



# JUNIOR COUNCIL GUIDE

Junior council or board meetings have proven to be one of the most popular and effective Local Government Awareness Week activities. This guide is offered to help those local governments that are planning to hold a junior council or board meeting for the first time.

The goal of a junior council is to give interested young people in your community the opportunity to 'try on' the job of local elected officials or senior staff members.

The junior council will hold its own council or board meeting ahead of the official meeting. Junior council members will move through a real agenda, facilitate discussion, and vote on motions.

## 1. Invite & Select Participants

Contact the local school board for permission to contact secondary school(s) in your area. Invite secondary school principal(s) to have their schools participate in the program. Each school may decide on a method to recommend participants, whether through a contest, vote, or other. It is recommended that the opportunity be open to students in Grade 10 to 12.

The number of students required will depend on the size of your council or board and the level of participation you desire. To increase how many students can participate, consider having them fill senior staff positions as well as elected officials.

## 2. Choose a date

Choose an upcoming regular council meeting for the junior council to hold their mock council meeting.

Publicize the meeting to encourage other students, teachers, parents, and the local journalists to attend.

## 3. Orientation Meetings

Plan a series of afternoon sessions in the weeks leading up to the mock council date. The sessions should cover:

- ▶ Meeting elected officials and staff, and overview of their job roles
- ▶ Local government obligations to the public
- ▶ Meeting procedures
- ▶ Discussion of top issues facing the local government
- ▶ Review some key agenda items from some previous meetings
- ▶ Optional: discussions on public engagement, bylaws, budgets, and the *Local Government Act* have proven helpful.

If time permits, students could have a practice session with an old agenda prior to the live council meeting.



*Less intensive option:* If your local government does not have time to host several preparatory sessions, consider inviting students to meet with elected officials and senior staff before a regular meeting the week before the mock meeting. Give students a chance to talk with elected officials and staff about their roles. Students are then invited to stay and observe the regular meeting.

#### 4. Share the Agenda

Provide students with the full agenda package for the mock meeting at the same time it is shared with the council or board.

Additional background information should be provided if an issue was discussed at a previous meeting. Students should also be provided with the names of people to contact if they have any questions about the material.

#### 5. Junior Council Mock Meeting

The meeting usually takes place on the regular meeting day in the council chambers. Prior to the start of the meeting, the Mayor or Chairperson should introduce all the junior members. Students assume the seats of the regular members and staff. Regular personnel may want to sit with their junior counterpart to provide consultation.

The junior council will move through the agenda, facilitate discussion, and vote on motions.

#### 6. Regular Council/Board Meeting

Once finished, the real council/board members assume their regular seats. At this point, the council/board can either go through the agenda in the same manner as the junior members or they may choose to

ratify, amend or override the decisions of their junior members.

#### 7. Recognition

After the meeting, a small reception could be held to give participants some sort of recognition—such as certificates from City Hall, their own name plates, or a free ticket to an activity at your recreational centre.

When the minutes of the meeting are prepared, they should reflect the junior council and 'real' council. Minutes can be signed by both junior and regular Mayor/Chairperson and Clerk. All participants should receive copies.

#### 8. Follow up

Junior council/board involvement does not have to end at this point. Many local governments continue to contact their junior counterparts requesting input on issues that the council will face in future meetings. This is an excellent way to keep students engaged and learning about local government.

#### 9. Share it!

Make sure to share the process with your public throughout the process. Photos, takeaways, video interviews with students, summaries of junior council's decisions can all help to engage local residents in the process.