



**Elections  
Ontario**

# **Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023**

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# Message from the CEO

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This Strategic Plan lays out the path that will guide Elections Ontario for the next four years as we build on the success of the 2018 provincial general election, and continue to improve Ontario's electoral process. We are excited about the transformational journey that we have started and look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead.

In 2013, we released a strategic plan outlining our approach to modernizing the electoral process in Ontario. Our goal was to transform how elections are conducted. We achieved change in the 2018 provincial general election by integrating technology to better serve electors and improve our processes.

Over the next four years, this ongoing transformation will be guided by five priorities that support our vision, mission and values. At the same time, Ontario's electorate can continue to rely on us to conduct elections in an efficient, fair and impartial manner, providing professional, non-partisan services that will always put their needs first.

In order to achieve our vision, we will focus on optimizing our operations, developing our staff, and improving the delivery of elections, now and into the future.

Our five strategic priorities are:

- › Maintain integrity and strengthen public trust by continuously improving organizational effectiveness;
- › Cultivate a collaborative and responsive team of election professionals and partners;
- › Always be prepared to deliver fair and efficient elections;
- › Advance modern elections in a measured and principled manner; and
- › Engage electors through ongoing communication.

In establishing these five priorities, we understand our responsibilities and the trust that Ontarians have placed in us.

We recognize our role as financial stewards and are committed to advancing our knowledge of best business practices, leveraging partnership opportunities, and seeking efficiencies in how we deliver our services.

We will continue to respond to the changing needs and expectations of our stakeholders while ensuring that our processes foster inclusiveness and remove barriers. We are committed to providing all electors with opportunities to exercise their right to vote independently and in confidence.

We are proud of our accomplishments to date—we have been steadfast in providing professional, non-partisan services to all of our stakeholders and we intend to remain a leader in electoral administration across Canada and around the world as we transform the future of elections in this province. While we are on this path, we always adhere to the core principles of our democracy: accessibility, one vote per voter, secrecy, integrity and security.

We are committed to making voting easy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Essensa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg Essensa  
Chief Electoral Officer

# Stakeholders

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Elections Ontario is committed to putting Ontario's electors first. In order to understand and respond to the needs of Ontario electors, we work regularly with stakeholders in Ontario's electoral process to assess and improve the services we are able to offer.

As we continue to transform elections in the province, we will regularly seek input from our stakeholders to ensure we are always meeting the needs of Ontario's electors. Some of our stakeholders include:

## **Ontarians**

Our primary responsibility is to serve Ontario's more than 10 million electors by administering the provincial electoral process, informing voters about their democratic rights, and providing information about how, when and where to vote. We want to make the voting process easier and more accessible for all electors.

## **Political Entities**

Political entities include candidates, nomination contestants, political parties and their constituency associations, leadership contestants, and third parties who are actively involved in the political process. We regulate their activities in accordance with statutory requirements. We also provide candidates and political parties with voters lists and electoral maps to support their activities. As the needs of political entities change, we are prepared to respond and provide relevant and timely information in a fair and consistent manner.

## **The Legislative Assembly of Ontario**

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario is responsible for passing, amending, and repealing laws in Ontario. The Legislature expects us to be aware of, and proactively involved with, the legislation that governs the electoral process. We are committed to continuing to work with the Ontario Legislature to clarify, modernize and streamline the legislation that governs the administration of elections in the province.

## **Media**

The media plays an important role in the electoral process by informing the public about when, where and how Ontario electors can vote. Whether through traditional channels like television, radio, and newspapers, or through digital platforms, including websites, applications, social media, and blogs, media play a powerful role in reaching, informing and motivating electors. Recognizing this, Elections Ontario works to provide journalists with information that is clear, correct and complete to share with Ontarians. We will continue to work collaboratively with Ontario media to provide them—and subsequently electors—with the timely information required to vote.

## **Advocacy Groups**

We regularly work with advocacy groups representing the interests of all Ontario electors, including Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, students, new Canadians and incarcerated electors. We will continue to seek the appropriate involvement and engagement of advocacy groups as we look to transform how we deliver our services to better meet all electors' needs.

# About Us

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## **Vision**

Elections Ontario will build modern services for Ontarians that put the needs of electors first.

## **Mission**

Our mission is to uphold the integrity and accessibility of the electoral process and to manage elections in an efficient, fair, and impartial manner.

## **Values**

Our values are the foundation of everything we do. They are what guide us as we realize our vision and mission.

We value:

### **Integrity**

We believe in administering transparent and non-partisan processes that maintain integrity and the democratic rights of all electors.

### **Accessibility**

We believe that the administration of the electoral process must be accessible, open, impartial and characterized by the consistent application of legislation.

## **Responsiveness and innovation**

We believe that, in administering the electoral process, we must respond to changing needs and encourage innovation.

## **Accountability**

We believe in creating an organizational culture where we understand and live by clear principles of professional and ethical conduct.

## **Respect**

We believe in recognizing and celebrating diversity, building collaborative working relationships based on mutual respect, fairness and equality and demonstrating courteous conduct and communication in all that we do.

## **Efficiency**

We believe that we need to ensure the prudent, effective and efficient use of the public funds with which we are entrusted.

## **Who we are**

Elections Ontario is a non-partisan office of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario responsible for administering provincial elections in Ontario.

Our team is made up of full-time staff working out of our head office, and a returning officer and election clerk for each of Ontario's 124 electoral districts. During preparations for an election, our team grows to include the temporary staff that help us administer the many tasks involved with delivering a provincial election.



## About Us (continued)

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### What we do

General elections, by-elections and referenda in Ontario are the heart of our organization's activities. For the 2018 provincial general election, which introduced technology in the polls, we set up over 7,000 voting locations across the province and hired over 50,000 election workers to help Ontario's 10.2 million electors vote.

During elections, we are also responsible for:

- › Providing electors with information about when, where and how to vote as part of our ongoing outreach and education programs;
- › Administering and protecting the integrity of the voting process by ensuring that provincial elections are efficient, secure and accountable; and
- › Overseeing the tabulation and delivery of results to the public, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and our other stakeholders.

Between general elections, we pilot initiatives to improve the voting process, implement regulatory changes when needed, fulfill our mandate as set out in the *Election Act* and the *Election Finances Act*, support other electoral management bodies, and administer any by-elections and referenda.

The collective efforts of our team of professionals—from returning office and voting location staff to our head office personnel and delivery partners—contribute to the successful delivery of provincial elections. Our expert team remains dedicated to providing high-level, quality services to all our stakeholders and delivering elections that are secure, transparent and accessible for all electors. As we move forward, we will continue to work together to facilitate and preserve the integrity of the voting process for all Ontario electors.

# Mandate

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The Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, appointed under the province's *Election Act*. Elections Ontario, under the Chief Electoral Officer, is responsible for the following:

## **Under the *Election Act*:**

- › Administering the electoral process in general elections and by-elections;
- › Maintaining the Permanent Register of Electors for Ontario;
- › Maintaining a register of electors who temporarily reside outside Ontario;
- › Maintaining a provisional register of 16 and 17-year-olds;
- › Testing new voting equipment, vote-counting equipment and alternative voting methods;
- › Conducting public education on the electoral process;
- › Investigating and reporting apparent contraventions; and
- › Recommending administrative reforms.

## **Under the *Election Finances Act*:**

- › Overseeing the registration and financial activities of political parties, constituency associations, candidates, leadership contestants, nomination contestants and third-party advertisers;
- › Online publishing of financial statements for the people and entities governed by the *Act*, including the lists of contributors who contribute in excess of \$100;
- › Online publishing of real-time disclosure of contributions received by political parties and leadership contestants;
- › Reviewing financial statements to ensure compliance with the *Act*;
- › Distributing publicly-funded subsidies;
- › Investigating and reporting apparent contraventions; and
- › Recommending reforms.

## Mandate (continued)

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### **Duties mandated by other legislation:**

- Other specific duties assigned by the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the *Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999*, and the *Fluoridation Act, 1990*.
- Meeting the requirements of electoral boundaries as prescribed by the *Representation Act, 2015*.

# The Environment

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In carrying out our mandate, we must balance how to best serve our stakeholders while protecting the integrity of the electoral process.

There are a number of internal and external factors, as well as legislative requirements, that impact our ability to fulfill our mandate and meet the needs of our stakeholders, including:

## **Electoral Preparedness**

Elections Ontario operates in a dynamic environment that calls for a flexible and adaptive approach to deliver an election of any size, at any time. We need to remain ready and able to deliver elections, by-elections and referenda in accordance with our legislated mandate, and to do so in a way that meets the expectations of Ontario's electors and our other stakeholders.

## **Evolving Workforce**

Ontario's population is expected to grow by 4.2 million over the next 25 years. Rapid change is also anticipated for Ontario's workplaces. An estimated 25 percent of Ontarians are expected to be above retirement age by 2040, with millennials making up the majority of the workforce. This change is predicted to affect the area of management in particular, where retirement rates are likely to be the highest. In preparation for this demographic shift, organizations have been placing greater focus on succession planning and knowledge management to ensure a smooth transition when the time comes. While the province's growing population is expected to impact the number of electoral districts, our field staffing model, and the overall cost of elections, the anticipated changes to the workforce over the next two decades must also be factored into our operational planning.

## The Environment (continued)

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### **Technological Changes**

Most Ontarians live highly connected lives and expect services that are readily available online. However, the integration of technology presents both challenges and opportunities. Electoral agencies must preserve the integrity of the voting process, protect elector privacy and maintain data security and voter confidence. At the same time, technology enables us to leverage new, more efficient ways to communicate and engage with Ontario's electorate, while keeping in mind the "digital divide" and the disparity between those with access to Internet, and those without. Elections Ontario's offerings must remain available, secure and accessible to all electors.

### **Cybersecurity**

As information and public processes move online, digital tools to steal, manipulate and disrupt computer systems are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Organizations are developing cybersecurity strategies to protect their systems and infrastructure and to ensure their services remain available to users. Globally, electoral agencies are taking steps to strengthen cybersecurity to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process and maintain public confidence in both agencies and the elections they administer. As an organization, we must continue to enhance our cybersecurity to protect and preserve our systems, critical infrastructure, services and, most importantly, voter information.

## Public Trust

Public trust and confidence in our public institutions help these organizations run more smoothly and effectively. However, the 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer—an annual international trust and credibility survey—indicates a pronounced decline of trust in the public institutions of democratic countries over the last five years. Elections Ontario continues to enjoy a high level of public trust and confidence as confirmed in our recent 2018 Survey of General Electors in Ontario, which reflected that 91% of general electors have confidence in Elections Ontario. However, we do not take this level of confidence for granted. We continue to ensure that we undertake our mandate responsibly and with the highest level of integrity. We know that public trust is essential to electoral agencies and elections. Trust in the integrity and security of an electoral agency translates into trust in the electoral process and the outcome of an election, and can influence whether or not electors participate in the voting process.

## Legislation

Responsive legislation allows electoral agencies to adapt to change and meet stakeholders' evolving expectations, while still safeguarding the electoral process. Changes to the *Election Act* and *Election Finances Act* allowed for a measured and principled approach to the introduction of technology in the polls for the 2018 general election, which in turn provided electors with a better voting experience. We support and will recommend other legislative revisions that will inform process improvements and respond to changing elector expectations, all the while preserving the integrity of the electoral process.

## Good Stewardship

As a public institution, Elections Ontario remains accountable to Ontarians and must continue to practice strong financial stewardship while modernizing operations and ensuring continuity of service for electors.

# Strategic Priorities

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Over the next four years, we are committed to optimizing our operations, developing our team, and improving how we deliver elections now and in the future.

To guide our work and realize our vision, we will focus on implementing the following five strategic priorities:

## **Maintain integrity and strengthen public trust by continuously improving organizational effectiveness**

Strategies:

- › Modernize and streamline operations to better meet stakeholder expectations and ensure good stewardship of public funds.
- › Leverage data management to inform all decisions, plans and actions.
- › Ensure compliance with the *Election Act* and the *Election Finances Act* through education and regulation.
- › Strengthen security and oversight to protect the privacy and integrity of electors' personal information.
- › Enhance cybersecurity to safeguard critical infrastructure, services and systems.

## **Cultivate a collaborative and responsive team of election professionals and partners**

Strategies:

- › Actively recruit the right talent to build the future elections team.
- › Develop talent to maintain and advance a team of results-oriented professionals.
- › Foster succession planning and knowledge transfer to maintain business continuity.
- › Build on collaborative vendor partnerships to support innovation and effective delivery.

## **Always be prepared to deliver fair and efficient elections**

Strategies:

- › Ensure a flexible and scalable election plan.
- › Establish an efficient election delivery plan, which allows for the integration of changes.
- › Deliver general elections, by-elections and referenda in accordance with our legislative mandate.
- › Provide electoral services that facilitate access to voting and respect the dignity and independence of all Ontarians.

## **Advance modern elections in a measured and principled manner**

Strategies:

- › Assess and analyze the environment to inform the modernization of future elections.
- › Better understand electors' needs and behaviours to build modern and responsive services.
- › Recommend legislative change to support modernization of electoral services.
- › Pilot modernization initiatives through by-elections.

## **Engage electors through ongoing communication**

Strategies:

- › Strengthen electors' awareness and knowledge of when, where and how to register and vote.
- › Cultivate relations with stakeholders to anticipate and respond to their needs and expectations.
- › Engage new electors and those facing barriers through effective education and responsive communication about the voting process.
- › Enhance existing tools to support two-way communication with electors.



# Key Performance Indicators

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As part of Elections Ontario’s commitment to transparency and accountability to the public, we are introducing key performance indicators (KPIs) for our strategic priorities. These KPIs are rooted in our vision and mission, and updates on our progress will be provided in our annual reports.

## **Elector Knowledge and Engagement**

<b>KPI - Percentage of electors who knew when, where and how to vote</b>	<b>2018 Survey Results</b>	<b>2022-23 Target</b>
When is election day	96 %	Maintain/ enhance
Where to vote	94 %	
What documentation to bring to vote	93 %	

Elections Ontario is responsible for ensuring electors know when, where and how to vote. By putting electors first, we remain committed to responding to their needs in our ongoing efforts to deliver accessible services.

## Public Confidence in Elections Ontario

<b>KPI - Percentage of electors who express confidence in Elections Ontario</b>	<b>2018 Survey Results</b>	<b>2022-23 Target</b>
Public confidence	91%	Maintain/enhance

Elections Ontario has long enjoyed a high level of confidence from all our stakeholders. We are committed to maintaining that confidence and will regularly seek input from our stakeholders.

## Fiduciary Responsibility and Efficiency

<b>KPI - Accuracy of budget projections based on percentage of general election budget utilized</b>	<b>2018 Results</b>	<b>2022-23 Target</b>
Budget utilization	98%	Within 5% of allocated funds

Elections Ontario takes its responsibility as a steward of public funds very seriously. We are committed to spending wisely while delivering on our electoral mandate, and ensuring we have the trust of, and act in the best interest of, electors in Ontario.

Please visit [www.elections.on.ca](http://www.elections.on.ca) for information on data sources for these key performance indicators.



[www.elections.on.ca](http://www.elections.on.ca)  
1.888.ONT.VOTE (668.8683)  
TTY 1.888.292.2312