AP/PPAS 4380 3.0 A Local Government Fall 2025

York University, School of Public Policy and Administration

Time and location: Mondays, 7pm in room DB 0009 (in-person seminar)

Land Acknowledgment

York University recognizes that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships with the territories upon which York University campuses are located that precede the establishment of York University. York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.

Course Director

Raphael Costa, PhD
Course Director
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Office hours by appointment

Course Description and Learning Objectives

This course explores the function, purpose, operations and financing of local government in the context of contemporary domestic and global challenges faced by municipal decision-makers. Topics covered included multi-level governance, boundaries and autonomy, council-staff relations, local elections and political economy, local planning and growth policy, municipal finance, housing, disruptive technology, transit and infrastructure development.

By introducing students to the theory and practice of public administration and management, with a focus on Canada and Canadian institutions, this course is designed to prepare participants for future study of, or careers in, local government.

Students will be exposed to topics in local government in context and in practice. As such, participants will have the opportunity to consider where local government sits in Canada's government structure, how local governments are run and elected, and what local governments are responsible for.

This is a seminar-based course. Although the instructor will provide context with a brief introduction to each class, students will have the opportunity to work through relevant issues introduced each week with their colleagues, guided by the instructor. This will further prepare students for the collaborative nature of public service and academic research.

Learning Objectives – Upon completion of this course, students will:

- Have a broad set of knowledge of how local government in Canada works through an introduction to the best practices and theories that drive local governance, policy, and services.
- Demonstrate the capacity to critically assess current approaches to the challenges facing local government in Canada today.
- Be able to identify and critically assess the implications of public sector decisions, issues, and alternative policy approaches.
- Be able to turn analysis and research into actionable recommendations on given issues in local government.
- Understand critical issues in the academic literature around local government.
- Develop skills related to analysis and critical thinking, participation and teamwork, and writing in both academic and professional settings.

Required texts:

This course utilizes one main textbook. The bulk of the reading throughout the course will come from this text. Students are expected to obtain their own copy.

Spicer, Zachary, Joseph Lyons and Kate Graham (2019). *Local Government in Practice: Cases in Governance, Planning and Policy*. Toronto: Emond [Referred to as SLG in the course schedule]. Approximate price is \$65.00.

All other readings will be available through the course website or York Libraries free of charge.

Course Assignments

1. Weekly Submissions: 25%

By 9:00am the day after each class, students are expected to submit a LinkedIn style post in eClass that reflects on one or more of the key themes discussed that day. Superior submissions will comment on one or more of the big questions identified in the class and connect them to the broader themes in the course. They may also draw on relevant current affairs to supplement their reflection. Submissions should be no more than 150 words.

2. Participation: 25%

This class is designed as a seminar. As such, each student must come prepared and participate regularly. Students will be graded based upon their attendance, understanding of reading material and quality of participation.

3. Reading Responses: 30% (3 x 10%)

Students will respond to selected discussion questions throughout the term. The discussion questions are listed under each week's readings, below. These assignments are worth 10% each. This is a self-directed exercise. Students are free to choose when they complete the assignments. Submissions should demonstrate that the writer understands how the concepts and theories presented in the course play out in their chosen topics.

At the end of the term, students must write 3 responses. Each response should be no more than 3 double-spaced pages. Responses will be accepted only in the week the discussion question. After class discussion of the week's readings, assignments will not be accepted.

4. Group Assignment: 20%

Due our final class on eClass BEFORE 7 pm. Students are expected to submit their presentation materials and their written assignment. Each student should individually submit a copy of the group submission.

Students are asked to work in groups of 3-5 people and assume the role of public sector staff in a local or regional government, or a local special purpose body identified amongst the textbook's case studies. The more specific a group gets in choosing who to represent, the easier it will be. For example, choose to be of a particular portfolio or department of a municipality, not simply of the municipality.

As representatives of your chosen agency, you are to provide an analysis of the impact of a case study for your Department's leadership. Analysis will be presented via a briefing note.

The briefing note of no more than five single-spaced pages should cover:

- Background that identifies the relevant issues related to the budget
- Analysis of the potential impacts and opportunities in the case study
- Options for the agency to take to mitigate the impact and/or take advantage of the opportunities
- Conclusions, recommendations, and next steps for their agency to take

To be successful, student groups must:

- Demonstrate understanding of their chosen agency's priorities and services
- Provide reasonable and actionable recommendations given the scope of their chosen agency
- Show that they understand the challenges that the budgeting organization faces
- Present interesting options that help their agency advance its goals

General Academic Policies

Grade Scale

Course grades conform to the 9-point Grade Scale used in undergraduate programs at York University

Percentage Mark	Letter Grade	Grade Point
90-100%	Α+	9
80-89%	Α	8
75-79%	B+	7
70-74%	В	6
65-69%	C+	5
60-64%	С	4
55-59%	D+	3
50-54%	D	2
40-49%	E	1
0-39%	F	0

Accessibility

While all individuals are expected to satisfy the requirements of their program of study and to aspire to achieve excellence, the University recognizes that persons with disabilities may require reasonable accommodation to enable them to perform at their best. The University encourages students with disabilities to register with Student Accessibility Services to discuss their accommodation needs as early as possible in the term to establish the recommended academic accommodations that will be communicated to Course Directors through their Letter of Accommodation (LOA).

The York University <u>Senate Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities</u> applies along with relevant guidelines, procedures and definitions.

Please let your instructor know as early as possible in the term if you anticipate requiring academic accommodation so that we can discuss how to consider your accommodation needs within the context of this course. Sufficient notice is needed so that reasonable steps for accommodation can be discussed. Accommodations for tests/exams normally require three (3) weeks (or 21 days) before the scheduled test/exam to arrange.

Academic Honesty and Integrity

Academic integrity offenses are taking seriously at York University. All students are expected to familiarize themselves with and adhere to the <u>Senate Academic Conduct Policy and Procedures</u>. To learn more about how to demonstrate academic integrity in your courses and to access related resources and support, visit the <u>Academic Integrity website</u>. All instances of academic dishonesty in this course will be reported to the appropriate university authorities.

Technical Requirements

Students should have access to the internet and a computer or smart device to fully participate in the course. Information about the course is available on eClass. Access to the internet is required to access eClass and fully utilize its features. News and information about the class will be shared via eClass. Students should ensure they check the course website frequently. At points in the class, students will be required to upload assignments and complete quizzes via eClass. Students should have access to a stable, high-speed internet connection to do so. If students are unsure about the quality of their internet connection or their access to necessary computer equipment they are encouraged to consult with University Information Technology services. For specific assistance please contact askit@yorku.ca

Intellectual Property

Course materials are designed for use as part of this particular course at York University and are the intellectual property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third-party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian copyright law. Students may not publish, post on an Internet site, sell, or otherwise distribute any course materials or work without the instructor's express permission. Course materials should only be used by students enrolled in this course.

Copying this material for distribution (e.g., uploading material to a commercial third-party website) may

lead to a charge of misconduct according to York's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty, and/or legal consequences for copyright violations.

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Accommodation of Religious Observances

York University is committed to respecting the religious beliefs and practices of all members of the community and to accommodating observances of special significance to adherents. Should any of the dates specified in this syllabus for assignments or quizzes pose such a conflict for you, please let the course director know in writing within the first three weeks of classes. Further guidance is available online.

Recording and Online Teaching and Learning

Activities for this course may involve recording, in partial fulfillment of the course learning outcomes. Images, audio, text/chat messaging that have been recorded may be used and/or made available by the University to students enrolled in the course and those supporting the course for the purpose of materials review, for assessment, etc. Recordings will be managed according to the University's Common Record Schedule and will be securely destroyed when no longer needed by the University. Your personal information is protected in accordance with York University's <u>Guidelines on Access of Information and Protection of Privacy</u> and the <u>Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act</u>. Access to online materials, including recordings or live meetings, is subject to York University's <u>Senate Policy on Computing and Information Technology Facilities</u>.

The University will use reasonable means to protect the security and confidentiality of the recorded information, but cannot provide a guarantee of such due to factors beyond the University's control, such as recordings being forwarded, copied, intercepted, circulated, disclosed, or stored without the University's knowledge or permission, or the introduction of malware into

computer system which could potentially damage or disrupt the computer, networks, and security settings. The University is not responsible for connectivity/technical difficulties or loss of data associated with your hardware, software, or Internet connection.

By engaging in course activities that involve recording, you are consenting to the use of your appearance, image, text/chat messaging, and voice and/or likeness in the manner and under the conditions specified herein. In the case of a live stream recording, if you choose not to have your image or audio recorded, you may disable the audio and video functionality. If you choose to participate using a pseudonym instead of your real name, you must disclose the pseudonym to your instructor in advance to facilitate class participation.

You are not permitted to disclose the link to/URL of an event or an event session recording or copies of recording to anyone, for any reason. Recordings are available only to authorized individuals who have been directly provided the above instructions/link for their use. Recordings for personal use, required to facilitate your learning and preparation of personal course/lecture notes, may not be shared with others without the permission of the instructor or event coordinator, and may not be published, posted, linked to, or otherwise made available online, including on social media feeds, even if those feeds are private.

Course Policies Regarding Assignments

- Assignments should be submitted through the course website and will not be accepted via email or in hard copy.
- Any concerns about the research process or assignments should be addressed with the
 instructor well in advance of any deadlines. The York University library system also has a
 research support service, which is available here.
- Students requiring support writing assignments are encouraged to consult with York's Writing Centre.
- Reflection assignments are due by the time class begins on the date noted in the course schedule, after which assignments will not be accepted.
- Citations for all assignments should conform to Chicago Style format. The York library has a guide available for students here.
- The penalty for late assignments is 10% per day, including weekends.

Course Schedule and Format

Classes will begin on September 8, 2025 and conclude on December 1, 2025.

This class will be delivered in-person at York's Keele campus. Even though this course meets in person, it may occasionally involve virtual sessions as needed.

Hyflex sessions are digitally transmitted and may be recorded to support teaching and learning in the classroom. As a result, York University may collect your image, voice, name, personal views and opinions, and course work under the authority of The York University Act, 1965, and for use in related educational purposes. Students who participate in a Hyflex session are consenting to have their video or image transmitted and/or recorded. If you have concerns with such transmission or recording, sit in the

designated seating area which is outside of the camera range. In addition, students who participate orally are consenting to have their voices, personal views and opinions transmitted and/or recorded. If you do not consent to the transmission or recording of your voice, please use the text-based chat function to communicate during class. Students are not permitted to use any third- party software or application to record a transmitted Hyflex session. If you have any questions about the collection or use of your personal information, please contact your instructor or the Privacy Office at info.privacy@yorku.ca. If the instructor is unable to attend lecture in person due to academic scheduling conflicts (outlined below) or health reasons, lecture will be recorded or (in a worst case scenario) cancelled.

This class is designed to prepare students for graduate work or work in the public sector. A seminar format is best suited to introduce participants to the intellectually rigorous, collaborative and creative nature of both careers.

Each session will begin with a short review of the key issues of the week. Students will be expected to prepare for class by reviewing the assigned readings and any assignments as needed. Note that the reading load is heavier than normally prescribed. It is expect that students understand the key issues presented in the readings by scanning all assigned articles and chapters. When time management is an issue, it is recommended that students focus on the cases while skimming the academic articles. Students should expect to respond to questions, reflect on material and engage with their colleagues at every meeting.

Date and	Agenda
Topic	
Sept 8: Introduction	Intro to Local Government PPAS 4380 Management
	Discussion Question: None

Readings

SLG - "A Brief Introduction to Local Government in Canada"

Raadschelders, Jos C.N. 2008. "Understanding Government: Four Intellectual Traditions in the Study of Public Administration." *Public Administration* 86 (4): 925-949.

Section 1: Local Government in Canada – Context

Sept 15:	Lecture:
Canadian	Levels of Government in Canada
Federalism	The roles of different governments

and Local Government

• The Ontario Municipal Act: Primer

Cases:

- SLG Chapter 16: "Meeting the Premier"
- SLG Chapter 18: "Responding to Recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission"

Discussion Question: What role (if any) should the federal and provincial governments play in the lives of Canada's towns and cities?

Readings

Alison Smith and Zachary Spicer. 2016. "The Local Autonomy of Canada's Largest Cities." *Urban Affairs Review*.

Christopher Leo. 2006. "Deep Federalism: Respecting Community Difference in National Policy," in *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, No. 3.

Zack Taylor. 2014. "If Different, then Why? Explaining the Divergent Political Development of Canadian and American Local Governance." *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 49: 43-80.

Sept 22: Why Local Government? Public Value Delivery

Lecture:

- Growth Engines
- Service Providers
- Public Value Delivery and Balancing Priorities while Delivering Indivisible "Products"

Cases: SLG - Chapter 10: "Debating Privatization"

Discussion Question: Beyond daily service delivery (transactions), what does local government do for residents and stakeholders?

Readings

Molotch, Harvey. 1976. "The City as a Growth Machine: Towards a Political Economy of Place." *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (2): 309-332

Sassen, Saskia. 2009. "Cities Today: A New Frontier for Major Developments", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 626: 53-71.

Sassen, Saskia. 2005. "The City: Localizations of the Global", Juxtapositions 36: 73-77.

Sept 29: Approaches to Local Government

Lecture:

- Public Administration New Public Management New Public Service
- Tools of Local Government

Cases:

- SLG Chapter 8: "Increasing User Fees for Recreation"
- SLG Chapter 14: "Building a Professional Sports Stadium"

Discussion:

• Should government be run like a business?

Readings

John M. Bryson, Barbara C. Crosby and Laura Bloomberg, "Public Value Governance: Moving beyond Traditional Public Administration and the New Public Management", *Public Administration Review*, vol. 74 no. 4 (July/August 2014), pp. 445-456.

Denhardt and Denhardt, "The New Public Service: Serving Rather than Steering", *Public Administration Review* November/December 2000, Vol. 60, No. 6

Colin Talbot, "Paradoxes and prospects of 'public value'", Public Money & Management, Volume 31, 2011 - Issue 1, pp. 27-34.

Dalton, Russell. 2005. "The Social Transformation of Trust in Government." *International Review of Sociology* 15(1): 133–154.

Oct 6:

Paying for Local

Government

Lecture:

- Roles and Responsibilities of different levels of Government: Costs and Revenues
- The Financial and Political Ramifications of Debt, Deficit, and Surplus
- The Infrastructure Gap
- Alternate methods: Public-Private-Partnerships; Regional Partnerships and Cost Sharing Agreements (Service Level Agreements); Special Purpose Bodies

Cases:

• SLG – Chapter 6: "Balancing the Budget"

Discussion: At what point do public investments become expenses?

Discussion: Canada's infrastructure gap – are we broken?

Readings

Hugh Mackenzie. 2013. <u>Canada's Infrastructure Gap: Where it Came from and Why will it Cost So Much to Close</u>? Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Jack Lucas. 2013. "Hidden in Plain View: Local Agencies, Boards, and Commissions in Canada." IMFG Perspectives. Toronto: Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance.

Kyle Hanniman. 2013. "Borrowing Today for the City of Tomorrow? Municipal Debt and Alternative Financing." IMFG Forum No. 3.

McMillan Melville and Bev Dahlby. 2014. *Do Local Governments Need Alternative Sources of Tax Revenues: An Assessment of Options for Alberta's Cities*. University of Calgary School of Public Policy, SPP Research Papers, pp. 7-26. September.

Slack, Enid. 2011. "Financing Large Cities and Metropolitan Areas," *IMFG Paper No. 3.* Toronto: Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance

Boardman, Anthony, Matt Siemiatycki, and Aidan Vining. 2016. The Theory and Evidence Concerning Public-Private Partnerships in Canada and Elsewhere. *University of Calgary SPP Research Papers* 9(2).

Oct 13:	No class
Fall Reading	
Week	

Part 2: Local Government in Practice

Oct 20:
Who Governs
(1) - Council
Elections and
Composition

Lecture

- Municipal Council: the Basics
- At large vs. the ward system

Case: Strong Mayor Powers in Ontario

- <u>Strong Mayor Authorities Scan: How Mayors Are Using their Powers</u>, AMCTO (2024)
- <u>Strong(er) Mayors in Ontario What Difference Will They Make?</u> IMFG (Updated 2022)
- Strong Mayor Powers the Erosion of Municipal Democracy. Aird & Berlis LLP

Case: Municipal electoral representation

• SLG – Chapter 3: Changing Municipal Electoral Boundaries

Discussion: Have the implementation of Strong Mayor powers in Ontario benefited residents?

Discussion: Do municipal elections advance public value by supporting good governance?

Readings

Lucas, Jack, and R. Michael McGregor. "Are city elections unique? Perceptions of electoral cleavages and social sorting across levels of government." *Electoral Studies* 66 (2020): 1021-65.

Urbaniak, Tom. "Studying mayoral leadership in Canada and the United States." *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 49 (2014): 205-228.

Tolley, Erin, Andrea Lawlor and Alexandre Fortier-Chouinard. 2023. "Whiney, Fake and I Don't Like her Hair": Gendered Assessments of Mayoral Candidates. *Urban Affairs Review* 59(4): 977-1012

Nicole Goodman, Michael McGregor, Jérôme Couture, and Sandra Breux. 2018. "Another Digital Divide? Evidence that Elimination of Paper Voting Could Lead to Digital Disenfranchisement." *Policy & Internet*.

Oct 27: Who Governs (2) -Council-Staff Relations

Lecture

- Council-Administration System
- The role of the local bureaucrat

Case: Managing Council

Development Charges Deferral Policy for Ground-Related Residential
 Buildings – Additional Information. York Region Council, June 26, 2025.

 Watch from minute 43 for 30-45 minutes.

Discussion: Do local bureaucrats have enough power?

Readings

Ontario Municipal Chief Administrative Officer Survey 2025, StrategyCorp (Aug 2025)

Catherine Althaus, "The Administrative Sherpa and the Journey of Public Service Leadership", Administration & Society, vol. 48(4) 2016.

John Nalbandian. 2006. "Politics and Administration in Local Government." International Journal of Public Administration 28 (12): 1049-1063.

David Siegal. 2015. "The Public Service Bargain in Local Government: A New Way of Looking at Relations Between Municipal Councils and CAOs." Canadian Public Administration 58 (3), pp. 406-425.

Siegel, David. 2010. "The leadership role of the municipal chief administrative officer." *Canadian Public Administration* 53(2): 139–61.

Nov 3:
How to Govern
(1) - Managing
in the Public
Sector

Lecture:

- Outcomes v. Outputs in local government
- Service and Program Logic Models
- Controls

Case:

- SLG Chapter 4: Blowing the Whistle
- Performance Management in Economic Development, EDAC (2011)

Discussion: What is the most meaningful impact a municipal bureaucrat can make?

Readings

Potts, Jason. 2009. "The Innovation Deficit in Public Services: The Curious Problem of Too Much Efficiency and Not Enough Waste and Failure." *Innovation: Management, Policy, & Practice* 11(1): 34–43

Hildebrand, Rachel and James David. 2011. Joining Public Accountability and Performance Management. *Canadian Public Administration* 54(1): 41-72.

Wichowsky, Amber and Donald Moynihan. 2008. Measuring How Administration Shapes Citizenship: A Policy Feedback Perspective on Performance Management. *Public Administration Review* 68(5): 908-20.

Nov 10:
How to
Govern (2) -
Policy
Development
and Decision-
Making

Lecture:

- What Guides Government: Strategy Business Plan Policy Procedure
- The Role of the Public in Government Decision-Making
- The De-Centralized Nature of Policy in Local Government

Case:

- SLG Chapter 24: Crafting an Arts and Culture Strategy
- <u>Tunnel Vision</u>: An Investigation into the Toronto Transit Commission Second Exit Project at Donlands and Greenwood Stations. 2012
- SLG Chapter 23: Banning Plastic Bags

Discussion: What, if any, are the opportunities for a more uniform policy approach in local government?

Discussion: What role should the public play in policy development?

Readings

Howlett, Michael and Ishani Mukherjee. 2014. "Policy Design and Non-Design: Towards a Spectrum of Policy Formulation Types." *Politics and Governance* 2(2): 57–71.

Schneider, Anne and Helen Ingram. 1993. "The Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy." *American Political Science Review* 87(2): 334-47.

Shipan, Charles R. and Craig Volden. 2012. "Policy Diffusion: Seven Lessons for Scholars and Practitioners." *Public Administration Review* 72(6): 788–796.

Nov 17: What to Govern (1) -Infrastructure and Land Use Planning

Lecture

 Local government's functions (Planning, Infrastructure Development, Public Works).

Cases:

- SLG Chapter 11: "New Condo Development"
- SLG Chapter 12: "Redeveloping an Old Industrial Area"
- SLG Chapter 19: "Negotiating an Intermunicipal Water Agreement"

Discussion: Are municipalities the best agencies to manage infrastructure? What, if any, are the alternatives?

Readings

Hugh Mackenzie. 2013. <u>Canada's Infrastructure Gap: Where it Came from and Why will it Cost So Much to Close</u>? Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Foth, Nicole, Kevin Manaugh and Ahmed M. El-Geneidy. 2013. "Towards Equitable Transit: Examining Transit Accessibility and Social Need in Toronto, Canada, 1996-2006." *Journal of Transport Geography*. Vol. 29.

Moffatt, Mike. 2021. Baby Needs a New Home: Projecting Ontario's Growing Number of Families and Their Housing Needs. Ottawa: Smart Prosperity Centre

Nov 24: What to Govern (2) -Service Delivery

Lecture:

 Service functions (Economic Development, Communications, Recreation, Emergency Services, Social and Health Services etc.)

Cases:

- SLG Chapter 7: "Dealing with Police Salaries"
- SLG Chapter 8: "Increasing User Fees for Recreation"
- SLG Chapter 15: "Organizational Structure and the Competition for Economic Development"
- Communications: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/e-bike-enforcement-campaign-1.7604479

Discussion: Are local governments in Canada responsible for too much?

Readings

Daniel Henstra, "Explaining local policy choices: A Multiple Streams analysis of municipal emergency management", Canadian Public Administration, 53:2 (2010), 241-58.

Connolly, K., & Smale, B. J. A. (2001). Changes in the financing of local recreation and cultural services: An examination of trends in Ontario from 1988 to 1996. *Leisure/Loisir*, 26(3–4), 213–234.

Paola Picco, M. A. (2008). Multicultural Libraries' services and social integration: The case of public libraries in Montreal Canada. *Public Library Quarterly*, *27*(1), 41–56.

Dec 1: WrapUp – Are Cities
Resilient?

Lecture:

Course Wrap

Discussion: What is the future of the municipal structure in Canada?

Readings

Eisenger, Peter. 2013. "Is Detroit Dead?" *Journal of Urban Affairs*. Vol. 36, No 1 Tabb, William K. 2015. "If Detroit is Dead, Some Things Need To Be Said at the Funeral" *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Vol. 37, No. 1

Sands, Gary. 2015. "Not Dead Yet: Response to William Tabb's 'If Detroit is Dead, Some Things Need To Be Said at the Funeral" *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Vol. 37, No.1

Scorsone, Eric and Mark Skidmore. 2015. "Blamed for Incompetence and Lack of Foresight and Left to Die: Response to William Tabb's 'If Detroit is Dead, Some Things Need To Be Said at the Funeral'" *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Vol. 37, No. 1

Tabb, William K. 2015. "Reply to Responses," Journal of Urban Affairs, Vol. 37, No.1