

Chapter 1

Local Government

Big Question

How do local governments make decisions that support the common good?

Learning Goals

- assess the effectiveness of actions taken by local governments
- formulate questions about an issue
- explain why different groups may have different perspectives on social and environmental issues



Hi, I'm Taja.

I live in London, Ontario. There's a new skateboard park near my apartment that I use every day. Before the park was built, my friends and I used to skateboard on the sidewalk in front of my building. My older brothers even did their skateboard tricks in the street! Many residents didn't like the noise we made. Some people thought we might cause an accident with a pedestrian or a driver.

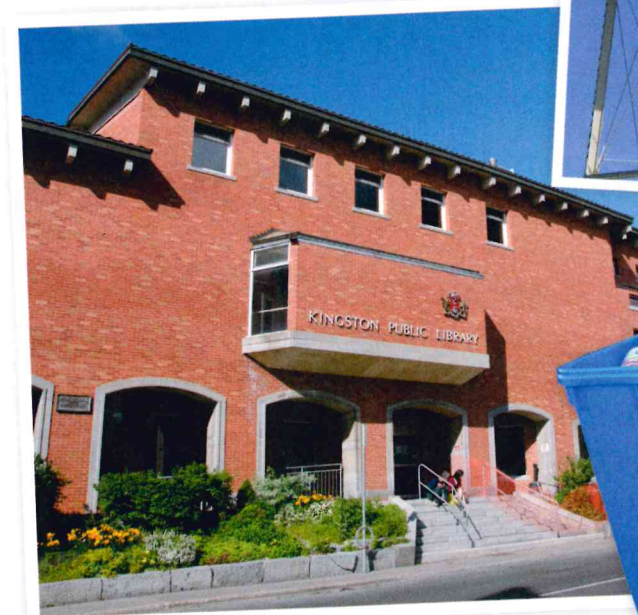
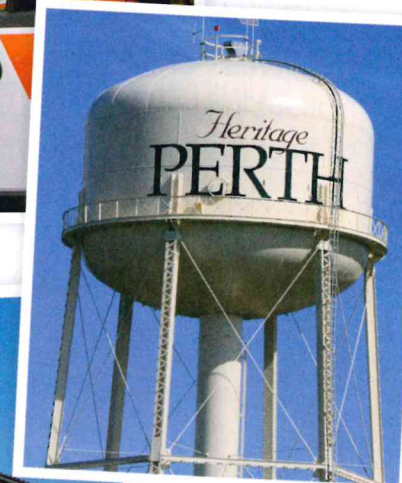
The city proposed a plan to build a new skateboard park in Springbank Park. Many people thought the skateboard park was a great idea! It would give us our own space. Other people were against the idea. They didn't like losing green space to concrete ramps.

I wonder how our skateboard park got built if people didn't agree on the project. How does a city make decisions if not everyone agrees?

This photo shows a skateboarder practising her skills at her local skateboard park.

What Is Local Government?

Think about the last time you visited your local park. Did you see skateboard ramps, a swimming pool, park benches, recycling bins, paths, or sculptures? If you did, you were looking at examples of services provided by your local government. A **local government** is a group of people who make decisions for a town, city, village, or region. A local government makes laws for the local community. It also provides local services, such as picking up garbage, recycling, and looking after local parks.



Using Vocabulary Strategies

To understand new words or phrases, use strategies such as the following:

- Consider what you already know about parts of the word or phrase.
- Figure out the word or phrase through context (how it is used).
- Look for synonyms or a definition that might follow the word or phrase.

Look around your community. What signs of your local government do you see? These photos show several services offered by local governments.

Map of the Regional Municipality of York



Each municipality in the Regional Municipality of York is responsible for some of its own services, and the Regional Municipality handles others. The costs for providing regional services are shared by the nine municipalities. Georgina Island First Nation is within the Regional Municipality of York, but its services are provided by its band council.

Municipalities

The most common type of local government is **municipal government**. It governs an area known as a **municipality**. A municipality can be an urban area, a rural area, or a mix of both. Cities, towns, and villages are all municipalities. Municipalities are created by the provincial or territorial government.

Regional municipalities are regions that include more than one municipality. Each municipality has its own government to deal with its own issues. However, the municipalities can come together to deal with larger issues or to share the cost of providing services.

First Nations Communities

Band councils are the local governments that govern First Nations communities. Many of those communities are on land that is reserved for use by First Nations peoples. This land is known as a **reserve**.

Reserves were created through agreements between First Nations peoples and the federal government. About half of all First Nations people in Canada live on reserves.



The Mikisew Cree Doghead Reserve is one of nine Mikisew Cree reserves near Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. There are more than 850 First Nations reserves across Canada. What questions do you have about reserves?

Inquire and Apply

- 1 Explain why it is important for a community to make its own laws and provide its own services.
- 2 Analyze the Regional Municipality of York map. How would sharing some services benefit the common good of each municipality? Which services would you suggest be shared? Explain your reasons.

How Are Decisions Made in Local Government?

Every municipal government or band council is made up of different groups of people.

Municipal Councils

The people who work for municipal government are called public servants. Some public servants are elected by the members of the community. Others are hired by the municipality to do different jobs, such as collect garbage, drive school buses, and maintain parks.

Elected public servants are the people who are responsible for making the decisions that affect a municipality. These people are called **councillors**, and together they form the **municipal council**.

The person who leads the municipal council is called the **head of council**. This person might also be called a mayor, a reeve, or a regional chair. The head of council makes sure that council decisions are made fairly and effectively.

Municipal councils make decisions during council meetings. Sometimes councillors get advice from committees. A **committee** is a group of people selected by council to investigate an issue and make recommendations to the council.

Council and committee meetings are usually open to community members. Community members can listen and present any ideas or concerns that they have.



Local governments often deal with issues that are unique to their communities. For example, in Banff, Alberta, the local government had to deal with a large number of elk that moved into the town. What special issues does your community deal with?



It is the responsibility of the municipality to provide lifeguard service at public swimming areas. The lifeguard in this photo is on duty at a beach in the City of Toronto. Do you think a lifeguard at a beach is hired or elected? Why do you think so?

Thinking about Perspective

Many of the townspeople of Banff don't like elk in their town because the animals eat their grass. However, tourists like seeing the elk. What other perspectives on the elk might there be? For example, how do you think the mayor or local store owners might feel?

The First Nations of the Ogemawahj Tribal Council



Tribal councils are made up of band council chiefs or other representatives from several First Nations. For example, the Ogemawahj Tribal Council has council members from six Ontario Nations. The Nations work together to share information, knowledge, and leadership. What connections can you make between tribal councils and regional municipalities?

Band Councils

The people who are elected to make decisions for a First Nations community form the band council. The band council is led by a chief. The number of councillors in the council depends on the size of the community.

Band councils are different from municipal councils because they are not created by the province or territory. Since reserves were created through the federal government, band councils work mainly with the federal government. Some of the responsibilities of a band council are different from those of a municipal council.

Band councils also cooperate with the provincial or territorial government and with neighbouring municipalities. There is a growing effort to create relationships between band councils and nearby municipalities. These relationships allow the communities to share the cost of providing some services.



Ogden's Point Breakwater in Victoria, B.C., was created in 2013. The Esquimalt and Songhees Nations and the City of Victoria worked together to create artwork on the breakwater that represents a bridge between cultures. How does this structure demonstrate the interrelationships between the two Nations and the municipality of Victoria?

Local Decision Making

Municipal and band councils make decisions about issues that affect people in their communities. From installing a crosswalk on a busy street to deciding where new recycling bins will be placed, all services involve decisions.

How One Municipal Council Made a Decision about Skateboard Parks

- 1 A councillor is notified that some members of a neighbourhood would like a skateboard park built for local children. The councillor informs the council.
- 2 The council discusses the idea. It creates a committee to explore the project.
- 3 The committee determines if there is a suitable area in the neighbourhood for a skateboard park. They also find out if there is money to fund the park. They discuss impacts with experts such as engineers and environmentalists.
- 4 The committee notifies the community, including local skateboarders, of the project. They hold a meeting to share more information with the community and ask for input about the park.
- 5 Based on available funds, support from experts, and input from the public, councillors vote to build the skateboard park.

How One Band Council Made a Decision about Solar Energy Panels

- 1 A councillor is notified that a solar energy company would like to build solar panels on reserve land. The councillor informs the council.
- 2 The council discusses the idea and creates a committee to explore the project.
- 3 The committee investigates the impact of the project on its lands. It also looks into the financial and employment benefits of the project for the community.
- 4 The committee notifies the community of the project. It puts ads in local newspapers, mails out comment cards, sets up an informational website, and holds public meetings.
- 5 Based on community support for the project and the benefits predicted by the committee, the council approves the project, allowing the solar panels to be built.

Inquire and Apply

- 1 At the beginning of this chapter, Taja wondered how her skateboard park got built if not everyone agreed to the project. Look at the diagram above. How would you answer Taja's question?
- 2 Find an article about a project that your local council is working on. Create a flow chart showing the steps the council might take to make its decision, including the people that the council might talk to for advice.

Each flow chart above is an example of how a council made a decision about an issue. Other issues might require different people to be involved or steps to be taken before a decision can be reached.

Did You Know?

If you feed the squirrels in Mississauga, Ontario, you are breaking the law and could get fined as much as \$5000! It is illegal to feed any wild animal in Mississauga, except for songbirds.



Local governments make decisions about what activities are allowed in certain areas. They also make traffic bylaws to keep people safe.

What Do Local Governments Do?

Local governments work toward the common good when they provide services and create laws to benefit citizens in their area.

Make Bylaws

Can you imagine what a hockey game would be like if there were no rules? In the same way, what would your community be like without rules? One of the roles of local governments is to make local rules, called **bylaws**. These bylaws help the community run smoothly and keep people safe.



Most municipalities have bylaws that require homeowners to shovel their sidewalk within a certain length of time after a snowfall. How does a bylaw like this contribute to the common good?

Some Bylaws from Ontario Communities

Areas for Bylaws	Example of Bylaw
Safety and Security	No person shall ride a skateboard or non-motorized scooter on any sidewalk designated in schedule XXV of this bylaw. (Bylaw 2002-17017, Guelph)
Transportation	No person shall operate a snowmobile within the city limits. (Bylaw 12852, Windsor)
Parks and Recreation	No person shall fly a powered model aircraft or sail a powered model boat in a city park. (Bylaw 2009-76, Kingston)
Animal Care and Control	No person shall keep more than three dogs in or around a single house. (Bylaw 2000.1 [21.0], Six Nations of the Grand River)
Government	Members of Council shall at all times seek to advance the common good of the community that they serve. (Bylaw 3149, Kapuskasing)

Provide Services

Local governments provide many different types of services, including the following:

- safety and protection
- transportation
- social
- arts and culture

Safety and protection services protect the lives and property of people in the community. These services include ambulance, police, and fire protection.

Transportation services include building and maintaining local roads, sidewalks, and transportation systems (such as buses and subways). Local governments are also responsible for keeping roads clear of snow and ice.

Social services help people meet their basic needs. These can include child care, nutrition programs, and programs to help people find jobs.

Arts and culture services include museums, art galleries, and outdoor festivals. These services expose us to new ideas and different perspectives of the community and the world.

Many children across the country do not have enough food to eat and sometimes go to school hungry. In order to ensure that students start the day with a full stomach, many local governments fund breakfast programs. What are some other ways local government services could help children in need?

Citizenship in Action



Urmish Shaikh helps keep her classmates safe. The Grade 5 student at Vista Heights Public School in Mississauga, Ontario, volunteers with her school's Safety Patrol program. In 2014, she won a School Safety Patroller of the Year award for her actions to keep students safe after a bus collision.



Inquire and Apply



- 1 What type of service do you think is most important? Why do you think so?
- 2 Choose three of the bylaws on page 20. Think about why local governments might have created these bylaws. Suggest a bylaw that you think should exist in your community. Then, research whether that bylaw already exists.

How Do Local Governments Pay for Services?



In Wawa, Ontario, there is a sculpture of a giant Canada goose. Unfortunately, the Wawa goose is starting to fall apart and is in need of repair. Look at the diagram below. Where do you think the money for the repairs would come from?

Most municipal governments and band councils would like to provide more and better services. However, these governments only have a certain amount of money to spend.

Municipal Councils

Each year, a municipal government creates a spending plan, called a **budget**. The municipality determines how much money it has, and then decides where this money is best spent. The spending decisions of a municipality depend on its size and the needs of its population.

Municipalities get some money from the federal and provincial or territorial governments. Municipalities also raise money themselves. For example, between 2008 and 2014, the City of Toronto collected almost \$300 000 in fines from people who parked too close to just one downtown fire hydrant! Many municipalities have bylaws that require pet owners to buy licences for their pet each year. These municipalities raise money from the cost of the licences and from fines charged for animals found without a licence.

However, most money that municipal governments collect comes from taxes. A **tax** is money that is paid to the government. All home and business owners pay property taxes to the municipality. Property taxes are based on the size of the land that someone owns and what the land is used for.

Example of How One Municipality Spends \$100



This diagram shows how a municipality might spend its money. For example, for every \$100 it has, it spends \$16 on "protection," which includes police services.

Band Councils

At one time, the only money band councils had came from the federal government. Band councils were not allowed to raise money through taxes. This created challenges. Band councils and the federal government often had different perspectives on how much money was needed and how it should be spent.

Today, band councils are allowed to raise money from taxes on their reserves. This helps pay for more and better services. However, many people believe that the federal government should be providing more money for services needed in First Nations communities.



This photo shows a school in Six Nations of the Grand River. For many years, education for First Nations students was the responsibility of the federal government. In most cases, this responsibility is now shared with band councils. Band councils have worked to ensure education reflects traditional First Nations practices.

Thinking about Perspective

Different communities have different needs. In some communities, it is important to spend money to maintain a boat harbour because the community is near the water. The next time you travel to another city, compare it to your community. Think about what services might be important to that community.

Example of How One Band Council Spends \$100



This diagram shows how a band council might spend its money.

Inquire and Apply

- 1 Compare how the band council spends its money with how the municipality spends its money. Think of some reasons why their spending might be different.
- 2 Create a diagram showing how you would divide \$100 among different municipal services if you were creating a budget for your community. Justify your choices.

Thinking about Significance

Former TV game show host Bob Barker came to Toronto from his home in Hollywood to help protest keeping elephants in Canadian zoos. Some people claimed city councillors were influenced by Barker's fame, rather than listening to facts. Many celebrities use their fame and wealth to influence government decisions. What advantages and disadvantages might there be to having a celebrity speak up about an issue? Explain.

What to Do about the Elephants at the Toronto Zoo

The City of Toronto owns the Toronto Zoo. The municipal government created the Toronto Zoo Board to make decisions about running the zoo responsibly. The zoo board is made up of the mayor, 3 council members, and 8 citizens. Citizens can apply to be members of the board. The board is also sometimes involved in discussions about the welfare of the animals.

After four elephants died at the zoo between 2005 and 2009, the board had to make a decision about what to do with the remaining three elephants. Should the city spend millions of dollars to improve the zoo's elephant shelter? Or, should the zoo end the elephant program and move the elephants to a warmer climate? Decisions about animals in captivity are not always easy. Different people have different viewpoints about what is best for the animals.

In May 2011, the head of the zoo suggested closing the elephant exhibit. The zoo board decided to end the elephant program at the zoo. It asked zoo officials to look for a new home for the three elephants. However, after six months, no action plan had been created.



Do elephants belong in cold climates? Support your response.

At a council meeting on October 25, 2011, Toronto city councillor Michelle Berardinetti made a surprise proposal to move the animals. She proposed moving them to the Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) sanctuary in the United States. A **sanctuary** is an area reserved for wild animals. Most of the members of the city council agreed and voted in favour of the proposal.

Zoo officials and zookeepers were angry about the decision. They said this decision should have been left to zookeepers and veterinarians. However, city councillors said that the elephants belonged to the city of Toronto, so the council had the right and responsibility to make this decision.

Over the coming months, citizens, journalists, zookeepers, and councillors wrote articles, letters, and blogs. They argued both sides of the issue. In the end, the elephants were moved to PAWS in October 2013. Many people said that the council did not take enough time to learn about all the perspectives and all options.



The elephants travelled from the Toronto Zoo to the sanctuary in California in large crates on a truck. The 4500-kilometre trip took more than 70 hours. Zookeepers were afraid that this long trip would put the elephants in danger. How do you think the photographer wants you to feel about the decision to move the elephants?

Inquire and Apply

- 1 If you were a city councillor, how would you have voted on this issue? Explain your thinking.
- 2 Think about the decision to move the elephants to the PAWS sanctuary. What criteria should you use to decide if the decision was a good one?
- 3 Create a graphic organizer to show the different viewpoints on keeping elephants in Canadian zoos. Use this organizer to create a survey to find out how people feel about this issue. Conduct your survey with people at school and at home.

How Do Governments and Citizens Communicate?

Local governments are responsible for communicating their ideas and decisions to their communities. They also want to hear ideas from the people they serve.

There are different ways that local governments and citizens communicate. Here are just a few ways:

- 1 Elections allow candidates to communicate their ideas to the public. **Candidates** are people who want to be elected to government positions. Elections also allow citizens to communicate with government. Citizens show they agree with a candidate's ideas when they vote for that candidate.
- 2 Council meetings are open to the public, so anyone can go to them, listen, and speak (with permission).
- 3 A municipal government might hold a public hearing to inform citizens about an important topic. A **public hearing** is a meeting that allows citizens to give their opinions about an issue affecting their community. Band councils might hold regular meetings to hear community members' opinions on local issues.
- 4 If an issue is especially important, a local government might also hold a referendum. A **referendum** is a process by which community members vote on whether the government should take a certain action.



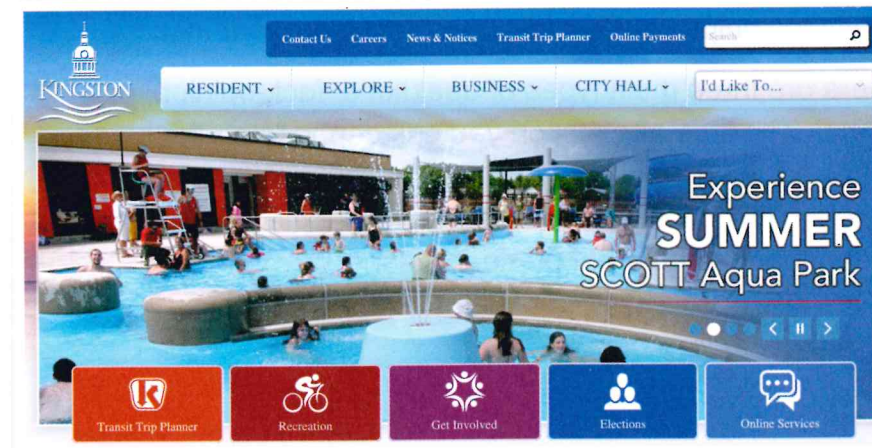
In 2010, Waterloo, Ontario, held a referendum to decide if the community should keep putting fluoride in its water system. Fluoride is a chemical known to prevent cavities, but some people fear that it has harmful effects. Most citizens voted "no" in the referendum. On November 29, 2010, the Region of Waterloo stopped adding fluoride to the water supply.

People often communicate their ideas to government by taking part in peaceful protests. This photo shows protestors holding homemade signs in Windsor, Ontario, in May 2014. Local residents gathered in Willistead Park to protest the construction of paved pathways in their park. How is the perspective of these protestors different from the perspective of the people who wanted the Springbank skateboard park to be built?



Communication and Technology

Governments usually use media to communicate with the community. For example, they might use newspaper articles, TV or radio ads, websites, flyers, or social media. Some municipal governments also show their council meetings on local TV stations.



Most local governments have a website where you can find out how to get involved with the issues in your municipality. What do you notice in this website for the municipality of Kingston, Ontario?

Technology can sometimes help people vote in elections. Most people place their votes in person, but some communities now allow people to vote by phone or online. Voting online or over the phone helps people who have difficulty getting out to vote.



In 2003, Markham, Ontario, successfully introduced an Internet voting system.

Did You Know?

The city council in Kitchener, Ontario, was one of the first in Canada to use text messaging to discuss local issues and decisions with the public.

Citizenship in Action



Grade 5 students at Kingsway Park Public School in Thunder Bay, Ontario, are practising voting. In 2014, their school held a student vote for a municipal election. Students learned about and voted for local candidates. The results of their vote were communicated to the rest of the community through local TV and newspapers.

Inquire and Apply

- 1 How would you bring an issue to the attention of your local government? Why would you choose that method?
- 2 Choose an issue in your community. Create a plan for how the municipal or band council could communicate its ideas about the issue. Include ways that the council could get feedback from the community.

Fact Questions

Fact questions guide you to clear answers based on obvious information in the text. For example: How do incinerators work?

Opinion Questions

Opinion questions lead you to form a personal point of view about an issue. Different people might respond differently to opinion questions. For example: Are incinerators good or bad for a community?

Critical Questions

Critical questions cause you to think deeply about all aspects and perspectives surrounding an issue. They guide you to develop conclusions that you can support with good reasons. For example: What factors should be considered when deciding whether to build an incinerator?

“... isn't it better to recover even a [small amount] of something from that product than sending it to a landfill site?”

Monika Turner, Policy Director, Association of Municipalities of Ontario

When you begin an inquiry, you might start by thinking about an issue that interests you. What do you already know? What do you wonder about? Effective questions will lead you deeper into your issue. They will also help you find information related to different perspectives people have on the issue. Formulating questions helps you create a clear focus for your inquiry.

There are three main types of questions: fact, opinion, and critical. The type of question you ask depends on the type of information you are looking for. As you read the following material, think about the questions that would help you understand the different perspectives.

To Burn or Not to Burn?

Every year across Canada, millions of tonnes of garbage are brought to landfills, or garbage dumps. Many people worry that landfills can release harmful chemicals into the soil and water. However, other people say that this risk is very small in modern landfills. People on both sides of the argument know there is a limit to landfills—eventually they get full.

Some municipalities, such as the region of Peel, burn their garbage in large furnaces, called incinerators. People opposed to this approach say that incinerators create air pollution. The incinerators also create ash that has to be disposed of.



This image shows a tractor moving garbage in a landfill in Ontario.

Supporters of incinerators say that very high temperatures are used to burn the garbage. This creates very little ash compared to the amount of garbage processed. They argue that the gases produced by burning garbage can be used to create energy, which is better than leaving garbage to rot away in landfills.

“When you build an [incinerator], you are saying we will never get to zero waste, we are giving up that goal ... since we need to keep coming up with materials to feed the incinerator. So the incentive to recycle more goes down as a municipality.”

Jo-Anne St. Godard, Executive Director, Recycling Council of Ontario

“I don't know if there is an amazing technological solution. We're not going to be able to vaporize the garbage. Hopefully, we educate people so they produce less waste—that's the best thing we can do.”

Jim Harnum, Manager, Waste Management Division, Toronto



“[By building an incinerator, we] can at least take the energy out, instead of putting [garbage] into the landfill.”

Norman Lee, Head, Waste Management, Region of Peel

Thinking about Perspective

Consider the different viewpoints, or perspectives, on burning garbage. Whose viewpoint do you most agree with? Why?

Inquire and Apply

- 1 Who should be involved in deciding whether a community should burn its garbage?
- 2 Formulate questions for an interview with one of the people quoted on page 28 or 29.

This photo shows a garbage incinerator in Québec. Would you prefer to have an incinerator or a landfill in your community?

Pulling It Together

How Can We Contribute to the Common Good?

It's Up to You

Responsible, active citizens of Canada are involved in their communities.

Reflect

Why is it important to consider different perspectives when making a decision?

Take Action

Think about an issue at school or in your family. How will you deal with the issue? Whose perspectives will you consider before you decide how to act?



I didn't know how much local government affects my life. I also didn't realize how much I could affect my local government.

I looked online to find out more about the building of the Springbank skateboard park in my community. It was really interesting to read all the different points of view. I never would have thought about the different sides to the argument or why some people didn't like the idea of the park. I can see why it's important for people to speak up and share their opinions about city planning.

I'm glad community leaders listen to different points of view. From my perspective, I think the municipal government made a great decision to build a skateboard park in my community. I now have a safe place to practise my skills!

Taja

Community members near Springbank Park had the opportunity to give their opinions about the new skateboard park. When we take part in investigating issues in our communities, we contribute to the common good.



Summarizing

Refer back to the Learning Goals for this chapter. Create a word web to summarize what you have learned. Identify significant ideas and relationships in your web. Explain to a partner the ideas and relationships you have identified. Compare the relationships you and your partner identified. How did differences in your perspectives affect the choices each of you made?

Making Connections

Create a map of your community. Label at least three services that your local government provides. Beside each service, describe how it affects your life and your community.

Chapter Inquiry

At the beginning of this chapter, you considered the Big Question: How do local governments make decisions that support the common good?

Identify an issue in your community. Find out how your local government is dealing with that issue. Create a two-column chart to record facts as well as your thoughts about the issue. Next, develop three questions that could help you investigate this issue. Be sure to think about the Big Question as you complete your chart. Remember, you want to dig deeply into this issue so that you can really understand it.

Refer back to the Learning Goals on page 14 to guide your inquiry.