their solid waste in a sanitary landfill site. One consideration in establishing a landfill site is deciding what it will be used for when it is full. Sometimes rural residents may not have collection services for waste and have to take their garbage to a sanitary landfill site. Some rural municipalities experience problems with the dumping of waste in ditches or on the side of roadways. Some municipalities may have recycling and composting programs.

+ Wastewater Services

Once water is used by residents, it becomes wastewater and is returned to a treatment system if a municipality provides one. Wastewater can come from sinks, showers, bathtubs, toilets, washing machines or dishwashers. A number of methods, including wastewater collection through underground pipes, are used to bring wastewater to a treatment facility. Where there are different elevations in the land, a lift station can be used to pump the wastewater to the higher elevation. Treatment facilities treat wastewater and when it is clean, release it back into the environment. Rural municipalities that have hamlets can use lagoon systems to treat wastewater. A lagoon system consists of one or more storage tanks or ponds where the wastewater is stored. Some people who live in rural municipalities are required to have their own wastewater system.

+ Police Services

The council of a municipality is responsible for providing a safe community. Police services provide protection of residents and property, and enforcement of laws. The police services in a large urban municipality can be provided by its own police department. It may also be provided by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Besides providing protection for all residents, the municipality's police or RCMP also enforce federal and provincial laws and some bylaws. Duties include enforcing traffic laws and supporting the municipality by providing information to residents and schools.

+ Ambulance Services

Municipalities may provide ambulance service to respond to people who need emergency medical care. The council can establish and decide on the type of ambulance service the municipality will provide. It may provide its own ambulance service, contract with private ambulance operators, or work in partnership with neighbouring municipalities to provide a regional ambulance service. There may be a combined fire and ambulance service that can include ambulance attendants who have some fire protection training.

+ Emergency or Disaster Response

Every municipality has a responsibility to be ready for emergencies or disasters. The emergency plan is the responsibility of the council. An important part of this plan includes the establishment of a disaster response and emergency team. Emergencies or disasters can result from severe weather conditions, such as tornadoes, large snowstorms or floods caused by heavy rainstorms. They can also result from "people" causes, such as fires or major accidents. Municipalities will often work together and with other local authorities, such as regional health authorities, to plan how to respond to major emergencies or disasters.

+ Fire Hall

Municipalities generally have fire departments that are responsible for putting out fires and rescuing people. They may also help keep the environment safe by monitoring the movement and responding to spills of dangerous goods. Municipalities often have fire prevention programs, including the inspection of places to prevent fires. School programs can be developed to inform students about the dangers of fires and hazardous goods. Municipalities may have full- or part-time firefighters, volunteer firefighters or a combination of both. Some municipalities may partner or contract with a neighbouring municipality.

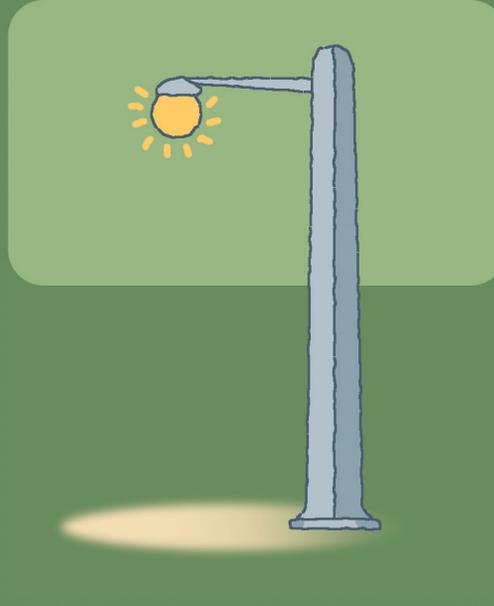
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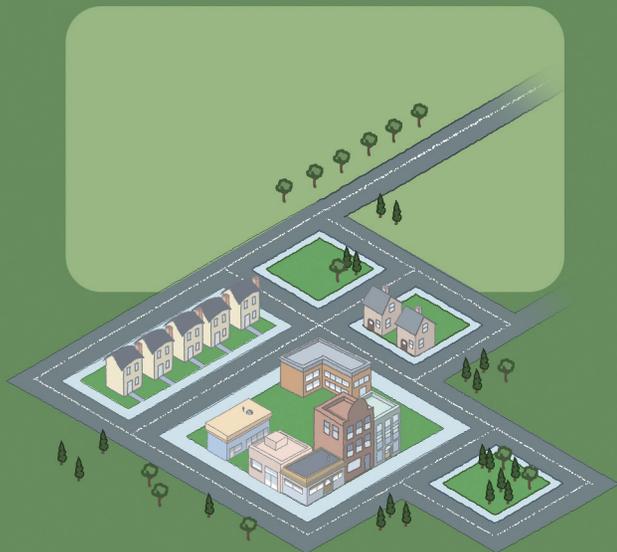
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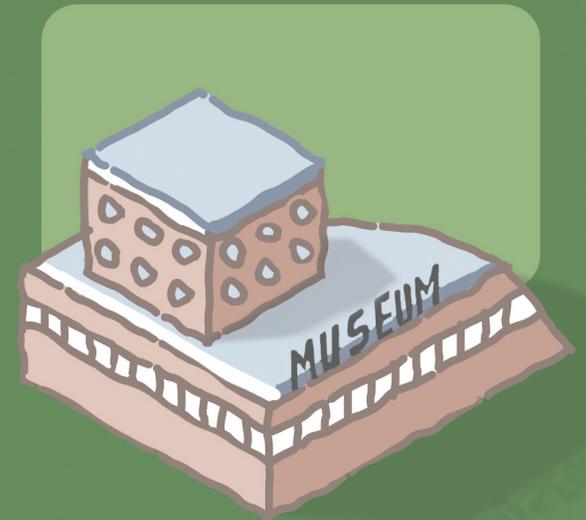
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+ Public Transit

Many large urban municipalities have a public transit system. Public buses or light rail transit systems provide transportation services that anyone can use. The municipality is responsible for managing these systems. It must also plan routes that will work best for the needs of the people who live there, while keeping the cost of the service reasonable.

+ Public Lighting

Public lighting is one of the services that municipalities provide. This service is usually part of a department called public works. The municipality provides adequate and safe lighting on public properties. Public lighting is planned to provide visibility for safety and security, and some municipalities try to take care that they do not use lighting that is too bright. Too much light, or light that is too bright, can be called light pollution.

+ Parks and Pathways

Municipalities can provide a variety of parks that may contain playgrounds or activity centres, outdoor ice surfaces, baseball fields and soccer pitches. Some parks have indoor recreation centres, arenas, pools, community centres or golf courses. Some neighbourhood parks have playgrounds and open space for children to play. Municipalities may also have parks that preserve the natural features of the landscape and include pathways and trails for bicyclists, skaters, joggers and walkers. Parks may also have large open areas for community gatherings, festivals and celebrations.

+ Cultural Facilities

Cultural facilities like museums, art galleries, historic sites and theatres may be found in municipalities. Festivals, entertainment and cultural activities also take place at different times throughout the year. These places and events celebrate the cultures, history, traditions, ideas and experiences of people who live there. Municipal councils may support these places with grants, land and the construction of special facilities. The municipality may hire people to work with cultural communities in planning and delivering programs. Some municipalities depend on volunteers to work with cultural communities in planning and delivering programs.

+ Family and Community Support Services

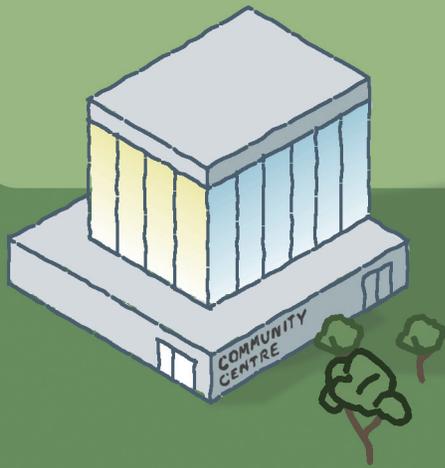
Municipalities may offer programs that support families, individuals and groups within the community, such as services for children, youth, adults and seniors. These support programs are held in different places around the municipality and can include hot meal services, parenting classes, seniors' transportation and newcomer services. Programs can be provided by volunteers and not-for-profit organizations. Programs in some municipalities can be provided in partnership with other municipalities.

+ Roads, Streets and Sidewalks

The roads, streets and sidewalks in a municipality are all part of the responsibilities of the council. This area of responsibility is often called public works or transportation. The municipality builds, maintains and repairs roads, streets and sidewalks. Sidewalks are constructed with the safety of pedestrians in mind. The municipality is also responsible for fixing problems that occur in roadways and sidewalks, such as cracks or potholes, and providing regular maintenance, such as grading and clearing snow. The province takes responsibility for highways in all municipalities except in cities.

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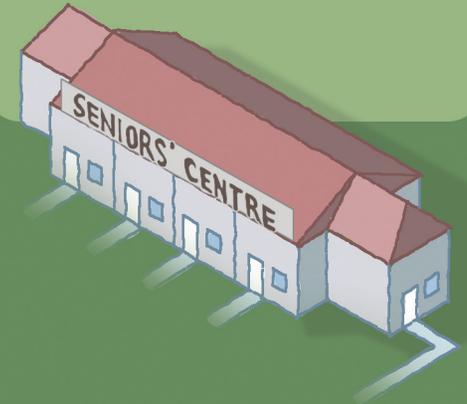
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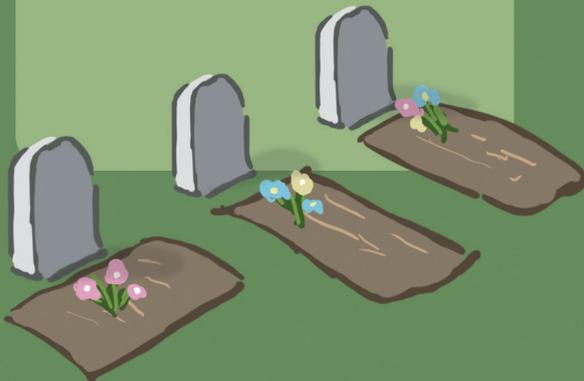
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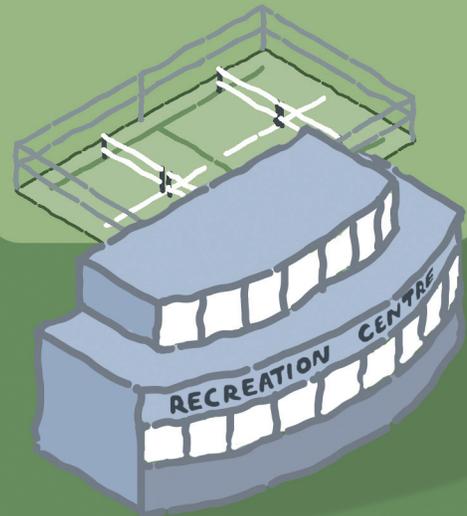
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+ Seniors' Centres

Some municipalities provide services to seniors that may include seniors' housing, drop-in centres, hot meal services, recreation and health programs and in-home care. Some services are provided directly by the municipality. Some may be coordinated through non-profit organizations within the municipality.

+ Libraries

Many municipalities provide libraries for their communities. Municipalities work with library boards and, in some cases, school authorities to provide public library services. These services include the use of library resources, help from library staff and information services. Municipalities that have a library must have a library board. They can also be part of a regional library system that shares library materials between communities.

+ Community Centres

Municipalities can have a variety of community centres, or large places where groups of people can hold meetings, social gatherings and events such as conferences and conventions. These centres are available for people and organizations in the municipality to use, but can also be used by groups and organizations from outside the municipality. These centres can range from community halls to large convention centres. Community centres can sometimes be managed by committees or groups that work with or for the municipality.

+ Recreation Facilities

Recreation facilities can include swimming pools, soccer fields, baseball diamonds and ice arenas. Some recreation centres have more than one purpose. They are often maintained by the municipality. Some municipalities may share multi-purpose facilities with neighbouring municipalities.

+ Animal Control

Municipal councils can pass bylaws to make sure that pets are looked after responsibly. They can also require that pets be licensed. Bylaws may even ban certain pets. Pet owners are responsible for making sure that their pets do not interfere with other people or their property. Animal control bylaws also make rules to ensure the safety of the pet and of people who live in the municipality.

+ Cemeteries

A cemetery is land that is used as a place for burials. Burial grounds, or cemeteries, can be owned by the municipality. They can also be owned by churches, religious groups, community or private groups and individuals. Cemeteries owned by the municipality serve all people in the community. Municipalities or groups in the community manage and look after the grounds in the cemeteries so they are pleasant and respectful places. Sometimes, pathways and parks are made to encourage people to visit the cemetery, or ceremonies and events are held to honour past events and people.

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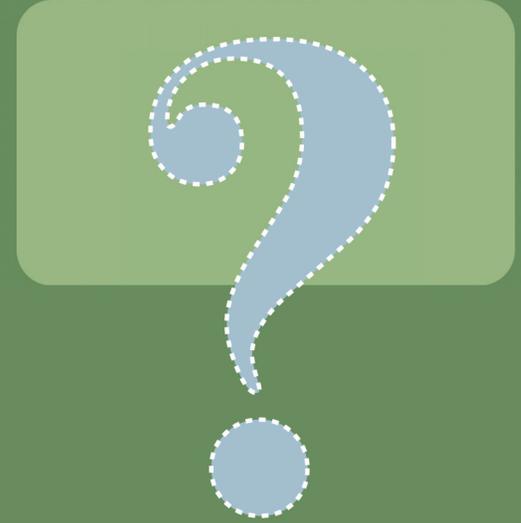
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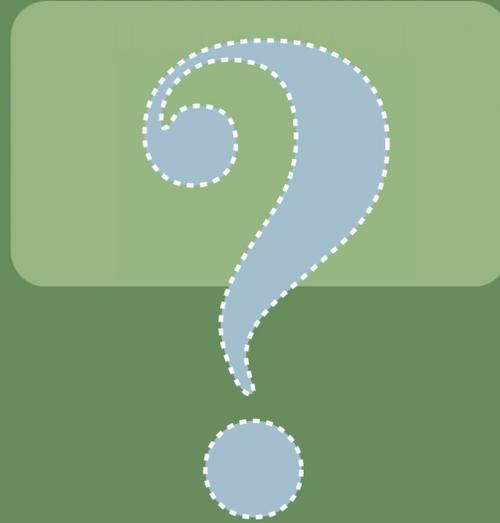
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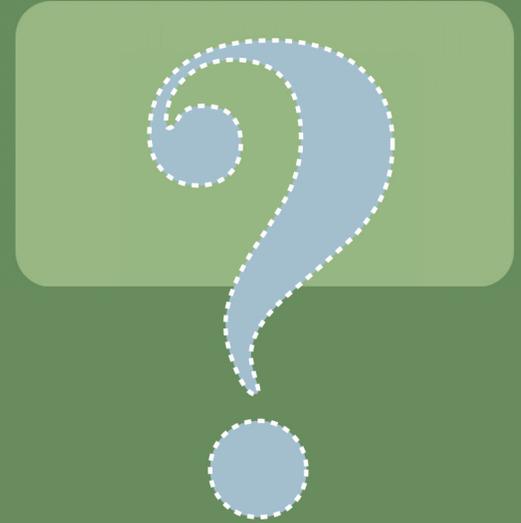
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Mayor or Reeve

What responsibilities do you think the Mayor or Reeve of a municipality has? Why do you think cooperation between the Mayor or Reeve and the council members is important to the municipality? What types of special events do you think the Mayor or Reeve attends?

Councillor

What are councillors called in your municipality? What types of responsibilities do councillors in your municipality have? Why do you think councillors have to represent the interests of the whole municipality? What types of decisions do you think councillors have to make? What decisions have councillors in your municipality made recently?

Council Meetings

In what ways do you think people can best participate in these meetings? How do you think you could get council to consider an issue that is important to you?

Chief Administrative Officer

What title does the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of your municipality use? What different types of responsibilities do you think the CAO of a municipality has? What types of decisions do you think a CAO makes on a day-to-day basis? Why do you think his or her role of providing information to council is important? The CAO manages the staff of the municipality. What types of jobs might the municipality staff have?

Chief of Police

Who leads the police services in your municipality? What types of activities do you think the Chief of Police or Detachment Commander has to do?

Police Services

How are police services provided in your municipality? What factors do you think municipalities have to consider when providing police services to help and protect the people who live there? Why do you think the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or the municipality's police service enforces federal and provincial laws, as well as some of the bylaws of the municipality? What differences do you think you might find in police services provided in urban and rural communities?

Emergency or Disaster Response

What do you think an emergency or disaster response plan contains? Why do you think a partnership between municipalities is important for emergency or disaster response plans?

Bylaw Enforcement

What are some bylaws in your municipality? What common bylaws do you think you would find in all municipalities? How do you think the land and resources of a municipality might affect the types of bylaws passed?

Weed and Pest Control

What challenges do you think weed and pest control causes for municipalities? What challenges does weed control cause for your municipality? Why do you think municipalities should be concerned about weed or mosquito control?

Animal Control

What types of issues do you think pet bylaws in a municipality should consider? What other organizations provide animal control in your municipality? Why do you think a municipality would ban certain types of pets?

Property Assessment

Who do you think are different property owners in a municipality? Why do you think property owners in a municipality should pay taxes? What determines the amount of tax a property owner pays? Why do you think property taxes are important to a municipality?

Solid Waste Management

What issues do you think municipalities face in establishing landfill sites? What happens to the waste once it is sent to a landfill site? What decisions do you think municipalities can make to establish a successful waste management program? What effect do you think recycling programs would have on waste that a municipality produces? How does your municipality recycle? What environmental issues and challenges do you think result from dumping waste in ditches or on roadways?

Water Services

Where does the water supply in your municipality come from? What issues do you think municipalities face in using different types of water sources, such as rivers or lakes? What types of choices do you think municipalities face in selecting their water supply? What challenges do you think there might be in purifying the water? What issues and challenges concerning water services do you think municipalities face?

Wastewater Services

What types of wastewater do you think businesses and industries in a municipality contribute? What challenges do you think wastewater treatment facilities might cause for these municipalities? How clean should wastewater be before it is released back into the environment? Why do you think some rural municipalities use lagoon systems instead of water treatment facilities?

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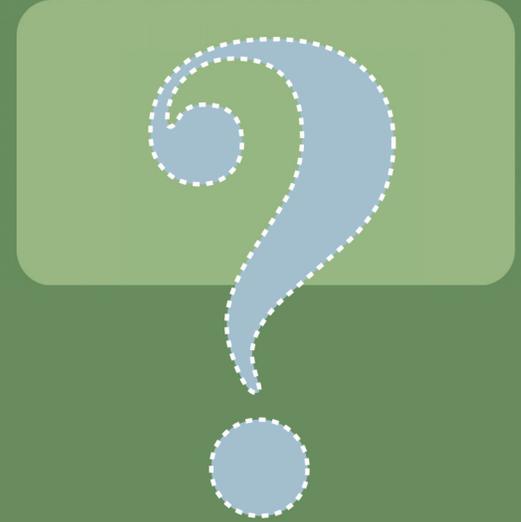
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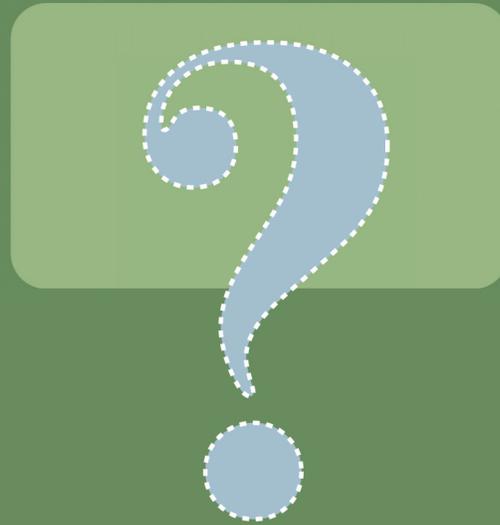
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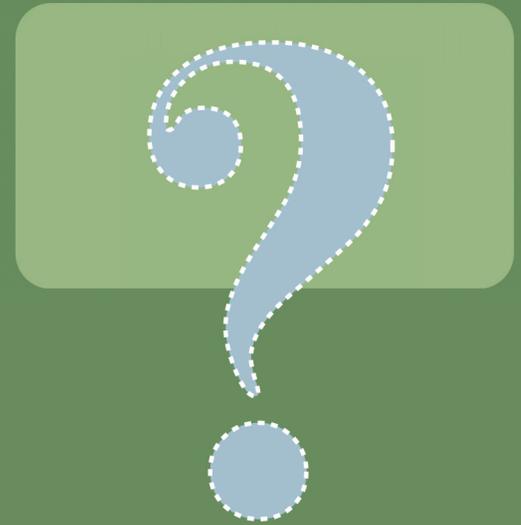
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Fire Hall

Why do you think fire departments are responsible for more than putting out fires? Why do you think some municipalities have fire departments with part-time or volunteer firefighters? What type of firefighters does your municipality use?

Fire Chief

Why do you think the Fire Chief has to consider many different features of the municipality in running a fire department? What responsibilities does the Fire Chief have in your municipality? What common responsibilities does a Fire Chief have in all municipalities? How do you think a Fire Chief's responsibilities might be affected by different environments in municipalities?

Ambulance Services

What challenges do you think a large urban municipality might face in providing ambulance services? What type of ambulance service is provided in your municipality? What advantages do you think shared services provide to the municipalities?

Public Transit

Why do you think it is important that municipalities consider public transit when planning future growth? Why might a municipality charge a user fee or a fee for services?

Roads, Streets and Walks

What do you think an urban municipality has to consider in planning for traffic and pedestrian safety? Why do you think a municipality should be concerned about traffic and pedestrian safety? How do you think the environment of the municipality affects the building and maintenance of roads?

Public Lighting

How does proper lighting enhance safety? In what types of areas and places do you think public lighting should be provided? Where do you think public lighting should be provided in rural municipalities? Why do you think light pollution can be an issue in a large urban municipality?

Land Use Planning

What different types of land uses would you find in a large urban municipality? What types of land use concerns do you think large urban municipalities have to consider when planning? What types of land use concerns do you think small urban municipalities have to consider when planning? What different types of land use decisions do you think rural municipalities have to consider when planning?

Cemeteries

Why do you think a municipality may maintain a municipal cemetery? What other places in your municipality are provided to honour past events and people? What can you do to help respect the public places in your municipality?

Airports

Why do you think it is important to have airports? Why do you think the municipal government might want to take responsibility for running an airport?

Cultural Facilities

What kinds of cultural facilities might be found in different types of municipalities? Why do you think there are differences and similarities in the types of facilities found in different municipalities? What types of cultural activities occur in your municipality?

Community Centres

Why do you think some municipalities make the decision to use municipal funds to build large community centres? What are community centres used for in your municipality?

Recreation Facilities

What recreation facilities do you have in your municipality? What factors do you think a municipality should consider when it makes decisions about how much to charge people for the use of a recreation facility? Why do you think recreation facilities can be a responsibility of municipalities? In what ways do you think recreation facilities should be shared?

Parks and Pathways

How many different uses do you think parks can have? Why do you think the municipality takes responsibility for building parks? In what ways do you think a municipality must consider safety issues when building parks and pathways? How do you think a decision is made to place an arena in one neighbourhood and a ball park in another?

Family and Community Support Services

What types of family and community support programs are provided in your municipality? How do you think volunteers can contribute to the quality of life in a municipality? What do volunteers contribute to your community?

Libraries

Why do you think library services are important to provide for residents of a municipality? In what ways do you use the library in your municipality?

Seniors' Centres

What services are available to seniors in your municipality? What services do you think could be valuable to introduce in your municipality? Why do you think municipalities should provide services for seniors?