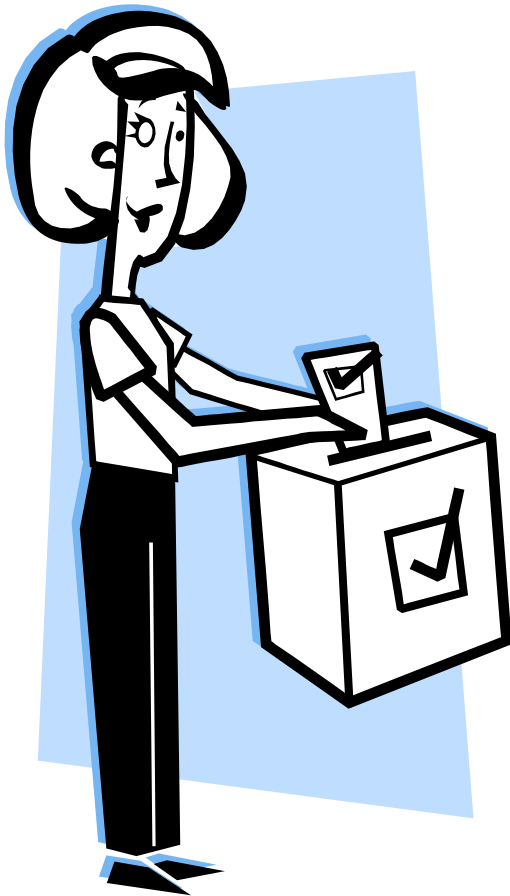


I'm a Future Voter!



A guide to
local government
and you

Greetings, future voter!

This book provides an introduction to local (municipal) government, and how you can get involved.

We are fortunate in Canada that our system of government is a democracy. This means that citizens have the right to elect their representatives. It also means that citizens have a say in how their community, province, and country are governed.

When you are 18 years old, you will have the chance to vote!

Government 101



We have three levels of government:

Federal: Covers all of Canada

Provincial: Covers Ontario

Municipal: Covers the city of Guelph

Municipal: the City of Guelph



Responsible for things that affect everyone in Guelph, for example:

- Guelph Police, Fire and Ambulance
- Roads, sidewalks, and Guelph Transit
- Water
- Garbage collection and recycling
- Parks, pools, arenas, and libraries

The leader of the municipal government is the Mayor and municipal elected officials are Councillors.



Guelph City Hall

Provincial: the Government of Ontario



Responsible for things that affect everyone in the province of Ontario, for example:

- Schools
- Hospitals
- Highways

The leader of the provincial government is the Premier, and provincial elected officials are called Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs).



The Ontario Legislature (Queen's Park), Toronto.

Federal: the Government of Canada



Responsible for things that affect **everyone in Canada**, for example:

- Armed Forces
- Immigration
- Banking

The leader of the federal government is the **Prime Minister**, and federal elected officials are called **Members of Parliament (MPs)**.



Canada's Parliament Buildings,
Ottawa

Not a good start to the day...

You wake up early and go to the bathroom for a glass of water, but nothing comes out of the tap. When you turn on the light switch, no light comes on. You wander into the living room and look out the window. The road and sidewalk in front of your house is gone. The park and playground across the street have also disappeared. When you call the police department, there is no answer. Nor is there any response from the fire department.

Not to worry – it was all just a bad dream! But this bad dream shows what life would be like if there were not any municipal government. It is municipal governments like the City of Guelph that provide most of the day-to-day services we enjoy.

*Story courtesy of AMCTO's *A Kid's Guide to Local Government*

City of Guelph Elections

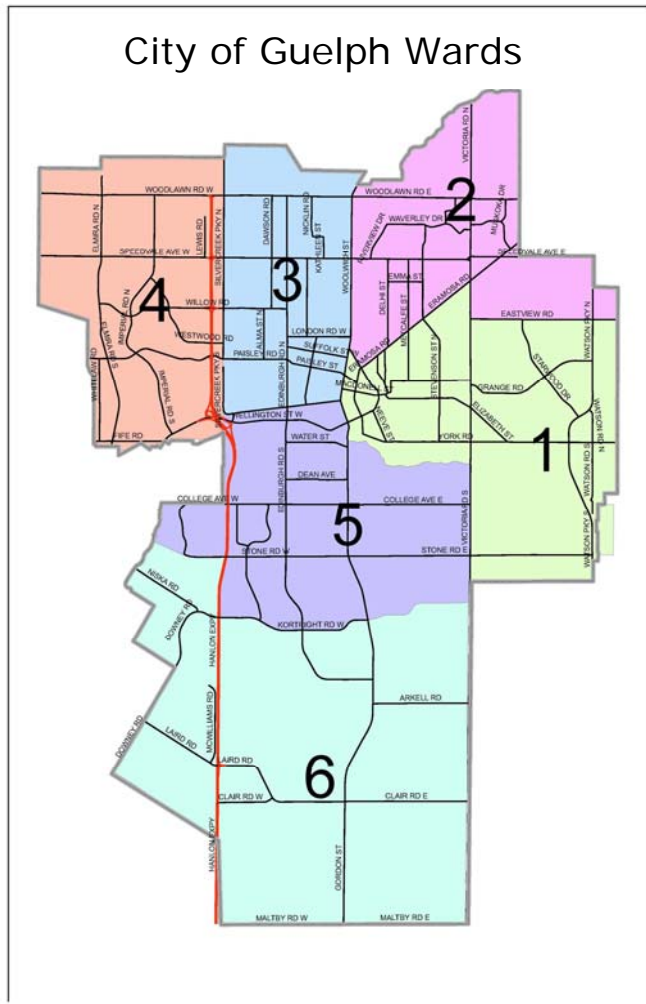
Who can vote in a City of Guelph election?

Among other things, you must be...

- A Canadian citizen
- At least 18 years old

And, you must live or own property in the City of Guelph.

How is the local government elected?



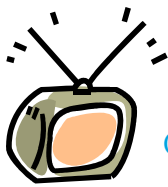
- Municipal elections take place every 4 years in November.
- The City is divided into smaller areas called **Wards**, and two Councillors are elected in each Ward. Only eligible voters in that Ward can vote for a candidate in their Ward. Guelph has 6 Wards and 12 Councillors.
- People in all Wards can vote for the Mayor; this is called being "elected at large."

Did you know...

Only 40% of eligible voters in Guelph cast ballots in the last municipal election, compared to 70% in the federal election and 57% in the provincial election.

How does Guelph's local government work?

The 12 elected **Councillors** and **Mayor** together form **City Council**. Meetings of City Council are open to the public, except in certain circumstances. Meetings are usually held on Monday nights at 7 p.m.



Did you know... You can watch most Guelph City Council meetings LIVE on Rogers TV, or online at rogerstv.com.

Council makes decisions about what programs and services the City will provide, and how they will be paid for. **City staff** give information and advice to Council, and deliver programs and services to the community.

Each member of Council, including the Mayor, has **one vote**.

Until 2007, members of Council voted through a **show of hands**. Now, members vote **electronically** by pressing a button on their desks. All votes are **recorded**, so citizens can find out how each member voted.



A Council meeting underway in Council Chambers.

Dollars and cents



The City pays for its services with money from different sources. The main source of revenue is a **tax on property** (houses and businesses.) Unlike the federal and provincial governments, the City cannot collect tax on income (money you make in your job) or sales tax (tax on things you buy at the store.)

Money also comes from **fees** (for example, bus tickets or swimming fees), **savings and interest** from the bank, and **grants** from the federal and provincial governments.

Guelph's History: a Timeline

- 1827** On April 23, Guelph is founded by John Galt with the ceremonial cutting down of a maple tree. Galt was a popular Scottish novelist, and Superintendent of the Canada Company.
- 1856** Guelph is officially declared a "Town" on January 1st. The first Mayor is John Smith. Also, the Grand Trunk Railroad arrives in Guelph.
- 1857** Guelph's first Town Hall and Market House opens at 59 Carden Street. The building remains Guelph's City Hall until 2009, when a new City Hall opens right next door.
- 1872** Colonel John McCrae, author of the famous poem "In Flanders Fields," is born in Guelph.
- 1882** Guelph opens the first public library in Ontario.
- 1920's** Two important items are invented in Guelph: the wire coat hanger and the jock strap.
- 1964** The University of Guelph opens, incorporating the Ontario Veterinary College (1862), the Ontario Agricultural College (1874), and the Macdonald Institute (1903).
- 2009** Guelph's new City Hall opens at 1 Carden Street.

Glossary of terms

Agenda - The list of topics that will be covered in a meeting, such as a Council meeting.

Budget - This sets out the revenues and expenses for the coming year. It must be approved each year by City Council.

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) - The most senior employee in the municipality. All departments report to the CAO.

City Council - The elected body of the municipality, which makes decisions on behalf of local residents.

Clerk - The City Clerk is the official record keeper for the City of Guelph, responsible for minutes of Council meetings, by-laws, and agreements. The Clerk's office also organizes municipal elections, and provides a number of public services, including marriage licensing, freedom of information, and business licensing.

Councillor - A member of City Council. Guelph City Council has 12 Councillors and one Mayor.

Treasurer - The City Treasurer's job is to make sure that municipal revenues are collected and that bills are paid, as well as preparing the annual budget.

Mayor - The head of City Council. The Mayor is elected by everyone in the City, and has one vote on Council.

Minutes - A written record of what was decided at a meeting, such as a Council meeting.

Municipality - a municipality has a defined geographic area, an elected Council, and the power to tax. The City of Guelph is a municipality.

Property tax - A tax on the property (e.g. homes and businesses) owned by people in the municipality.

Ward - A geographic area in the City. Each Councillor represents a Ward, and is elected by eligible voters there.

Word Search

Can you find the words below? These are all services the City of Guelph provides, or facilities it operates.

tap water
River Run Centre
recycling
Farmer's Market
pool

snow plowing
park
traffic light
roads
library

A S E K F O O M T P R S R P P O R X T A K
B Y U I O P G H S T E R K A F G R T M J Y
L T S Z F A R M E R S M A R K E T A O T X
L R N G N H Q A T A P R O K P O L P O O L
E D O S O M Y B B M A R I Q U A B W H T L
W S W F O U Z T F I P J L M C V G A G T B
E J P H M S X P R V J U J N U F R T K Y S
V H L V Q B T D E A L T Q Y W W E E L A U
D G O G C E O G M M F U A L X Y W R I B M
D T W L H Y O X H I U F Z U Q R L A O B H
J Y I Z V S B N O S N A I A P V O P P I Q
U R N F N D L D F K D Z E C Z E I P T R Y
Y E G T T A R E N A I D Q Z L I B R A R Y
L Q X Q X T E K S E W H U R V I D E R U X
J I O E H H R N D R B K S A N G G T E N D
O P N J R E O Y Y Y U O T A F E T H W D N
A J K B Y C M R I V E R R U N C E N T R E
S D V O N D M O P I K V O E S T D I Q C R
O S B V D D A T D S K E A A N A F T I X H
B V A N X G Q L T H O H D A N B B R Y N T
R E C Y C L I N G N D E S P T T N E H G V

Good luck, future voters!