

**TOWNSHIP OF ESSA  
CONSENT AGENDA  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2024**

**A – ITEMS RECEIVED AS INFORMATION**

- p. 1      1. Essa Public Library October 2024 Report.
- p. 4      2. Nottawasaga Futures Newsletter.
- p. 13     3. Correspondence from the Township of Papineau-Cameron dated November 12, 2024, re: Resolution - Amendment to the Ontario Building Code.
- p. 14     4. Correspondence from the Township of Adjala-Tosorontio dated November 19, 2024, re: Resolution – Enbridge Gas Inc. Application to Increase Natural Gas Rates.
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- p. 17     5. Correspondence from the Township of Adjala-Tosorontio dated November 19, 2024, re: Resolution – Request for Support Regarding Suspicious Fires.
- p.19      6. Correspondence from the Township of Terrace Bay dated November 19, 2024, re: Resolution – Ambulance Shortages and Healthcare Systems Issues.
- p. 21     7. Correspondence from the Minister of Finance dated November 22, 2024, re: Ontario Increasing Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund to \$600 Million.
- p. 26     8. Correspondence from the Township of Springwater dated November 22, 2024, re: Request for Repeal of Wage Increases for all Members of County Council.
- p. 28     9. Correspondence from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation dated October/November 2024, re: InTouch – MPAC’s Municipal and Stakeholder Newsletter.
- p. 35     10. Correspondence from AMO re: Policy Update – NDP Motion on Municipal Fiscal Sustainability, Mental Health and Addictions, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure.
- p. 39     11. Correspondence from the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) re: November 2024 Board Meeting Highlights.
12. Correspondence from the County of Simcoe:
- p. 41      a) November 14, 2024 – Release – County Provides 20 New Safe, Affordable Homes for Vulnerable Seniors in Barrie.
- p. 43      b) November 21, 2024 – Correspondence – Upper-Tier Planning and O.Reg. 525/97 Update.
- p. 45      c) November 26, 2024 – Release – County Council Approves 2025 County of Simcoe Budget
13. Correspondence from AMCTO:
- p. 51      a) Policy Update – Advocacy Update: AMCTO at Queen’s Park & Recent Submissions.
- p. 54      b) Recommendations for Provincial Update - Modernization of the Municipal Elections Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

- p. 99      14. Correspondence from the Township of Clearview dated October 8, 2024, re:  
Provincial Updates to the Municipal Elections Act.

**B – ITEMS RECEIVED AND REFERRED TO SERVICE AREA FOR ACTION**

None

**C – ITEMS RECEIVED AND REFERRED TO SERVICE AREA FOR REVIEW AND  
REPORT TO COUNCIL**

None.

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## October 2024 Report

Prepared by: Emily Nakeff



“ The word library isn’t often associated with friendship, making connections or feeling a sense of belonging. Our very own Angus library has done just that for us.

- Leigh and Ruby

### MATERIALS CIRCULATED

ANGUS	THORNTON
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<b>9,686</b>	<b>993</b>
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68,121 TOTAL IN 2024

### MATERIALS USED IN HOUSE

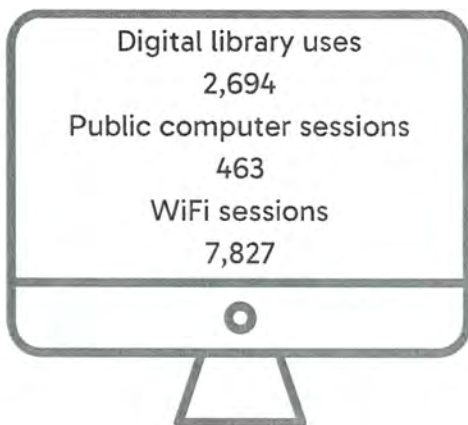
ANGUS	THORNTON
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<b>514</b>	<b>66</b>
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4,060 TOTAL IN 2024

### INTERLIBRARY LOANS

**40** Items borrowed from other libraries



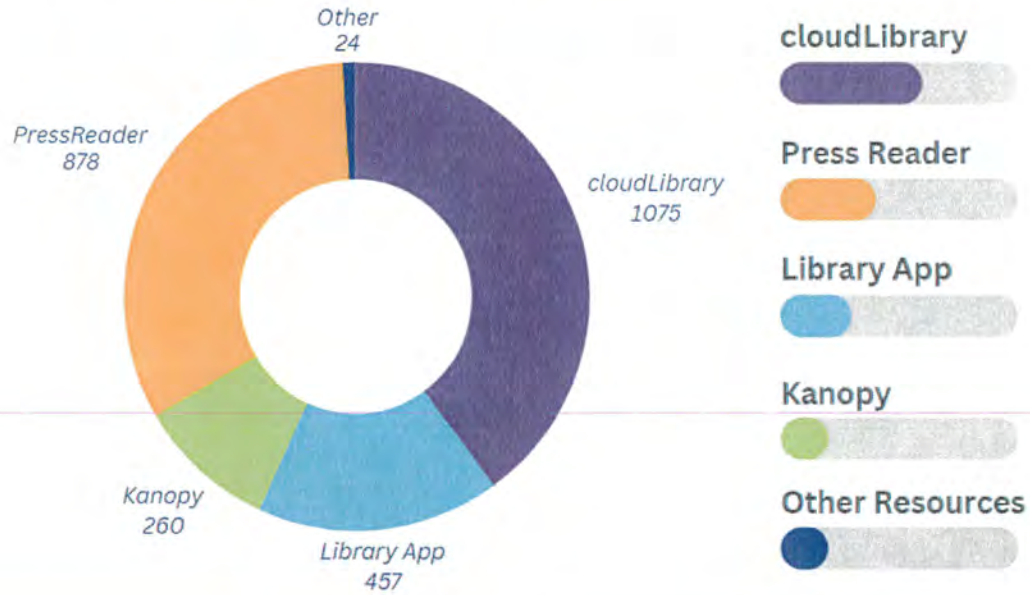
### New Memberships

Angus	124
Thornton	3
Year-to-date total	1,045

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(October 2023 99)

# DIGITAL LIBRARY USES



## KIDS

Let's Learn Spanish - AN	10
Parachute Play	30
Tinker Tuesday - AN	40
Wiggles and Giggles - AN	135
Imagination Station - TH	46
Toddler Time - AN	70
Growing Together: Indigenous Storytime - AN	16
Angus Storytime - AN	41
Thornton Storytime - TH	67
Family Play Zone - AN	42
Songs & Stories - AN	33
Search and Find - AN	92
Search and Find - TH	21
<b>Halloween Events</b>	
PA Day Haunted House Craft - AN	15
Halloween Storytime - AN	12
Teeny Halloweeny	151

## TEEN PROGRAMS

Pumpkin Painting - AN	16
Teen Movie - AN	3

## ADULTS

Cercle de Conversation	26
Hobby Circle - AN	12
Writers Group - AN	8
Movie Night for Adults - AN	7
Angus Book Clubs - AN	18
Thornton Book Club	9
Simcoe Reads Live Debate	62
Prenatal Classes - AN	40

## SENIORS

Seniors Social - AN	43
Seniors Social - TH	29

“ I forgot how much stuff you have here. And everyone is so friendly.

- Patron comment

YouTube - Total Subscribers	915
YouTube - Views	6,922
Facebook - Total Followers	1,830
Instagram - Total Followers	885

# Simcoe READS

“ [Simcoe Reads books] are always good.  
It’s like a guaranteed amazing read.

- Patron Comment

<h2>6</h2> <p>PARTICIPATING LIBRARIES</p>	<h2>62</h2> <p>ATTENDED THE LIVE FINAL DEBATE</p>	<h2>138</h2> <p>TOTAL CHECKOUTS OF SIMCOE READS TITLES</p>
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Sarah Corbett

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**Subject:**

FW: Nottawasaga Futures Newsletter



**Nottawasaga Futures is a community  
economic development agency serving the  
South Simcoe Area.**



**BWG Business Catalyst Centre Workshops**

**Winning Marketing Strategies for Impact**

**December 5, 2024 - Time 6pm - 7:30 pm**

The team from Addictive Design will lead a dynamic workshop on marketing strategies for small businesses.

**ADDICTIVE DESIGN**

We kindly ask attendees to bring a non-perishable food item for donation to the food bank.

  **Nottawasaga Futures**  **Ontario**

This project is funded in part by the Ontario government through the Rural Economic Development Program

Join us on December 5th from 6:00 to 7:30 PM at the Community Hub, 177 Church St., Bradford, ON, for a dynamic marketing seminar presented by Addictive Design!

Learn the latest trends and practical techniques to help you break through the clutter and grow your brand and business—whether you're a startup or a large corporation.



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It's a fantastic opportunity to connect with fellow business owners in a fun, social atmosphere!

We can't wait to see you there!

Please don't forget to bring your non-perishable food donation!

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[Register here](#)

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# Nottawasaga Futures Consulting Program

The Nottawasaga Futures Consulting Program in partnership with the municipalities of Bradford West Gwillimbury, Innisfil, and New Tecumseth, was developed after extensive feedback from local businesses.

It is built to specifically address the needs of businesses in this region and provides start-up's and existing businesses the opportunity to apply for coaching assistance to further develop their business.

## Eligibility :

- Business owners in the municipalities of Adjala Tosorontio, Bradford West Gwillimbury, Innisfil, and New Tecumseth can now access support through targeted coaching support in the following areas:
  - Pivoting the Business
  - Sales and Marketing
  - Social Media Best Practises
  - Human Resources and Workforce Development
  - Financial Management
  - Business Management
  - Quickbooks Training



WHEN YOUR BUSINESS  
SUCCEEDS,  
SO DO WE

To learn more contact  
Nottawasaga Futures • 705-502-0311 •  
ced@nottawasaga.com

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## We believe there is a job for everyone in our community.

- ✓ Paid Interviews: We pay to meet you!
- ✓ Work Immediately: Positions are available!
- ✓ Close to Home: Work in Simcoe County!
- ✓ Free Registration: There is no fee to register!
- ✓ We'll Stay Connected: We're here to help!



Call Today! (705) 502-0311  
Visit: [nttemps.com](http://nttemps.com)

At NT Temps, we believe there is a job for everyone in our community.

We are available from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm Monday to Friday

Contact us today at (705) 502-0311 or [colleen@nttemps.com](mailto:colleen@nttemps.com).

For more information on NT Temps click here [www.nttemps.com](http://www.nttemps.com).

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The Fall 2024 issue of Outdoor Canada & Outdoor Canada West features an article on The Nottawasaga River Restoration Program, coordinated by the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority and Nottawasaga Futures/ South Simcoe Streams Network.

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Have your say. Join the conversation.



# PLANNING TOMORROW TOGETHER

Official Plan Review and Growth Management Study



[newtecumseth.ca](http://newtecumseth.ca)



What will New Tecumseth look like in the 2051? The Town is growing, but where will everyone live? What kind of housing will people want to live in? What modes of transportation will people use to get necessities? How will agricultural lands and natural heritage features be protected long-term?

Building on the Municipal Comprehensive Review led by Simcoe County, the Town is projected to grow from its current population of 43,948 people to 80,590 people by 2051. Employment is also

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expected to increase to 31,620 jobs over the same time period. This means approximately 448 hectares of land is needed for residential and community development and 72 hectares of land is needed for employment lands.

You see the draft growth scenarios on the Town's webpage here:

<https://www.newtecumseth.ca/en/town-hall/official-plan-review.aspx#Phase-3-Scenarios-Oct-Dec-2024->

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Have your say and take the **Official Plan Review & Growth Management Study Survey**

The survey is open until December 11th, 2024.

Please **subscribe** to the Town of New Tecumseth Planning "What's Happening" eBlast to keep informed about the project and other engagement opportunities. Information will also be posted on this project webpage: <https://www.newtecumseth.ca/en/town-hall/official-plan-review.aspx>

## **Financial Support and Resources**

- [Nottawasaga Futures Community Investment Fund](#)
- [Steps to Consider Before Starting a Business](#)
- [Canada - Ontario Job Grant](#)
- [Ontario Business Registry](#)
- [Business Benefits Finder](#)
- [Canada Business App](#)

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**THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF PAPINEAU-CAMERON**

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4861 Highway 17, P.O. Box 630, Mattawa ON P0H 1V0  
Office: (705) 744-5610 • Fax: (705) 744-0434 • Garage: (705) 744-5072  
Website: www.papineaucameron.ca

DATE: **November 12, 2024** RESOLUTION NUMBER: **2024-328**

MOVED BY: *Shelley Belanger* SECONDED BY: *MChenier*

**WHEREAS** Ontario is facing a significant affordable housing crisis, with many residents struggling to secure safe and affordable living accommodations;

**AND WHEREAS** the crisis of homelessness in Ontario continues to affect thousands of individuals and families, necessitating urgent and effective housing solutions;

**AND WHEREAS** the current Ontario Building Code contains regulations that may inadvertently hinder the development of affordable housing by imposing excessive costs and barriers on individuals and developers;

**AND WHEREAS** current building code regulations may restrict the development of innovative housing solutions designed to address the needs of homeless individuals and families;

**AND WHEREAS** an increase in affordable housing units is essential to promote economic stability, community well-being, and social equity within Ontario;

**AND WHEREAS** providing pre-approved affordable housing plans can streamline the construction process, reduce costs, and facilitate quicker access to housing for those in need;

**THAT** the Council of Papineau-Cameron Township hereby calls on the Ontario government to amend the Ontario Building Code to include provisions for pre-approved affordable housing plans specifically aimed at supporting low income and homeless individuals, including:

1. Standardized Designs: Creating a set of pre-approved housing designs that meet safety and quality standards while being cost-effective and quick to construct.
2. Flexible Design Standards: Allowing for innovative building designs and materials that meet affordability criteria while ensuring safety and livability.
3. Community Integration: Ensuring that these housing designs can be integrated into existing neighborhoods in a way that respects community character and promotes acceptance.
4. Support for Diverse Models: Including options for various types of housing, such as tiny homes, modular units, and converted shipping containers, to cater to different needs and preferences.

**AND FURTHER THAT** the Council of Papineau-Cameron Township encourages the Ontario government to engage with stakeholders, including architects, housing advocates, and service providers, to develop these pre-approved plans that effectively address the needs of low income and homeless individuals;

**AND FURTHER THAT** this resolution be provided to the Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, Hon. Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Hon. Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, Hon. Victor Fedeli, Chair of Cabinet, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Association Municipalities of Ontario, Ontario Building Officials Association, Municipalities of Ontario.

CARRIED: *Robert Corriveau* NOT CARRIED: \_\_\_\_\_ **COPY**  
(Mayor) (Mayor)

Recorded Vote (Upon Request of Councillor \_\_\_\_\_) Section 246 (1) Municipal Act

RECORDED DIVISION VOTE	YES Signature	NO Signature	ABSTAIN Signature
Mayor Robert Corriveau			
Deputy Mayor Shelley Belanger			
Councillor Keith Dillabough			
Councillor Jason Bélanger			
Councillor Mélanie Chenier			



7855 Sideroad 30  
Alliston, ON L9R 1V1  
P.: 705-434-5055  
F.: 705-434-5051

November 19, 2024

Sent Via Email: [premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca)

The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario  
Premier's Office  
Room 281, Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford,

**Re: Enbridge Gas Inc. Application to Increase Natural Gas Rates**

I am writing to advise that at the Regular Council Meeting held on November 13, 2024, Council adopted a resolution urging the Province and the Ontario Energy Board to deny the application put forward by Enbridge Gas Inc., to increase its 2025 natural gas distribution rates.

The resolution reads as follows:

*WHEREAS Enbridge Gas Inc. has applied to increase its natural gas distribution rates in 2025;*

*AND WHEREAS many residents are facing a cost of living crisis;*

*AND WHEREAS Natural Gas must continue to play an integral role in meeting the energy needs of Ontario;*

*NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT that the Council of the Township of Adjala-Tosorontio urges the Province and the Ontario Energy Board to deny the application from Enbridge Gas Inc. to increase its natural gas distribution rates for 2025;*

*AND FURTHER THAT a copy of the resolution be sent to Honourable Premier Ford, Honour Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources, Brian Saunderson, MPP Simcoe-Grey and all Simcoe County Municipalities.*

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself by email at [clerk@adjtos.ca](mailto:clerk@adjtos.ca) or phone at 705-434-5055 ext. 263.





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7855 Sideroad 30  
Alliston, ON L9R 1V1  
P.: 705-434-5055  
F.: 705-434-5051

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. Reid".

Robin Reid  
Municipal Clerk

Cc: Honorable Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources  
Brian Saunderson, MPP Simcoe-Grey  
Simcoe County Municipalities





# NOTICE OF A RATE HEARING

## Enbridge Gas Inc. has applied to increase its natural gas distribution rates

Enbridge Gas Inc. has applied to increase its natural gas rates effective April 1, 2025, to recover costs associated with meeting its obligations under the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* and the regulations under the *Ontario Emissions Performance Standards*, as well as to recover other related account balances.

If the application is approved as filed, a typical residential customer of Enbridge Gas Inc. would see the following total annual increase:

<b>EGD Rate Zone (2,400 m3)</b>	<b>\$70.84</b>
<b>Union South Rate Zone (2,200 m3)</b>	<b>\$63.83</b>
<b>Union North Rate Zone (2,200 m3)</b>	<b>\$64.10</b>

For a typical residential customer, these increases include an annual bill increase arising from the 2025 carbon charges of \$68.71 (EGD) and \$62.98 (Union South and Union North); plus, a one-time charge of \$2.13 (EGD), \$0.85 (Union South) and \$1.12 (Union North) to recover the balances in the related deferral and variance accounts.

Other customers, including businesses, will also be affected. It's important to review the application carefully to determine whether you may be affected by the proposed changes.

The federal government's *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* establishes a carbon pricing program under which a natural gas utility in Ontario, such as Enbridge Gas Inc., is required to pay a carbon charge to the federal government on the volume of natural gas that it delivers to its customers, and on the volume of natural gas used in the operation of Enbridge Gas Inc.'s natural gas distribution system. The federal carbon charge came into effect on April 1, 2019, has increased annually on April 1<sup>st</sup> between 2020 and 2024 and will increase again on April 1, 2025.

The *Ontario Emissions Performance Standards* program is the Ontario government's carbon pricing system for industrial emitters that came into effect on January 1, 2022, and replaced the federal government's Output-Based Pricing System in Ontario.

### YOU SHOULD KNOW

There are three types of OEB hearings: oral, electronic and written. The applicant has applied for, and the OEB intends to proceed with, a written hearing. If you think a different hearing type is needed, you can write to us to explain why.

This hearing will be held under section 78 of the *Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998*.

Ce document est aussi disponible en français.

During this hearing, we will hear questions and arguments from participants about this case. We will also hear questions and arguments from participants that have registered as Intervenors. After the hearing, we will decide whether to approve the application.

### HAVE YOUR SAY

You have the right to information about this application and to participate in the process.

Visit [www.oeb.ca/notice](http://www.oeb.ca/notice) and use file number **EB-2024-0251** to:

- Review the application
- File a letter with your comments
- Apply to become an intervenor

### IMPORTANT DATES

You must engage with the OEB on or before **November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024** to:

- Provide input on the hearing type (oral, electronic or written)
- Apply to be an intervenor

If you do not, the hearing will move forward without you, and you will not receive any further notice of the proceeding.

### PRIVACY

If you write a letter of comment, your name and the content of your letter will be put on the public record and the OEB website. If you are a business or if you apply to become an intervenor, all the information you file will be on the OEB website.

### LEARN MORE

#### Ontario Energy Board

- /TTY: 1 877-632-2727
- 🕒 Monday - Friday: 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM
- 🌐 [oeb.ca/notice](http://oeb.ca/notice)

#### Enbridge Gas Inc.

- 1 877-362-7434
- 🕒 Monday - Friday: 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM
- 🌐 <https://www.enbridgegas.com/en/about-enbridge-gas/regulatory>



Ontario Energy Board

November 19, 2024

Sent Via Email: [premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca)

The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario  
Premier's Office  
Room 281, Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford,

**Re: Request for Support regarding Suspicious Fires**

I am writing to advise that at the Regular Council Meeting held on November 13, 2024, Council adopted a resolution requesting the Province to dedicate resources to address the emerging safety crisis within our community and across the province relating to a pattern of suspicious fires involving newly constructed unoccupied houses.

The resolution reads as follows:

*WHEREAS a safety crisis is emerging within our community and across the province relating to a pattern of suspicious fires involving newly constructed unoccupied houses;*

*AND WHEREAS the Office of the Fire Marshall (OFM) has declined to dedicate resources to investigate these suspicious fires;*

*AND WHEREAS it is the role of the OFM to conduct fire investigations and act as principal adviser to the government on fire safety issues;*

*NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the Township of Adjala-Tosorontio urges the Province to dedicate resources to ensure that all necessary steps are being taken to investigate these suspicious fires and protect our residents;*

*AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this resolution be sent to the Honourable Premier Doug Ford, Honourable Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General, Brian Saunderson, MPP, Simcoe-Grey, Ontario Fire Marshal, O.P.P., Ontario Home Builders Association and all Simcoe County Municipalities.*

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself by email at [clerk@adjtos.ca](mailto:clerk@adjtos.ca) or phone at 705-434-5055 ext. 263.



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7855 Sideroad 30  
Alliston, ON L9R 1V1  
P.: 705-434-5055  
F.: 705-434-5051

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. Reid".

Robin Reid  
Municipal Clerk

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Cc: Honorable Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General  
Brian Saunderson, MPP Simcoe-Grey  
Ontario Fire Marshal  
Ontario Provincial Police  
Ontario Home Builders Association  
Simcoe County Municipalities





## The Corporation of the Township of Terrace Bay

P.O. Box 40, 1 Selkirk Avenue, Terrace Bay, ON, P0T 2W0  
Phone: (807) 825-3315 Fax: (807) 825-9576

November 19, 2024

Minister of Health Sylvia Jones  
[sylvia.jones@ontario.ca](mailto:sylvia.jones@ontario.ca)

Dear Minister Jones,

At the Township of Terrace Bay Regular Council Meeting held on Monday September 16, 2024, the following resolution was put forth by Councillor Chris Dube and was passed.

### **Re: Ambulance Shortages and Healthcare System Issues**

#### **Resolution 266-2024**

**Moved by: Councillor Johnson**

**Seconded by: Councillor Dube**

WHEREAS, the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Terrace Bay is gravely concerned about the ongoing shortages and staffing challenges facing Superior North EMS (SNEMS);

WHEREAS, the provincial funding for ambulance services, currently at 50%, along with the city's 50% contribution, has been falling short, leading to financial strain on municipalities and regional partners, including the City of Thunder Bay;

WHEREAS, the rolling shortages of paramedics and EMS personnel in the region present a significant risk to public safety and healthcare services in northern communities, which are disproportionately affected by the province-wide shortage of paramedics;

WHEREAS, recruitment and retention issues, including insufficient wages and benefits, lack of mental health supports, frequent exposure to traumatic experiences, and inadequate recovery time between work periods, are causing high turnover rates and burnout among EMS workers;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Honorable Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health, be requested to take immediate action to address the funding shortfalls and structural challenges in the delivery of EMS services in northern communities, including:

1. Increasing provincial funding to support EMS services and reduce the financial burden on municipalities;
2. Implementing incentives such as "learn and stay" grants to encourage paramedics to live and work in northern Ontario;
3. Enhancing support systems for EMS workers, including improved wages, benefits, and mental health resources.

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## The Corporation of the Township of Terrace Bay

P.O. Box 40, 1 Selkirk Avenue, Terrace Bay, ON, P0T 2W0  
Phone: (807) 825-3315 Fax: (807) 825-9576

AND THAT, this resolution be forwarded to Minister Sylvia Jones, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), and all Ontario municipalities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Hall".

J. Hall  
Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk

**CC:**  
AMO  
All Ontario Municipalities

NEWS RELEASE

## Ontario Increasing Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund to \$600 Million

\$100 million increase will support 390 municipalities across the province

November 22, 2024

Finance

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UXBRIDGE — As part of the provincial government's historic increase to financial support for Ontario municipalities, the province is increasing the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) by \$100 million over two years, bringing the total funding envelope to \$600 million by 2026. The OMPF is the province's main general assistance grant to municipalities.

The 2025 OMPF grant includes an immediate increase of \$50 million to provide \$550 million in unconditional funding to 390 municipalities. The \$50 million enhancement has been targeted to small, Northern and rural municipalities and those with a limited property tax base, with the aim of assisting municipalities so they can provide critical municipal services to people across the province.

"We have heard from small, Northern, and rural municipalities that they need more support to meet the financial challenges they face in delivering services to their communities and that's exactly what this significant increase to OMPF, which is being delivered through our recent Fall Economic Statement, will help them do," said Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy. "Municipalities are critical partners in delivering important local services and we will continue working together to build more homes, support economic growth and strengthen Ontario's communities in a way that is sustainable and responsible."

Ontario has been steadily increasing support to municipalities. From 2019–2023, key provincial support to municipalities grew by over 45 per cent. In 2023 alone, the government provided almost \$10 billion to Ontario municipalities through key transfers. This includes increasing the Homelessness Prevention Program to \$654 million annually, as well as enhanced support for Northern and rural communities, such as the introduction of the \$15 million Northern Ontario Resource

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Development Support (NORDS) program in 2021 and the investment of an additional \$1 billion for the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) over five years, starting in 2022.

"We will not leave any part of the province behind as we work together with our municipal partners to create stronger communities," said Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. "By increasing our infrastructure investments for small, Northern and rural municipalities, we are helping lay the groundwork for more homes for the hardworking people of Ontario."

"Today's announcement continues to demonstrate our government's commitment to rural and Northern municipalities," said Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs. "We have created a stand-alone ministry dedicated to rural affairs and we are listening and taking action as well as building supports that will enable small towns and rural communities to thrive and prosper. Increased funding through the OMPF will ensure small, rural, and Northern Ontario municipalities receive additional base funding needed to address local priorities."

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#### Quick Facts

- The OMPF is a formula-based program that incorporates annual data updates to ensure the program is responsive to changing municipal circumstances.
- As the enhancement to the program is phased-in, all core grant recipients will receive 100 per cent or more of their 2024 OMPF allocation in 2025.
- Beginning this winter, Ontario will consult with municipalities on their priorities for the OMPF as well as the implementation of a reporting framework to gain a better understanding of how the OMPF is supporting local communities.
- The province is working with municipalities to support building more homes for people and families. Ontario is investing nearly \$2 billion in housing-enabling infrastructure through the [Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund](#) and [Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program](#), complementing support already being provided through the Building Faster Fund.
- Investing in key local infrastructure through programs like the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund and the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program is part of the province's capital plan of more than \$191 billion over 10 years to build critical infrastructure and get more homes built faster to support growing communities and lay a strong foundation for future generations.



"Municipal fiscal sustainability is under pressure across Ontario. AMO welcomes this enhancement to the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund as an important step in addressing these challenges. We look forward to working with the province to get our communities back on track as the drivers of Ontario's economy and quality of life."

- Robin Jones

President, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Mayor, Westport

"Small and Northern municipalities depend on the OMPF to deliver the services that people and businesses rely on every day. These enhancements will help rural communities to keep pace with growing needs like housing affordability, aging infrastructure and homelessness that require new approaches and resources. ROMA thanks Minister Bethlenfalvy for responding to rural municipalities' concerns and looks forward to ongoing conversations to build sustainable, thriving communities."

- Christa Lowry

Chair, Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), Mayor, Mississippi Mills

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"The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) is thrilled to learn of the announcement by the Minister of Finance regarding the upcoming increase to Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF). NOMA has been a long-time advocate for a permanent increase to the OMPF and we greatly appreciate that the Minister understands the importance of this fund specifically for small, rural, and Northern municipalities. These municipalities greatly rely on this funding, and the additional \$50 million in 2025 and \$50 million in 2026 which will amount to a total increase of \$100 million over the next 2 years, will be vital to our small, rural, and Northern communities. The Minister's commitment to create a consultation group with municipalities in the winter of 2025 to discuss OMPF shows the province is dedicated to understanding municipal needs and ensuring we can work together to guarantee this fund meets the needs of the small and rural municipalities across Northern Ontario."

- Wendy Landry  
President, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association

"The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus would like to thank the Provincial Government for the significant increase to the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF), supporting small and rural communities. OMPF is a critical funding source that empowers our rural communities to deliver essential services and address unique local priorities. This funding ensures that smaller municipalities have the resources to maintain infrastructure and invest in long-term development, fostering economic resilience and quality of life for our residents."

- Glen McNeil  
Chair, Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus

"On behalf of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, I thank Minister Bethlenfalvy for the increased investment in the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund highlighted in the 2024 Fall Economic Statement. This \$100 million boost signifies the government's recognition of the unique challenges faced by our 103 rural and small-urban communities. The funding will bolster essential services and also foster growth and resilience across our region."

- Peter Emon  
Chair, Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus

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#### Additional Resources

[2025 Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund](#)

[2024 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review: Building Ontario for You](#)

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#### Media Contacts

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[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy](#)

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Sent via electronic mail  
[jonathan.magill@simcoe.ca](mailto:jonathan.magill@simcoe.ca)

November 25, 2024

Jonathan Magill, County Clerk  
County of Simcoe  
1110 Highway 26  
Midhurst, ON L9X 1N6

Dear Clerk Magill,

At its Regular meeting on November 20, 2024, the Township of Springwater's Council passed the following resolution:

**Resolution C619-2024**

Moved by: Alexander  
Seconded by: Fisher

Whereas the Council of the Township of Springwater recognizes the increasing cost of living and the impact those costs have on their taxpayers; and,

Whereas these increases disproportionately affect those on fixed incomes; and,

Whereas tax rates at the municipal, provincial and federal level continue to put an increasing burden on taxpayers; and,

Whereas increases to the County of Simcoe's budget are passed onto the municipalities within the County; and,

Whereas all members of County Council sit on municipal Councils for which they receive additional pay;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved That, Council of The Corporation of the Township of Springwater urge County Council to repeal their wage increase to all members of County Council.

Be It Further Resolved That a copy of this resolution be circulated to the Premier of Ontario, Hon. Doug Ford; Barrie-Springwater-Oro Medonte Member of Provincial Parliament, Hon. Doug Downey, and all municipalities within the County of Simcoe.

**Carried**

I can be reached via email at [jennifer.marshall@springwater.ca](mailto:jennifer.marshall@springwater.ca) or by phone at 705-728-4784, Ext. 2042.

A8

Regards,

*Jennifer Marshall*

Jennifer Marshall  
Clerk, Township of Springwater

cc: Premier of Ontario, Hon. Doug Ford  
Barrie-Springwater-Oro Medonte MPP Hon. Doug Downey  
All County of Simcoe Municipalities



[La version française](#)

October/November 2024

 Important updates

**Fall Economic Statement**



Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy delivered the 2024 Ontario Fall Economic Statement (FES), [Building Ontario For You](#), on October 30. The FES includes some positive assessment-related developments focused on investments to address

affordability for Ontarians. As property tax reassessments remain deferred pending the completion of the system-wide assessment and taxation review, the government is taking action to prioritize three areas identified through their consultations with stakeholders:

- **Affordable Rental Housing** — Providing municipalities with the ability to reduce municipal tax rates on affordable rental housing through the creation of an optional property tax subclass. As well, the government will continue exploring potential assessment methodology changes for these properties.
- **Student Housing** — Introducing a legislative amendment that would provide consistent treatment for university-operated student housing whether the institution’s property tax status is governed by the Assessment Act or an institution-specific statute.
- **Information Sharing** — Undertaking work with MPAC, municipalities, and other stakeholders to enhance information sharing and develop new digital solutions, including:
  - Enabling broader municipal use of MPAC data to improve planning;

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- Evaluating new tools to help municipalities manage their assessment base;
- Making assessment roll information available to the public through a centralized electronic platform; and
- Authorizing digital delivery of property assessment notices.

MPAC has actively contributed its insights and expertise throughout the review process, and we are pleased to see that some of our collaborative contributions are reflected in this announcement. We are dedicated to advancing these priorities through meaningful partnerships with municipalities. By working together, we can enhance service delivery, leverage data more effectively, and develop solutions that address your unique needs, benefiting communities across Ontario.

We will continue to keep you informed on our next steps as we learn more. In the meantime, reach out to a member of your [Municipal and Stakeholder Relations Team](#) should you have any questions.

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## **Year-end key dates and MPAC product deliveries**

We are pleased to share that our work to finalize the 2024 roll is nearly complete, and we are on track to capture more than \$42 billion of new assessment across the province for the second consecutive year. We recognize the vital role new assessment plays for our municipal partners in supporting your planning and budgeting efforts.

This month, our focus has shifted to preparing for year-end municipal products and distributing over 632,000 Property Assessment Notices, which reflect changes to property ownership, classification or value that occurred this year across Ontario.

To support property owners, we ask that you direct any questions about their Property Assessment Notice to the [Understanding Your Assessment](#) page on [mpac.ca](#). Here, they can access information about Ontario's property assessment and taxation system, the different types of notices and notifications they may receive and content from our First-time Homeowners Hub that answers many common questions about homeownership.

To ensure you are fully prepared for the end-of-year activities, here is a summary of key dates and MPAC product deliveries for the remainder of 2024:

**October 30**

2024 Q3 New Assessment Forecast and 2024 Preliminary New Assessment Forecast available in the My Products portal of Municipal Connect.

**November 4 – 29**

Final 2024 Control Totals available in Municipal Connect

**November 12 – 21**

Property Assessment Notices mailed

**Week of November 25**

Municipal Change Profile (MCP) available in the My Products portal of Municipal Connect

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Year-end Tax File available in the My Products portal of Municipal Connect

**November 28 – December 9**

Assessment Roll for 2025 Taxation delivery

**Week of December 2**

Municipal Connect available for the 2025 Tax Year

**Week of December 16**

2025 Municipal Levy Letter delivery

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2024 Municipal Partnership Report and Municipal Assessment Change Summary delivery to Municipal Administrators

**Week of December 23**

First Quarter 2025 Levy invoice delivery

**Week of January 13, 2025**

2024 Municipal Partnerships Report delivery to Heads of Council and Clerks

We look forward to wrapping up another successful year and setting the stage for an even more impactful 2025 for your communities. Thank you for your invaluable partnership and ongoing commitment to building strong, resilient communities together.



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## Implementation of New Aggregate Extraction Property Class for 2025 Taxation

In late September, the Minister of Finance filed O. Reg. 370/24 to amend section 2 of O. Reg. 282/98 to add and establish a new property class called the Aggregate Extraction property class. The amendment is applicable to the 2025 and subsequent taxation years.

To prepare the 2024 assessment roll for the 2025 taxation year, MPAC has developed a plan to implement the new regulation and update the impacted properties.

The majority of the updates have been completed and are now visible in Municipal Connect. New code combinations will be shared with Reamined and municipal vendors and MPAC will continue to support the Ministry of Finance by providing updates on the implementation of the regulation and information on impacted properties.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this change or any other matter, please do not hesitate to contact us.

### Resources you can use

We've updated the [Municipal Sector Resources](#) page to better support your needs and equip you with the tools for effective communication and outreach to property owners!

One of the key highlights is the refreshed [Home Values Matter Toolkit](#), which includes engaging shareable social media content and graphics. We've also created a [ready-to-print buck slip](#) featuring our free online tool, AboutMyProperty™. This resource, available in the [AboutMyProperty Toolkit](#), can be easily incorporated into your mailings or used as a graphic on your website to help property owners discover the advantages of using this valuable tool.

While exploring the page, don't miss our other toolkits: [First-time Homeowners' Hub](#) and [School Support Designation](#). These materials can assist you in addressing common questions and can be easily integrated into newsletters and social media channels.

We encourage you to use these resources, share your feedback, and let us know how else we can support you!

### Data spotlight: Prioritizing climate action and energy efficiency

In the last issue of [InTouch](#), we highlighted how our data strategy was a key focus of our session at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference. There are so many ways that municipalities and property owners can leverage our data to make informed decisions for the future. For example, municipalities are increasingly prioritizing climate action and energy efficiency. MPAC can provide data that supports these initiatives, like the Municipal Energy Plan Program.



MPAC's data encompasses various property types within municipal boundaries, offering detailed information that allows municipalities to assess current energy use and identify opportunities for improvement. This valuable information supports the strategic, long-term development of robust climate action plans that address specific local needs.

Municipalities can use data to create accurate energy models, aiding in formulating energy conservation initiatives and programs. Creating public energy models based on aggregated MPAC data can also help ignite conservation efforts at a community level, fostering a collaborative approach to energy efficiency.

You can read more about our [Data Strategy](#) and how some municipalities are leveraging our data on [mpac.ca](#).

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### Webinar recap

#### In case you missed it

**MPAC Property Insights and Meeting the Evolving Needs of Our Partners – A Municipal Update**

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President and CAO, Nicole McNeill, Acting Vice-President, Valuation and Customer Relations, Dan Devellis, and Vice-President, Public Affairs and Customer Experience, Jamie Bishop, presented MPAC's annual municipal update. The presentation included information on our data strategy and leveraging MPAC data for informed decision-making, recent operational highlights, property insights and market trends. A Q+A session followed the presentation.

### WATCH IT HERE

To view recordings of all past webinars, visit [mpac.ca](http://mpac.ca) or our [YouTube Channel](#).

## MPAC on the move

### Fall conference roundup



Photos clockwise from top left: Association française des municipalités de l'Ontario (AFMO) Conference; Ontario East Municipal Conference (OEMC) Conference; Ontario Municipal Tax and Revenue Association (OMTRA) Conference; Ontario Building Officials Association (OBOA) Conference; Ontario Municipal Administrators Association (OMAA) Fall Workshop; Municipal Finance Officers' Association (MFOA) Conference; Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) Conference; International Plowing Match (IPM).

As we wrap up another year of municipal conferences, we reflect on the invaluable insights and connections made and are inspired to start planning next year's events. Thank you to everyone who attended our sessions and dropped by our booth. See you in January at ROMA!

## We're better together

MPAC is dedicated to building stronger partnerships with municipalities across Ontario, and your local Municipal and Stakeholder Relations team is here to support you.

Want more information about who we are and how we can work with your municipality? Reach out to your local [Municipal and Stakeholder Relations Team](#) to book an information session for your staff or municipal council. Need Municipal Connect training? We can help with that, too.



This email was sent by [intouch@mpac.ca](mailto:intouch@mpac.ca) to [scorbett@essatownship.on.ca](mailto:scorbett@essatownship.on.ca)  
Not interested? [Unsubscribe](#) | [Manage Preference](#) | [Update profile](#)  
MPAC | 1340 Pickering Pkwy, Pickering, ON L1C 3C0

Sarah Corbett

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Subject:

FW: AMO Policy Update – NDP Motion on Municipal Fiscal Sustainability, Mental Health and Addictions, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure



**AMO**  
**Policy**



## **AMO Policy Update – NDP Motion on Municipal Fiscal Sustainability, Mental Health and Addictions, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure**

### **NDP Motion Calling for a New Deal with Ontario's Municipalities**

Yesterday, the NDP [tabled a motion](#) calling on the provincial government to reach a new deal with Ontario municipalities to address downloaded provincial costs in areas such as housing and healthcare.

AMO welcomes this acknowledgement that the current provincial-municipal fiscal framework does not support sustainable communities or the quality of life of their residents. AMO has been calling for a [Social and Economic Prosperity Review](#) to update our fiscal relationship. Municipalities need a provincial partner that will:

- **Sustainably invest in public infrastructure** to support growth, improve transportation, and prepare for the impacts of climate change.
- **Reduce the province's continued reliance on municipal revenues** to fund provincial programs, like health and social

services, so municipal tax dollars can go toward supporting thriving communities.

- **Take action on the root causes of homelessness** through investments in mental health and addictions programming and improved income security that allows people to keep a roof over their heads.

## Response to Provincial Bike Lanes Legislation

Yesterday, AMO's Executive Director Brian Rosborough presented [remarks](#) to the legislature highlighting concerns with Bill 212, *the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act*.

AMO views the provincial proposal to remove and block bike lands in specific locations as misguided and an ineffective way of addressing congestion. The development of a balanced transportation network that includes a broad mix of roads, cycling paths, sidewalks, and public transit options is an exercise best left to municipalities, based on their in-depth understanding of municipal infrastructure, community needs, and long-term growth plans.

AMO also submitted written [comments](#) to the Committee calling on the province to abandon the proposal.

## Bill 223, *Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act*

Minister Kerzner tabled [Bill 223, \*Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act\*](#), which includes previously announced changes to supervised consumption sites in Ontario. The legislation would:

- Prohibit any supervised consumption site from operating within 200 metres of a school, childcare centre, or EarlyON centre. This change would close 10 sites currently operating in Ontario.
- It would also require municipalities to seek provincial approval before requesting federal approval or renewal of supervised consumption site or funding for safer supply programs. This means that

supervised consumption sites not currently impacted by the 200m limit could be impacted once provincial approval for renewal is required.

- Municipalities would also require provincial approval to publicly support, including through by-laws or resolutions, any other organization seeking to open a supervised consumption site or safer supply program.

As outlined in AMO's July Report, [The Opioid Crisis: a Municipal Perspective](#), tackling a problem as complex as the opioid crisis requires a comprehensive approach, including harm reduction supports that make sense for local communities. Municipalities – in collaboration with health, police, and other partners – are best positioned to decide whether supervised consumption sites are right for their communities.

## **Ontario Expanding Mental Health Supports for Public Safety Personnel**

As employers of first responders, municipalities are faced with the financial obligations associated with work-related mental health injuries. AMO was pleased to see a \$32 million investment through a new Mental Health Supports for Public Safety Personnel program and the creation of an Anti-Stigma Strategy for first responders and public safety personnel.

The program will include a web portal to access core services, access to a 24/7 call-line and other trauma-informed mental health services. Grants for employers will also be provided to help subsidize the costs of these additional programs and services. A call for applications, inviting organizations to apply for funding under the grant, will be rolled out in early 2025.

## **Proposed Integrated Energy Plan for Ontario**

AMO [presented to the legislature](#) in support of Bill 214, *Affordable Energy Act*, that makes progress on a plan to grow clean and affordable electricity capacity in Ontario. Key priorities include:

AMO

- Urging to the province to commit to a 2050 net-zero emissions target;
- Endorsing community benefit agreements between municipalities and energy proponents as part of procurement processes related to generation, storage and transmission projects;
- Ensuring the costs and risks of new last mile energy infrastructure are not transferred to municipalities or local distribution corporations.

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AMO also [submitted comments](#) supporting enhanced funding to municipalities and local distribution corporations (LDCs) to implement local energy efficiency measures.

## **Cyber Security and MFIPPA**

AMO [submitted comments](#) to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy on Bill 194, *Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act*. The bill proposes changes that would establish a cyber security framework for broader public sector entities including municipalities, school boards, and hospitals.

AMO highlighted the need to balance strong data and privacy protection with the flexibility needed to allow municipalities to put systems in place, and act quickly when cyber-threats are identified. AMO also commented on the long-standing need to update MFIPPA, particularly around frivolous and vexatious requests.

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*This policy update is also available on [AMO's Website](#).*

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\*Disclaimer: The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) is unable to provide any warranty regarding the accuracy or completeness of third-party submissions. Distribution of these items does not imply an endorsement of the views, information or services mentioned.





## NVCA November 2024 Board Meeting Highlights

**Next Meeting: December 13, 2024, held in person at the Tiffin Centre for Conservation**

*For the full meeting agenda, including documents and reports, visit [NVCA's website](#).*

### Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy

The NVCA Board of Directors approved NVCA's Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy (WBRMS).

The WBRMS identifies the risks, issues, and challenges the Nottawasaga Watershed faces, as well as the mitigation strategies to address these concerns. The strategy also provides a summary of NVCA's programs and services.

NVCA conducted a 30-day public consultation period through an online survey to seek feedback on the stressors and challenges associated with NVCA's Programs and Services, as well as mitigation strategies to address them.

Under Ontario Regulation 686/21, all conservation authorities must complete a WBRMS before December 31, 2024.

### Updated 2025 Conservation Services Fees

The NVCA Board of Directors amended and approved recommended changes to NVCA's Conservation Services programs fees.

NVCA's Conservation Services program provides a variety of programs and services to watershed residents and visitors through a fee-for-service basis. Services include environmental education, forestry, events and recreational opportunities.

The majority of fees changes were based on the average 2023-24 Cost of Living Allowance of 3.1%. Revenues generated through Conservation Services programs reduce the overall levy required by member municipalities.

### Contract awarded to flood management structures RFP

NVCA has awarded a contract to D.M. Wills Associates Limited for the completion of safety reviews and other studies related to flood management structures.

### Natural Hazard Infrastructure & Ice Management Plans

Under Ontario Regulation 686/21, all conservation authorities must complete a Natural Hazard Infrastructure Operational Plan and an Ice Management Plan before December 31, 2024.

The Natural Hazard Infrastructure Operational Plan outlines NVCA's roles and responsibilities in operating and maintaining the seven flood management structures within the watershed.

The Ice Management Plan establishes clear roles and responsibilities for NVCA and municipal partners related to ice jam monitoring and flood emergencies, which may result from ice jams.

### 2024 Year End Surplus/Deficit Allocation

The NVCA Board of Directors approved that any deficit/surplus for 2024 will be allocated accordingly to the budget reserve.

### Upcoming Events

#### Giving Tuesday

NVCA is inviting watershed residents to show support for local conservation efforts by helping NVCA meet their GivingTuesday goal of \$10,000.

GivingTuesday is the world's largest generosity movement. It is an opportunity for people around the world to stand together and support their communities or give to the causes they believe in. This year, GivingTuesday Canada will celebrate its 11th anniversary, with millions of Canadians expected to participate.

**Date:** December 3, 2024

Donations can be made through NVCA's website at [nvca.on.ca](http://nvca.on.ca)

## Winter Camp Tiffin

Our staff have been excited to plan some winter camp activities for Winter Camp Tiffin which will be full of outdoor adventures.

Led by NVCA's environmental educators, Camp Tiffin is an outdoor camp designed to enhance your child's knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the natural world and our amazing planet.

**Dates:** December 30, 2024, January 2 & 3, 2025

**Location:** Tiffin Centre for Conservation

## Tiffin Nature School

At Tiffin Nature School, children aged 2.5 to 10 are invited to explore and connect with the natural world. We nurture their innate curiosity, offering immersive outdoor experiences that inspire discovery and growth.

**Dates:** Tuesdays & Thursdays until May 29, 2025

**Location:** Tiffin Centre for Conservation



## Release

County of Simcoe, Office of the Warden and CAO  
1110 Highway 26, Midhurst, Ontario L9X 1N6  
simcoe.ca

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## County provides 20 new safe, affordable homes for vulnerable seniors in Barrie

Prioritizes long-term permanent accommodation for unhoused seniors

**Midhurst/November 14, 2024** – The County of Simcoe has partnered with a local retirement residence in Barrie to provide safe, affordable accommodations in a domiciliary care environment for seniors (aged 55+) who have been living chronically unhoused. The County is expanding its current domiciliary care partnership with the residence, covering the costs of shelter and personal needs for low-income individuals who cannot live on their own, but do not qualify for long-term care. This new program is another additional service being added to broad system of services and is a major step towards ending chronic homelessness for seniors living in shelters in the County of Simcoe.

“By funding twenty more domiciliary care spaces in this seniors’ residence, we are taking twenty people out of shelters or encampments, and giving them a permanent place to call home,” said Warden Basil Clarke. “These twenty new spaces will create a domino effect in our shelter system, freeing up shelter beds and encouraging more people to come inside during the coldest months of the year.”

These spaces are prioritized for homeless individuals in the Barrie area, aged 55 or older, and who require assistance with activities of daily living and who are not able to live independently.

Supports provided for these individuals will include: three nutritious meals and two snacks per day, provision of personal laundry services, an adequate supply of towels and bed linens, medication management and supervision, access to telephone services, on-site 24/7 staffing, and the provision of social and recreational activities.

This is just one more investment in unhoused individuals across the region through the County’s [10-point homelessness prevention strategy](#), which provides significant investments and resources to help unhoused individuals across the region.

The strategy makes affordable housing even more attainable by increasing supply, creating “deep rent subsidies”, increasing eviction prevention services, and improving available shelter. It commits the County to find new opportunities, enhance community shelter services, and improve safety throughout the community.

Those in need of shelter or warmth can always call 2-1-1 to connect with a nearby shelter.

### **About the County’s 10-point homelessness prevention strategy**

The County of Simcoe’s 10-point Homelessness Prevention Strategy provides a strong, data-driven plan to help vulnerable residents and our communities. The strategy includes a considerable added investment toward the goal of preventing and ending chronic

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homelessness. For further details and ongoing updates to the homelessness prevention plan, visit [simcoe.ca/HomelessnessSystem](http://simcoe.ca/HomelessnessSystem).

**About the County of Simcoe**

County of Simcoe is composed of sixteen member municipalities and provides crucial public services to County residents in addition to providing paramedic and social services to the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia. Visit our website at [simcoe.ca](http://simcoe.ca).

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**Sarah Corbett**

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**Subject:** FW: Upper-tier Planning & O.Reg. 525/97 Update

**From:** Westendorp, Nathan <Nathan.Westendorp@simcoe.ca>

**Sent:** November 21, 2024 2:00 PM

**Subject:** RE: Upper-tier Planning & O.Reg. 525/97 Update

Hi everyone,

As many of you have heard, the province is currently in a consultation process with regard to proposed changes to O.Reg. 525/97. Proposed Amendments to Ontario Regulation 525/97 to Exempt Certain Official Plan Matters from Approval under the Planning Act

As background, here are a few refresher points RE: Bill 23 and upper-tier planning, some notes on the current consultation on O.Reg. 525/97, and commentary as it relates to Simcoe County:

- Bill 23 was passed in 2022 made changes to the Planning Act introducing the concept of “upper-tier municipalities without planning responsibilities”
  - 7 upper-tiers were specifically referenced, 6 regions and the County of Simcoe
  - The named upper-tiers would only lose their planning responsibility on a proclamation date to be determined sometime in the future
- Bill 185 made some related edits to the Planning Act clarifying that the 7 upper-tiers may be proclaimed at different times
- York, Peel and Halton Regions were proclaimed July 1, 2024
- Recently, the other three regions found out that they will also be losing their planning responsibility under the Planning Act
  - Durham & Waterloo – January 1, 2025
  - Niagara – March 31, 2025
  - After these dates and with the removal of the upper-tier as the approval authority, the approval authority for Local Official Plans and Local Official Plan Amendments defaults to the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing.
  - The Province has the ability to exempt certain Local OPA’s from Ministerial Approval. The municipalities listed on O.Reg. 525/97 are those that have been exempted.
  - As posted on the ERO, the Province is proposing to add the local municipalities in Durham, Waterloo and Niagara to this Regulation...effectively untangling itself (MMAH) from having to approve every single Local OPA. Rather the Province will only retain approval authority for the following:
    - New Official Plans
    - Official Plan Amendments adopted in accordance with Section 26 of the Planning Act
    - Official Plan Amendments dealing with Protected Major Transit Station Areas

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- The ERO posting indicates that proposed exemptions for lower-tier municipalities in Simcoe County would be subject to further notice and consultation and a separate regulatory amendment, coinciding with future government decisions related to the date of proclamation of the Bill 23 changes that remove planning responsibilities from Simcoe County.
- No information has been provided to Simcoe County staff regarding if/when Simcoe County would become an upper-tier without planning responsibility.
- In the absence of any confirmation or clarity on the Bill 23 matter, Simcoe Planning is proceeding with work to continue updating the Simcoe County Official Plan. This will include implementing the results of the Lands Needs Assessment driven settlement area boundary expansions, updating the Greenlands, Agricultural, and Rural Designation mapping on Schedule 5.1, and preparing any requisite policy changes to be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement 2024. We expect to go to County Council with further detail on the PPS consistency work in early 2024.

We hope that helps. If you have any questions or need clarification, feel free to reach out to me directly.

Thanks very much.

Cheers,

**Nathan Westendorp, MCIP RPP**  
**Director of Planning/Chief Planner**  
County of Simcoe - Planning Department  
1110 Highway 26, Midhurst, Ontario L9X 1N6  
Phone: 705-726-9300 Ext. 1004  
E-mail : [Nathan.Westendorp@simcoe.ca](mailto:Nathan.Westendorp@simcoe.ca)  
simcoe.ca

[EXTERNAL]



## Release

County of Simcoe, Office of the Warden and CAO  
1110 Highway 26, Midhurst, Ontario L9X 1N6  
simcoe.ca

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Council approves 2025 County of Simcoe Budget

**Midhurst/November 26, 2024** – On November 26, 2024, County of Simcoe Council approved a \$962 million budget, which focuses on the resources necessary to maintain existing services and address significant growth in our communities. The 2025 budget also includes strategic allocations that enable the County to continue to invest in services and assets such as infrastructure, long-term care, paramedic services, museum, transit, affordable housing, the Lake Simcoe Regional Airport, waste collections, economic development, tourism, and enhancements to our road network.

At the direction and approval of County Council, residents will see a 3.625% increase (1.625% per cent increase for operating and a 2 per cent increase for infrastructure and asset management) on the County portion of their municipal property taxes in 2025. This represents an impact of approximately \$10.86 per \$100,000 property assessment across the region. \$224.6 million of the County's budget comes from Simcoe County residential property taxes and the remaining amount from other revenues and funding streams.

"County Council and staff worked hard to limit the impact of this budget on our residents, while ensuring we maintain the ability to meet service demands and infrastructure needs as our communities continue to grow," said Warden Basil Clarke. "When times are challenging, the demand for County services is greater than ever. As we head into 2025, we look forward to opening more affordable housing units, creating new spaces for those living unhoused, making driving easier and safer across our road network, supporting the environment through waste management and sustainability programs, creating more transit connections, supporting more seniors in need of care and services and creating more jobs as we build up Simcoe County."

The County maintains a strong financial position having received an AA+ long-term issuer credit rating from S&P Global Ratings, a provider of high-quality market intelligence in the form of credit ratings and research.

While pressures continue, the 2025 budget ensures the County continues to address areas of growth, as well as initiatives directed by Council to enhance and maintain critical service levels for the region, support infrastructure, increase efficiencies, and prepare for the future of our region.

The County's 2025 budget includes key projects to continue building up Simcoe County, including,

- New LINX Transit route to serve south Simcoe communities
- Continued progress at the Simcoe Village Campus redevelopment
- A large affordable housing build in Barrie and completion of other sites
- Phased road work on CR4, 21 and 22
- A new Paramedic Station in Waubaushene
- Museum expansion for the C. Matthews Innovation and Transportation Gallery
- Redevelopment of the Bradford West Gwillimbury waste drop-off facility

A120

**2025 Budget Highlights include:**

Total County operating and capital expenditures for 2024: **\$962 million** (\$694 million operating and \$268 million capital)

- LTC Homes \$188 million
- Seniors Services \$12 million
- Paramedic Services \$83 million
- Children Services \$151 million
- Social Housing \$120 million
- Ontario Works \$85 million
- Community Services \$30 million
- Transportation and Engineering \$89 million
- Solid Waste Management \$82 million

Attached to this news release is the [2025 County of Simcoe Budget Overview](#).

County of Simcoe is composed of sixteen member municipalities and provides crucial public services to County residents in addition to providing paramedic and social services to the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia. Visit our website at [simcoe.ca](http://simcoe.ca).

- 30 -

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# 2025 COUNTY BUDGET OVERVIEW

## RESPONSIBLY MANAGING YOUR SERVICES

The 2025 County of Simcoe budget includes a total of \$962M in operating and capital expenditures. The total revenue is \$840M with a taxation levy amount of \$224.6M.

The budget has been prepared to address key ongoing needs and strategic initiatives. It includes a 1.625% tax increase to maintain operating service levels and keep pace with cost increases that can't be covered by growth. It also includes a 2.0% increase to support infrastructure and asset management

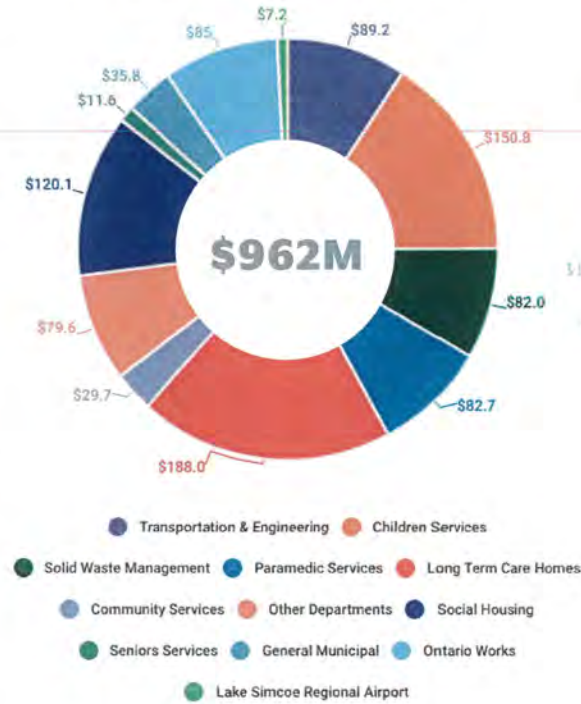
The budget focus is on the resources necessary to maintain or improve the existing crucial County services and programs and address significant growth in our communities

The County continues to invest in housing in 2025, building upon the 3,134 new affordable housing units created since January 1, 2014 through new rental development, secondary suites, affordable homeownership, and rent supplements/housing allowances. With builds scheduled to open in both Orillia and Bradford West Gwillimbury in 2025 and work to begin on the projects in Barrie, Collingwood and Midland, the County will continue to invest significantly in building up affordable homes across Simcoe County.

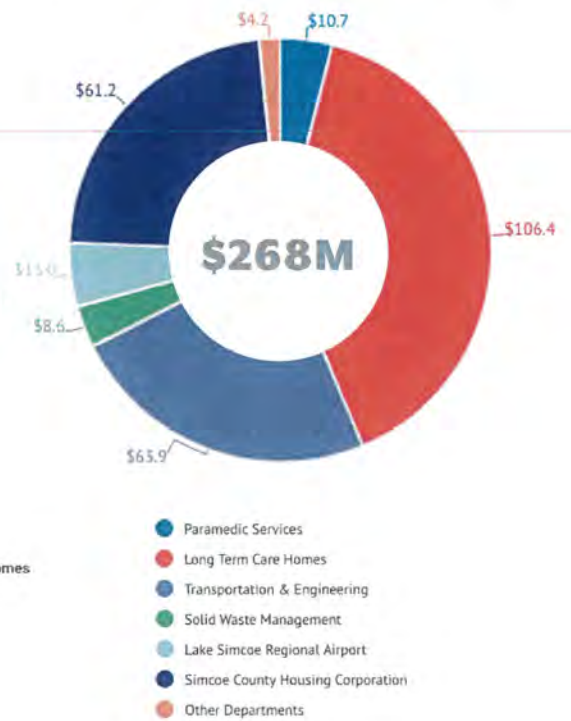
Because significant growth in the region impacts demand for all County services, we continue to work closely with our community and municipal partners to ensure residents receive the best value for their regional tax dollars.

In 2022, under an agreement with the federal government, Ontario announced the implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, an initiative to be rolled out over five years, intended to provide parents with improved access to quality, inclusive, and affordable child care. 2025 will include

**Total County Expenditures**  
\$962M Operating and Capital



**County Capital Expenditures**  
\$268M



The County is investing \$64M in capital project expenditures to enhance road networks across Simcoe County, with major projects continuing on County Road 22, County Road 21 (Innisfil Beach Road), County Road 4 (image above).

the implementation of a new cost-based funding formula and targeted regional system growth of 698 new licensed Child Care spaces.

The budget directs additional spending in Health and Emergency Services, including resources for Paramedic Services to address demand, including the completion

and occupancy of the Springwater South Paramedic Post and the construction of the Waubaushene Paramedic Station to optimize response time performance.

Funds directed in Long-Term Care and Seniors Services continue the design and construction of the redevelopment of the Simcoe Village

Campus and the occupancy and operation of 16 new beds at Georgian Manor.

Major road projects for 2025 include County Road 4, County Road 21 and County Road 22 with related road, bridge and intersection components.

County Council continues to make strategic non-mandated investments in our communities, such as commitments to local hospitals, hospice, and post-secondary education institutions, while continuing to keep a strong long-term financial outlook.

The County's strong financial position is confirmed by maintaining an AA+ long-term issuer credit rating from S&P Global Ratings, a provider of high-quality independent market intelligence in the form of credit ratings and research.

## Health and Emergency Services

### Long-Term Care And Seniors Services

2025 Expenditures: \$200M

The County of Simcoe provides a broad range of long-term care and seniors services to residents living throughout the region, supporting more than 1,200 seniors. They include four long-term care homes, supportive housing, retirement living, assisted living, affordable housing, life lease suites and garden homes, adult day programming, and an entire suite of home support services. This vast diversity of programs and services addresses a wide spectrum of needs that support residents to age in place and assist in a seamless transition for individuals as they



The design and construction of the redevelopment of the Simcoe Village Campus in Beeton continues in 2025 (rendering above).

move across the continuum of care from the community to long-term care. Operating results include completion of occupancy of 16 new

beds at Georgian Manor. Capital projects include the full ongoing redevelopment of the Simcoe Village Campus.

### Paramedic Services

2025 Expenditures: \$83M

Paramedic Services provide land ambulance services at a Primary and Advanced Care Paramedic level of service, training programs, public education, Public Access Defibrillator program, and Community Paramedicine programs.

The 2025 budget includes costs associated with staffing, equipment replacements and upgrades related to emergency medical response to the region, including the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia.

Annual call volume/responses are anticipated to be more than 102,000. Capital projects include facility development and vehicle and equipment replacements.

## Community Services

2025 Expenditures: \$30M

As the legislated Service System Manager (provincially) and Community Entity (federally) for the system of homelessness prevention services and support, the County is responsible for mobilizing and maximizing funding streams to enable service providers to offer programs and support at the local level that prevent and reduce homelessness.

Housing First principles are the overarching framework for all funding streams, recognizing that immediate access to permanent housing is the solution to homelessness and that some people will need additional support to establish and maintain their housing, particularly those with deeper levels of need or longer periods of housing instability.

The County of Simcoe applies a coordinated, systems-based, and data-driven approach to address local homelessness priorities. The approach includes a well-developed Coordinated Access System



In 2025, the County will continue to further the work of the 10-Point Homelessness Prevention Strategy including increasing supportive housing units/spaces and diversifying options and increase outflow housing and support opportunities.

and a Quality By-Name List.

In 2025, the County will continue to further the work of the 10-Point Homelessness Prevention Strategy including increasing supportive housing units/spaces and diversifying options to reduce reliance on emergency homeless shelters. A Quality Assurance and System Resourcing Framework will be developed to focus on continuous improvement and best practices and, housing and homelessness service system management will be further

integrated to maximize flexibility and responsiveness of funding streams to realize housing outcomes. A change to the outreach model to address street involved homelessness and to facilitate encampment response is a key priority for 2025.

### Poverty Reduction Initiatives

The County of Simcoe invests \$1.2M annually in the Social and Community Investment Fund (SCIF) to help local organizations develop community-based initiatives to address poverty. SCIF supports external program

development for services to address the needs of low-income families.

### Local Immigration Partnership

The Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) provides leadership to community based collaborative planning intended to support improved social and economic outcomes for immigrants and newcomers. Community planning is undertaken with leaders from sectors such as education, health, employment, human services, settlement services, government, and policing. Work of the LIP is guided by federal policy/guidelines, in conjunction with the County approved Community Settlement Strategy.

### Business Intelligence & System Planning

Initiated in 2023, this area will focus on analyzing and publishing data to improve delivery and policy for the regional Community and Social Services system. It will provide a data-informed policy background to enhance community partnerships and to develop a delivery framework for Social and Community Services.

# expenditure **breakdown**

## Social and Community Services

### Ontario Works

2025 Expenditures: \$85M

The County of Simcoe is the designated Municipal Service Manager for delivery of the Ontario Works program, with a projected monthly caseload of 7,050. Ontario Works provides life stabilization supports that include both financial and employment assistance to individuals in financial need. Program outcomes focus on individual goals that lead to financial independence and self-reliance such as:

- Development of a client-centered action plan to address individual goals through targeted referrals for employment and educational programs
- Enhanced life stabilization supports for clients with multiple barriers

### Social Housing

2025 Expenditures: \$120M

The County is responsible for the administration and funding of numerous mandated social housing programs. In addition, the County participates in a number of initiatives that enhance the range of options/programs available to our residents, including the Simcoe County Housing Corporation and other housing providers.

Under housing programs this budget expands the very popular rent supplement program due to increasing demand, as well as creates a new Housing Opportunities Fund to assist in creation of more affordable Housing. There are approximately 4,100 community housing units within the County's housing portfolio, comprised of both



The capital budget includes affordable housing rental development projects in Barrie (Rose St. rendering above) and Collingwood. Also, pre-design activities will begin on an affordable housing seniors project in Midland.

rent-gear-to-income and affordable units. The capital budget includes affordable housing rental development projects in Barrie and Collingwood. Also, pre-design activities will begin on an affordable

housing seniors project in Midland with a view to start construction in 2026, as well as ongoing asset management, through capital repair projects, to maintain the existing infrastructure.

## Engineering, Planning and Environment

The Engineering, Planning and Environment division consists of Transportation and Engineering, Solid Waste Management, Planning, Forestry and Transit.

### Transportation and Engineering

2025 Expenditures: \$89M

The 2025 capital budget includes construction and road maintenance projects totaling \$64M. Capital project expenditures include the continued construction of County Road 22, County Road 21 (Innisfil Beach Road), County Road 4, construction of the Willow Creek Structures as well as a number of other road and bridge rehabilitation and construction projects.



### Solid Waste Management

2025 Expenditures: \$82M

The Solid Waste Management department manages the waste disposal facilities and critical collection of curbside waste and diversion programs.

Capital project requirements are for site development/ redevelopment of existing sites to improve customer service and

storage and processing capacity and the design, environmental approvals, and permits for the Organics Transfer Station.

Additionally, expenditures include fleet additions and normal replacement of existing equipment that have reached the end of their reasonable service lives.

## Working together for the greater good

The County of Simcoe understands that strong community partnerships play a vital role in providing high-quality services to residents. In order to maintain and foster these established partnerships, the County provides strategic funding to other community impact services. Some strategic investments the County is proud to support in 2025 include:

### Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

\$6.1 million

### Simcoe County Hospital Alliance

\$3.0 million

### Post-secondary capital support

\$1.5 million

### Age Friendly grant

\$0.6 million

A12c



## How your tax dollars work

While the County's expenses are \$962M, they are offset by County revenues and funding from both provincial and federal levels of government. Residents will see a 3.625% increase on the County portion of their municipal property taxes in 2025. Overall, due to revenues and provincial funding, the County's actual tax requirement of \$224.6M is broken down as follows:

LEVY SUPPORT AREA	%*	(\$000s)*	PER \$100,000 RESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT VALUE*
Paramedic Services	12.4	27,880	38.53
LTC - Homes/Seniors Services	6.2	13,918	19.23
Ontario Works	2.2	4,832	6.68
Children Services	1.4	3,240	4.48
Community Services	1.5	3,449	4.77
Social Housing	10.8	24,286	33.56
Transportation & Engineering	11.2	25,164	34.78
Solid Waste Management	24.5	55,038	76.06
Planning	1.8	4,052	5.60
Economic Development	1.7	3,878	5.36
Transit	2.6	5,759	7.96
Administrative & Statutory Support **	7.2	16,280	22.50
General Municipal Services ***	10.7	23,989	33.15
Asset Management	2.4	5,374	7.43
Allocation of Operating to Capital	2.4	5,483	7.58
<b>Total Taxes based on Services</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>224,572</b>	<b>\$310.36</b>

\* All numbers are rounded  
 \*\* CAO, Clerks, Service Simcoe, Corporate Performance  
 \*\*\* SMDHU, MPAC, LSRA, Age-Friendly Grant, Hospital, Educational Support, Strategic land purchase

APPROXIMATE TAX INCREASE PER RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY ASSESSMENT		
County Tax Rate Increase		
% Increase	\$ Increase	per \$100,000 assessment
3.625%	\$7.7M	\$10.86

NOTE: Actual Taxation impacts do not parallel assessment change because of Ontario's variable tax rate system. Tax rates vary by property class and assessment based on tax ratios, as well as local municipal and education taxes, which affect the distribution of the tax levy across classes. The numbers noted reflect the County's 2025 Budget Plan for illustration of the County's services and expenditure financing.

## How to contact us



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November 26, 2024

## Advocacy Update: AMCTO at Queen's Park & Recent Submissions

AMCTO has had a busy few weeks with visits to Queen's Park to discuss advocacy priorities on behalf of members. We delegated before the Standing Committee on Justice Policy as the only municipal representative regarding *Bill 194, Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024*. We also met with Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Paul Calandra, regarding our submission on the *Municipal Elections Act (MEA)* and discussed key issues like housing, municipal finance and strong mayor powers.

Our team has also been reviewing Provincial policies that continue to put municipalities' decision-making powers at risk and create unnecessary administrative burden for staff. Read more on this below.

### Presentation at Standing Committee

AMCTO was the only municipal representative invited to speak before the committee. On November 15, Executive Director, David Arbuckle spoke on behalf of the Association to reinforce the need to modernize legislation and provide recommendations where we see opportunities for improvement.

As members will recall, [we submitted comments](#) to the Government's regulatory posting on *Bill 194, Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024*. In addition to

A13a

making recommendations related to the Bill, David spoke about the need to future-proof the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*. As we noted in our *MFIPPA submission earlier this year*, the legislation is over 30 years old, has not been comprehensively reviewed and regulations still contain outdated technology references (i.e. CD-ROMs). We had also flagged that the legislation was not equipped to manage changes to technology like artificial intelligence (AI) which is a key item within Bill 194.

While the Bill is a good first step towards enhancing digital security and establishing trust across public sector institutions, David highlighted:

- The interconnectedness between cybersecurity, AI, and privacy protection, and the need to modernize *MFIPPA* to reflect this connection.
- The differences in municipal digital maturity, capacity, and resources that need to be considered in the development of regulations.
- Municipalities and their staff will need adequate guidance and resources to support the implementation of requirements.
- The legislation should contain more information about responsible use and trustworthy AI principles.
- Regulations should be developed in collaboration with affected stakeholders including municipalities.

David also expressed that subject to collaborative consultation and having supportive resources in place, AMCTO supports extending similar proposed provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)* to *MFIPPA*. However, in its current form, *MFIPPA* is onerous, lacks clarity, creates additional unnecessary work, and is not equipped to consider important technology trends. Local government administrators need a modern *MFIPPA* before adding new provisions to an old *Act*.

The transcript of the committee proceedings will be available on the [Ontario Legislative Assembly website](#) soon.

There are still opportunities for municipal councils to endorse our recommendations. For a template resolution please see our [member toolkit](#), and don't forget to copy us in your correspondence to the minister.

## Meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

We were pleased to meet with Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Paul Calandra, on November 18 to continue to advocate for changes to the *MEA* ahead of the 2026 municipal and school board elections.

We were happy to hear that the Minister was receptive to making changes to the *MEA* and agreed with us that it needs a comprehensive review. While no timelines were provided, we remain hopeful that some amendments to the *Act* can be made in time for the 2026 elections. We have emphasized to the ministry since the release of our [submission in April](#) that changes to the *Act*

would ideally come by spring 2025 to avoid significant impacts to elections planning that is already well underway.

We also took the opportunity to reinforce our concerns about the **impacts of strong mayor powers** on municipal professionals and organizational culture, specifically related to the role of the chief administrative officer (CAO), department heads, and organizational structure, as well as our concerns about the continued health and sustainability of local government administration.

There are still opportunities for municipal councils to endorse our *MEA* recommendations or for clerks to submit a letter to the ministry about their concerns with the legislation. Members can access these templates in **our toolkit**.

## Other Submissions

We are concerned about the increasing encroachment of the Province on matters of local decision-making through policy initiatives that also place more administrative and cost burdens on municipalities and their staff.

As a result, we **submitted comments to the Government's proposal** related to bike lanes. While AMCTO does not traditionally comment on these matters, we believe the Provincial overreach and intrusion into local decision-making warranted a formal response.

We may make a similar submission related to schedule 4 of the new **Bill 223, Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act, 2024** which prevents municipalities from working with the federal government on safe consumption sites and requires applications to the Province for approvals for such sites.

We note that the sector continues to wait for the Province to act on areas where municipalities and their staff have requested support and resources. We will keep you, our members, informed of the Government's response and our next steps on these and other matters, and continue to advocate for the interests of the municipal profession and those dedicated to serving their communities.

For more information or to discuss further, **please contact us**.



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# Issue at a Glance



**Modernizing the *Municipal Elections Act* for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
April 2024

## Key Takeaways

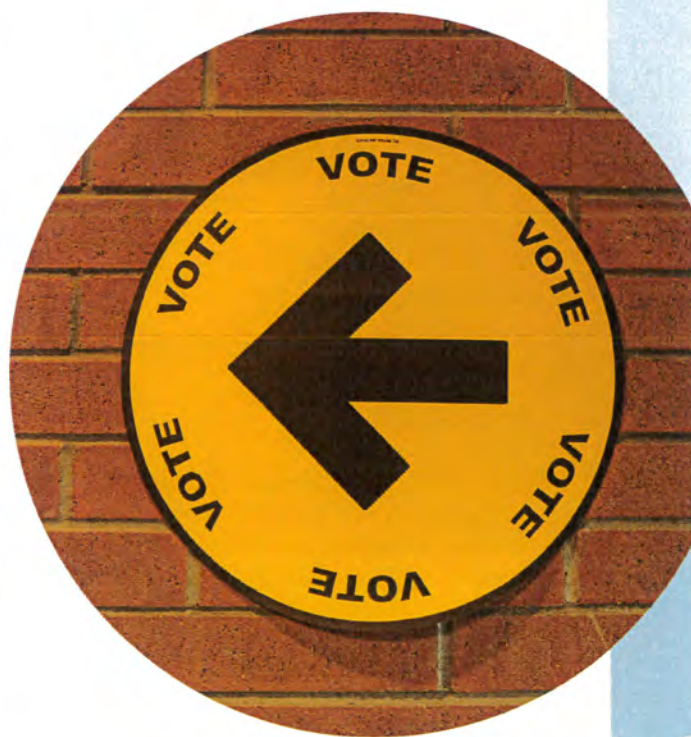
- To continuously improve public trust, a comprehensive review of the *MEA* is needed in consultation with the sector.
- Legislative rules and guidelines for elections must address increased public expectations, reflect promising practices, and address current technology and trends.
- There are opportunities to modernize, harmonize, streamline, and simplify the legislation to better support election administrators, candidates, and voters.

## Issue

Ontario's framework for local elections is set out in the *Municipal Elections Act (MEA)* which will be 30 years old by the next election cycle in 2026. For local elections to be run more efficiently and to ensure improved compliance, the *Act* should be streamlined, modernized, and re-designed to assist voters, candidates, contributors, and advertisers with understanding their responsibilities while reducing operational and administrative burden for election administrators.

## The Need for Reform

Elections are much more than counting ballots and declaring a winner. In the case of municipal and school board elections, where 2,842 municipal offices and 676 representatives are elected, it is often a 2.5-plus year planning and implementation journey that continues up to a year or more past election day making election administration a complex endeavour that municipal staff lead and oversee.





## What is the *MEA*?

While the [Municipal Elections Act, 1996 \(MEA\)](#) sets out the rules for local elections, the [Assessment Act, 1990](#) and the [Education Act, 1990](#) also contain provisions impacting local elections adding more places for voters, candidates, and administrators to look for the rules that bind the local democratic process in Ontario. With rules across three pieces of legislation, and the MEA containing a patchwork of clauses in its current form, there are interpretation challenges and inconsistencies that need to be addressed and clarified to ensure accountability, transparency and to address technological changes.

There are benefits to making continuous improvements to the rules and framework that support local democracy ensuring the MEA is modernized and future-proof. The Act should be reviewed and updated regularly (every four years) to keep pace with changing voter expectations, technology, and trends.

## Harmonized Rules

Another significant issue is the lack of harmonization of local election rules across three Acts. School board trustee candidates and voters must interpret three pieces of legislation to understand their qualifications. Moreover, because school support has two purposes under legislation – election and assessment – outdated business rules make it difficult to match school support to voters which can mean delays at the polling station<sup>1</sup>.

Rules on campaign finance and third-party advertising are complex and difficult to oversee and enforce<sup>2</sup>. There needs to be a thorough review of both frameworks to streamline mechanisms to make enforcement more efficient. This must include reviewing enforcement mechanisms such as the compliance audit process, offences, and penalties.

## Modern Legislation

While there have been updates and amendments made to the Act, the current mix of political, environmental, social, technological, and legal factors means this is an opportune moment to modernize the Act ahead of the 2026 municipal and school board elections.

There should be a complete overhaul and re-write of the Act to bring it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It should consider impacts of digital transformation and digital government including standards for online voting, updating language to reflect the move from paper and manual processes to more electronic methods and changes to technology which may impact the democratic process.





## Streamline and Simplify Administration

Election administration will always be complex, but there are ways to streamline and simplify processes by providing more clarity, aligning timelines, and permitting clerks to do what is needed to administer an election in a timely way.

For instance, updating language and definitions will help to provide clarity to administrators, voters, and candidates<sup>3</sup>. Providing better definitions of "tenancy", "non-residency", and other similar terms especially for secondary residents in cottage communities, will provide clearer rules on who is qualified to vote.

The length of the nomination period should also be shortened. By moving nomination day back to July to align campaign periods with provincial and federal elections, municipalities and local election administrators have more time to prepare ahead of voting days.

Further, mandating that school boards schedule one of the provincially-required Professional Activity (PA) Days on municipal and school board election day would simplify polling location selection and give voters consistent, centrally-accessible facilities to cast their ballots.

## Conclusion

These are some of the more pressing recommendations for election administrators. For our full list of recommendations, please see our submission, *Modernizing the Municipal Elections Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, which provides further details that should be considered both in the long- and short-term, as well as a line-by-line review of proposed amendments to modernize the Act.

AMCTO supports legislative provisions that require Acts to be reviewed regularly, at least at four-year intervals. This allows legislation to be updated to ensure that the rules and guidelines are working and are continuously improved to address increased public expectations, best and promising practices, current technologies and trends.

## Ideal Solution

AMCTO has proposed several recommendations within our submission, *Modernizing the Municipal Elections Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, for the short, medium, and long-term to address some of the challenges and opportunities in local elections. Our recommendations focus on outcomes-based solutions<sup>5</sup> that seek to strengthen public trust and electoral integrity; enhance accountability and transparency while making compliance and enforcement easier; and providing permissive legislation that reduces administrative complexity.

Our members would like to see the Province:

1. Implement priority and secondary recommendations well ahead of the next election.
2. Amend the Act to include a legislative mandate to review the Act every four years.
3. Strike a working group with AMCTO and other stakeholders to look at:
  - a. Developing a regulation that defines "tenancy", "spouse of a non-resident" and "occupancy" for electoral purposes;
  - b. Reviewing and updating the campaign finance framework; and
  - c. Reviewing and updating the third-party advertising framework.
4. Commit to a comprehensive review and re-write of the MEA in consultation with AMCTO and other municipal stakeholders ahead of the 2030 elections.



<sup>1</sup> Ontario Ombudsman. 2022. *Annual Report 2021-2022*, <https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/resources/reports,-cases-and-submissions/annual-reports/2021-2022-annual-report> p 43

<sup>2</sup> AMCTO. 2024, *Modernizing the Municipal Elections Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p 13-19

<sup>3</sup> AMCTO. p 12

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.amcto.com/network-community/blog/advocacy-update-bill-218>

<sup>5</sup> AMCTO. p 5



**AMCTO**  
THE MUNICIPAL EXPERTS

**Modernizing the  
*Municipal Elections Act*  
for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**



## Introduction

The *Municipal Elections Act (MEA)* legislates the processes for how local elections operate in Ontario. It provides municipal staff who are also local election administrators with the framework in which to organize and run efficient municipal elections. It provides voters, candidates and third-party advertisers with guidance on qualifications for participating in local democracy. The Act serves as an important tool for local election accountability, ensuring smooth democratic processes for citizens across Ontario, and is key to voter and public trust in local governments.

While public trust has always been front and centre to democratic processes<sup>1</sup>, since the COVID-19 pandemic there has been commentary, concern and cautions raised about the state of trust in public institutions at all levels of government and the state of the democratic process that empowers those institutions<sup>2</sup>. Applying a continuous improvement mindset to the rules and framework that support local democracy ensures democratic processes are modernized, reflect current circumstances and technology, meet citizen expectations, and continue to be reliable.

As the largest voluntary municipal association in Ontario with members working across the province, the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) takes the position that local governments serve as the most transparent level of government with openness and accountability at the core of operations. To continuously improve public trust, a comprehensive review of the *MEA* is needed in consultation with the sector. By reviewing and re-writing the *MEA* to reflect today's challenges in bolstering public trust, improving voter turnout, and improving overall election administration; voters, residents, candidates, third parties, interest groups and election administrators can rely on a modern act that is clear and consistent, while ensuring that processes are accountable and transparent.

To keep public trust and improve safeguards, a review should apply a lens considering the ever-changing landscape that impacts election administration. This includes threats of foreign interference<sup>3</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> AMCTO. 2015. *Submission on the Municipal Elections Act*. <https://www.amcto.com/sites/default/files/2023-05/AMCTO-MEA-Submission.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Bridgman, A., et al. *Mis- and Disinformation During the 2021 Canadian Federal Election*. Media Ecosystem Observatory. March 2022. [https://www.mcgill.ca/maxbellschool/files/maxbellschool/meo\\_election\\_2021\\_report.pdf](https://www.mcgill.ca/maxbellschool/files/maxbellschool/meo_election_2021_report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> For instance, Ball, Stewart. "China tried to influence last two federal elections, says report released by CSIS." *Global News*. 31, Jan. 2024. <https://globalnews.ca/news/10264872/canada-china-foreign-interference-elections-csis-report/>

increased spread of misinformation<sup>4</sup> and the increased use of technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) that presents both opportunities<sup>5</sup> and challenges<sup>6</sup> for election administration and for supporting candidates and voters in their electoral participation. A fulsome review should also contemplate how to ensure the continued health of our local democracies, something the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) is looking at currently through their Healthy Democracy Project<sup>7</sup>.

While we know this is easier said than done and recognize that the legislation contains a patchwork of provisions which attempts to fill in gaps, this approach has made the overall MEA in its current form, more challenging to read, interpret, comply with, and enforce. With the upcoming 2026 municipal elections, municipalities will be planning earnestly early next year, and a focus on renewing the election frameworks has never been timelier.

This submission has been prepared by AMCTO with a goal to improve and modernize the MEA and its regulations. It highlights the need for revisions as conducted on a line-by-line basis and considers how the proposed amendments would impact other acts such as the *Education Act, 1990* and the *Assessment Act, 1990*. Our recommendations focus on outcomes-based solutions across three broad themes:

1. **Strengthening Public Trust and Electoral Integrity**
2. **Enhancing Accountability and Transparency while Making Compliance and Enforcement Easier**
3. **Permissive Legislation that Reduces Administrative Complexity**

Through this submission, we also identify a proposed timeline to assist the Province in planning for continuous improvements to the Act. These recommendations are labelled as:

- **Priority:** those we believe must be implemented through legislative updates ahead of 2026
- **Secondary:** those we believe can and should be implemented through legislative updates ahead of 2026
- **Long-term:** those that may require further investigation, analysis, and collaboration between the Province, AMCTO, municipalities, and other affected stakeholders to get right.\*

*\*It should be noted that these are no less important to AMCTO members and we would encourage the Province to initiate work on them as soon as possible.*

This submission is the result of continuous work by our MEA Working Group, ongoing conversations with members, as well as feedback from clerks following the 2022 municipal elections. Through this submission, we hope to inspire the Province to take action in reviewing the MEA and to inform a broader dialogue around local election administration, the importance of openness and accountability in local government.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, Thompson, Elizabeth. "Disinformation, foreign interference threatening Canada's electoral system, elections watchdog warns." *CBC News*. 22, June 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-elections-watchdog-cote-1.6497875>; Bridgman, A., et al. Mis- and Disinformation During the 2021 Canadian Federal Election. *Media Ecosystem Observatory*. Mar. 2022. [https://www.mcgill.ca/maxbellschool/files/maxbellschool/meo\\_election\\_2021\\_report.pdf](https://www.mcgill.ca/maxbellschool/files/maxbellschool/meo_election_2021_report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Deepack P et al. *AI Magazine*. "AI and core electoral processes: Mapping the horizons." V. 44.3 Fall 2023. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/aaai.12105>

<sup>6</sup> Leaders. "How worried should you be about AI disrupting elections?" *The Economist*. 31 Aug. 2023. <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2023/08/31/how-artificial-intelligence-will-affect-the-elections-of-2024>

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.amo.on.ca/about-us/healthy-democracy-project>





## Background

Elections occur in 414 cities, towns, and villages<sup>†</sup> across Ontario to ensure that 2,842<sup>8</sup> municipal offices and 676<sup>9</sup> school board trustees are elected through processes that run as efficiently and effectively as possible within the current legislative framework.

While the MEA sets out the rules for local elections, the Assessment Act, 1990 and the Education Act, 1990 also contain provisions impacting local elections; adding more places for voters, candidates, and administrators to look for the rules that bind the local democratic process in Ontario.

*quality assurance testing*  
*compliance audit post-election reporting*  
*staff training committee recruitment*  
*ward boundary candidate support*  
*election monitoring financial statement reviews*  
*representation reviews overseeing prosecutions*  
*new council orientation stakeholder relationships*  
*vendor procurement supply chain management*  
*voters list updates local scouting*  
*volunteer recruitment*

Election administration is a complex endeavour that municipal staff lead and oversee. This includes a multi-year planning and implementation journey that continues up to a year or more past election day. As election administrators, municipal clerks support candidates, third-party advertisers, election workers, and voters by overseeing ballot and technology preparation; coordinating supply chain management and vendor selection;

performing security reviews; preparing election reports; revising voters' lists; overseeing compliance audit committees (CACs); and responding to possible prosecutions. In many Ontario municipalities, this work may be done by one or two people.

Election administrators take pride in executing fair, accountable, transparent, accessible, and reliable local elections and are always looking for ways to continuously improve the delivery of these important services. An updated MEA would allow election administrators to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively while providing needed clarity to local candidates, third-party advertisers, voters and the general public.

To ensure administrators can pivot and implement legislative changes without impacting planning for the 2026 municipal elections, we urge the Province to act swiftly to consult on, then enact the following recommendations and updates to the MEA.

<sup>†</sup> While there are 444 municipalities in Ontario, 414 hold elections. The other municipalities are upper tiers, representatives for which are elected or appointed through lower tiers locally.

<sup>8</sup> Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). "Analysis of 2022 Municipal Post Election Data", 14 Nov. 2022. <https://www.amo.on.ca/policy/municipal-governance-indigenous-relations/analysis-2022-municipal-post-election-data>

<sup>9</sup> Ontario Education Services Corporation. "Post Election Data," 1 Nov. 2022. <https://elections.ontarioschooltrustees.org/Resources/pdf/2022Data/Post-Election%20Data%20-%20All%20School%20Boards.pdf>

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## Overview of the Issues

Strengthening  
Public Trust &  
Electoral Integrity

As outlined in the introduction, the *MEA* in its current form needs to be comprehensively reviewed in consultation with the sector and re-written. Processes can be streamlined, rules improved, provisions re-ordered, and clarity brought forward to ensure that voters, residents, candidates, third-parties, interest groups and election administrators have a modern act that is clear and consistent, while ensuring that processes are accountable and transparent.

Enhancing  
Accountability  
& Transparency  
while Making  
Compliance &  
Enforcement  
Easier

Some of the top concerns identified by AMCTO members include the current legislation containing a patchwork of amendments, repealed sections, and transitional provisions that are no longer relevant. On top of this, there are other structural issues in the how the Act is laid out, that make it difficult for voters, candidates, and organizations to understand and manage. Often a clause in one section must be read with a clause in another section, or within another act, which makes reading and complying with the rules difficult to do.

Permissive  
Legislation  
that Reduces  
Administrative  
Complexity

Another significant issue has been the lack of harmonization of local election rules across the three Acts (*MEA*, *Assessment Act*, *Education Act*) that set out the complex rules for municipal and school board elections. School board trustee candidates and voters must interpret three pieces of legislation to understand their qualifications. Moreover, because school support has two purposes under legislation – election and assessment – outdated legislative requirements make it difficult to match school support to voters which can mean delays at the polling station.

Rules on campaign finance and third-party advertising are also complex and difficult to oversee and enforce. There needs to be a thorough review of both frameworks to streamline rules and introduce mechanisms to make enforcement more efficient. This must include examining enforcement such as the compliance audit process, offences, and penalties.

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## Recommendations

The *MEA* will be 30 years old when the next scheduled municipal and school board elections take place in October 2026. While there have been a few changes to the *Act* since the last formal review, the current mix of political, environmental, social, technological, and legal factors make this an opportune moment to modernize the *Act*.

A review and re-write of the *Act* should also include a concurrent review of relevant sections of the *Education Act* and *Assessment Act* which contain provisions that add further complexity to the local election picture.

### ***General Recommendations***

1. **Overhaul and update the *Act* to ensure that it is future-proof, addresses current gaps, streamlines rules, and brings added clarity well ahead of the 2030 election.**

While it may not be possible to complete a top-to-bottom re-write and re-design of the *Act* ahead of 2026, AMCTO is calling on the Province to launch consultations and engage our members to begin the process as soon as possible. The goal is to bring forward brand new legislation by 2028 at the latest, ahead of the 2030 municipal elections. The project planning for this endeavour should begin now, informed by discussions with AMCTO, Elections Ontario, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) and Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

A new *Act* would breathe new life into local government elections by rebuilding a fulsome statute instead of relying on the current patchwork of fixes that make the legislation more complicated than necessary. A new *Act* would make it easier for voters, candidates, and third-party advertisers to understand, comply with and participate in democratic processes. A review also provides an opportunity to bring innovation to election administration so that Ontario is looked to as a leader in the local democratic process in Canada.

2. **Include a legislative requirement to review the Act after every scheduled municipal and school board election year.**

While a comprehensive review should ensure the Act does not become quickly outdated, with the pace of technological and societal change, the MEA will continue to need regular review and updating. We are suggesting that the Act be substantially reviewed at least every four years with a specific legislative requirement to do so.

3. **Review how the current legislation, regulations, and prescribed forms treat personal information, considering a digital privacy lens.**

In the past few years, privacy protection has become increasingly important. With increased vitriol both in-person and in digital public spaces, members of the public, candidates for elected office, and other officials have expressed concern about the protection of personal information. Furthermore, as personal safety concerns have become increasingly alarming, it is essential that steps are taken to protect the privacy of individuals while balancing the need for increased transparency in local elections.

For instance, [several municipalities have passed resolutions](#) calling on the Province to remove requirements to post personal information online including candidate and contributor home addresses<sup>10</sup>. Anecdotally, several clerks have noted that they have received requests from those who experienced harassment or violence and consequentially, they do not want their information appearing on the voters' list.

Unlike provincial election legislation, the MEA does not explicitly allow for the redaction of certain information when posting documents online. Section 4.7 of the [Elections Act, 1990](#) gives Elections Ontario, upon request, the authority to redact certain personal information if the Chief Electoral Officer reasonably believes posting the information would endanger the person's life, health, or security. Further, section 4.8 of the [Elections Act](#) restricts the sharing of names, addresses, and unique identifiers of electors to certain persons.

For municipal election legislation, consider allowing for redaction of personal information or removing the requirement for municipalities to post personal information online while ensuring information is still available to clerks or to any other body to review qualifying addresses for contributions.



<sup>10</sup> See for instance, <https://kitchener.citynews.ca/2023/04/26/region-of-waterloo-asks-province-to-keep-home-addresses-of-local-candidates-donors-private/>

## **Recommendations to Strengthen Public Trust and Electoral Integrity**

Electoral integrity is a core focus of election administration and critical to ensuring public trust. While all recommendations are built on the foundation of electoral integrity, recommendations listed under this theme speak to the need to provide support to electors, residents, and administrators in this endeavour.

### **Priority Recommendations**

- 1. Amend the Act to include a preamble that captures the principles of elections recognized by the court and the intended outcomes of the Act.**

One way to enhance the clarity of the MEA is to ensure that the text matches core guiding principles of elections.

As we noted in our [2015 submission](#)<sup>11</sup>, in *DiBiase v. Vaughan (City)*, 2007, the Honourable Justice Peter Howden of the Ontario Superior Court wrote that in making its finding, the court relied upon the principles articulated in a previous Supreme Court of Canada ruling (*Haig v. Canada*, 1993), specifically that:

- The secrecy and confidentiality of the voting process is paramount;
- The election shall be fair and non-biased;
- The election shall be accessible to the voters;
- The integrity of the voting process shall be maintained throughout the election;
- There is to be certainty that the results of the election reflect the votes cast;
- Voters and candidates shall be treated fairly and consistently; and
- The proper majority vote governs by ensuring that valid votes be counted, and invalid votes be rejected so far as is reasonably possible.

These principles are fundamental to the administration and exercise of elections at all orders of government in Canada. They are in fact, central to the MEA itself, and should be embedded in the Act.

- 2. Establish a mechanism that permits the Minister of Municipal Affairs, in consultation with affected communities, to alter municipal and school board election day if it falls on a day of cultural or religious significance.**

The 2022 municipal and school board election day fell during Diwali, an important festival observed by many communities across the province. In future years, it could be the case that election day falls on another culturally or religiously significant festival or event.

While many municipalities provide advance voting opportunities, local elections rely on volunteers as well as municipal staff to support election day activities including running voting locations.

<sup>11</sup> See <https://www.amcto.com/sites/default/files/2023-05/AMCTO-MEA-Submission.pdf>



Candidates for office may also be impacted as they may wish to be with family and friends during these special occasions. For residents and staff of the impacted communities it can be a difficult decision to choose between missing personal celebratory commitments or missing an important democratic process. This could be a contributing factor to lower voter turnout and election staffing resources.

Section 9.1 (6) of the *Ontario Election Act, 1990*<sup>12</sup> contains a mechanism through which an alternative day can be chosen for provincial elections. A mechanism for selecting an alternative day is needed for local elections, however the selection of a suitable alternate day should not be left to individual clerks as there is a policy imperative that municipal and school board elections must be held on the same day across the province.

Moreover, as clerks need ample time to ensure that they can plan and execute elections, the selection and communication of an alternate date would need to be done well in advance, at least by the January in the year prior to the year of the election, if not earlier.

**3. Amend the Act so that, if requested, schools and institutions must allow space for advance polls and voting day free of charge.**

To facilitate in-person voting, municipal clerks and their staff require large, central, and accessible locations to host voters on advance voting and election days. Often, the best facilities are local schools. While the *MEA* allows clerks to use certain buildings, including schools, as voting locations (*section 45(4)*), health and safety concerns often cited by school administrators make the location selection process less seamless than it should be.

While school boards are required to provide space on election day, clerks often face administrative difficulties in securing these spaces. For example, we have heard from members that some school administrators request that municipalities hire security personnel or may not provide access to facilities such as washrooms, or access to school staff during election day, and some refuse access altogether. This leaves clerks with challenges confirming voting locations and without the enforcement tools to secure these spaces.

Additionally, all electors should have access to voting in multiple locations on all voting days. As per the *definition in section 5 the MEA*<sup>13</sup>, “voting day in a regular election is the fourth Monday in October” which does not specifically include advance voting opportunities. For instance, schools can currently say no to advance polls, or can charge a permit fee. The *Act* should be changed so that schools must allow advance polls if requested, and free of charge.

On election day, institutions like long-term care homes become polling locations for the Province’s most vulnerable electors. However, there may be issues with accessing these locations because of outbreaks or other circumstances, which can make casting votes more difficult. Explicitly allowing voting to take place in institutions and schools on advance voting days allows clerks to provide more electors more choice in when and where to cast their ballots.

<sup>12</sup> See the *Election Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.6*

<sup>13</sup> See section 5 in the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

4. Require school boards to schedule one of the provincially required Professional Activity (PA) days on municipal and school board election day.

Further to the above, enhancing safe schools on voting day is a priority for everyone. This goal can be achieved by reducing the number of people in schools. To do this, one of the mandatory PA days should fall on election day and while some school boards practice this, there remains inconsistency across the province.

AMCTO previously shared an analysis of locally scheduled PA days that showed that moving PA days every four years to coincide with municipal election days is unlikely to be a significant burden for school boards as there is a pattern of October PA days. School boards should be required to schedule one of the provincially mandated PA days on municipal and school board election day to facilitate the election of their own representatives and so that election administrators can focus on providing safe electoral services.

Ahead of the 2022 municipal elections our Association [made formal requests of school boards](#) to schedule one of the mandatory PA days on election day<sup>14</sup>. We also asked that these dates be included every four years as part of the annual school year calendar development.

Following this advocacy push, we were pleased to see an increase in the number of school boards that scheduled a PA day in 2022, with [encouragement from the Ministry of Education](#)<sup>15</sup>. However, this remains an issue for future elections, requiring a permanent, reoccurring solution.



### **Secondary Recommendations**

5. Remove the requirement for employees of a municipality or local board to provide notice of their intention to stand for election to council.

There are areas where the rules and guidance within the *Act* should provide more certainty to candidates and to electors to facilitate their participation in local democracy. Potential candidates for municipal office, who happen to work for a municipality or a local board, should be provided the same, equal opportunity as other candidates who are not required to declare their intentions until they submit their paperwork. Municipal staff are responsible to their employer and so should follow established HR protocols for taking leave. By removing the requirement for municipal employees to provide council with notice of their intention to stand for election, all candidates can be treated fairly.

<sup>14</sup> See AMCTO letter, September 2021, to School Board Directors of Education & Board Chairs re PD Days <https://www.amcto.com/letter-to-school-boards-re-PD-days>

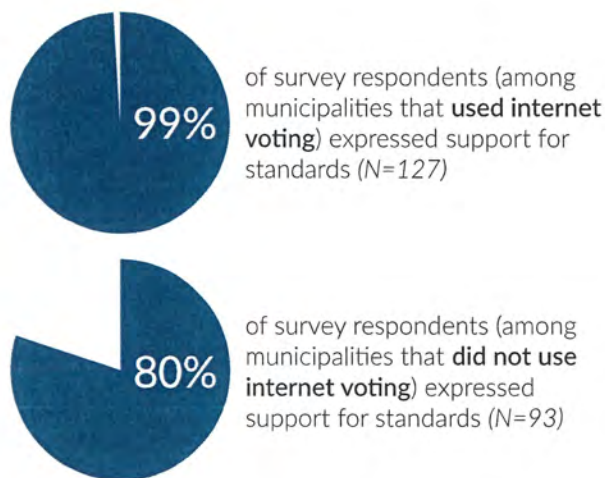
<sup>15</sup> See AMCTO Advocacy Update, September 2022, re Progress on Professional Development (PD) Days on Municipal and School Board Election Day <https://amcto.informz.net/informzdataservice/onlineversion/pub/bWFpbGluZ0luc3RhbmNlSWWQ9MTA3NTYwODQ=>



6. Clarify the Act to reflect that a voter's absence from work may be on any day voting is available (i.e. advance voting days).

Like the issue noted above about the definition of voting day in [section 5](#) of the MEA, it should be made explicit that any elector can be absent from work to exercise their right to vote on any day voting is available. The current definition of voting day is limited to election day only and could be read to exclude advance voting days, days that may be more convenient to voters for casting their ballots and participating in the democratic process.

7. In consultation with AMCTO and other municipal stakeholders, consider how the work by the [Digital Governance Standards Institute](#)<sup>16</sup> related to electronic voting may be formalized to support election administration in Ontario.



Survey data collected through AMCTO's 2022 Post-Election Survey

Work is already underway to develop voluntary standards on [voting technology](#)<sup>17</sup> and [electronic voting](#)<sup>18</sup>. Municipal professionals from across Ontario have engaged with the committee undertaking this work. With an increasing number of municipalities considering e-voting methods for ease of meeting voters 'where they are', there should be a provincial interest in adopting voting standards.

Overwhelmingly, respondents to our 2022 Post-Election Survey support internet voting standards. The responses also suggest more municipalities would consider this method of voting if there were standards in place. The right training and supports would need to be

#### What our Members are Saying:

*"Standards would ensure consistency in format, security, etc. across vendors."*

*"[Voting standards] would ensure a province-wide standard for security and operational experience."*

*"There are standards set out for paper voting in the MEA. There should also be a standard for electronic voting as it is now left to the municipality and vendors. It may provide further confidence in these systems."*

<sup>16</sup> See <https://dgc-cgn.org/>

<sup>17</sup> See <https://dgc-cgn.org/standards/find-a-standard/voting-technologies/>

<sup>18</sup> See <https://dgc-cgn.org/can-dgsi-111-public-review-for-online-voting-standard-now-open/>

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in place to ensure that municipalities, vendors, and other interested parties fully understand the standards and their responsibilities.

Moreover, decisions about voting methods should always be left to the municipality to decide. Whereas online voting may be beneficial in some regions of the province, it may not be the best method for others given costs, technological support and access to broadband.

Ultimately, voting standards would empower municipalities to select the best voting method(s) for them and their communities. Consider how these standards may be formalized to support election administration in Ontario.

### **Long-Term Recommendations**

8. Establish a working group with AMCTO and other municipal stakeholders to inform the development of a regulation for electoral definitions of "tenant", "spouse of a non-resident" and "occupancy".

Municipal elections have unique eligibility rules tied to property and tenancy status that make these terms important and unique. The current definitions provided in the Act are not sufficiently clear, and create potential confusion for electors, candidates, and administrators. We raised this [concern in 2015](#)<sup>19</sup> and legislative changes in [2016](#)<sup>20</sup> brought forward regulation-making authority to consider a definition of tenant for electoral purposes. However, regulations are not yet in place.

The lack of definition about occupancy, control, possession and tenancy remains a significant gap municipal clerks must deal with related to voter qualification with many claiming to be eligible based on a lease of "properties" such as parking spots, sheds on land, as well as various seasonal properties such as RV parks and leased cottages. Providing a clearer definition of "occupancy", "control", "possession", "tenancy", and "spouse of a non-resident" is important to all municipalities, but more so in communities where qualifications based on residency and property are muddled such as in cottage country and rural Ontario. There are unique eligibility rules at the municipal level that make clear terminology important.

<sup>19</sup> See <https://www.amcto.com/sites/default/files/2023-05/AMCTO-MEA-Submission.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-41/session-1/bill-181/debates>



For example, Wollaston Township experienced issues with lack of clarity on qualifications and in 2020 called for the Province to close loopholes on property qualifications and leases in what they called “pay for play schemes”<sup>21</sup>. The resulting council resolution received support from several other municipalities.

Providing this clarification for electoral purposes will help clerks ensure that tenants entitled to vote can do so, and those who believe they may be entitled to vote (but are not under law) can obtain needed clarity. Our Association can be a willing partner to assist in developing these regulations.

## ***Recommendations to Enhance Accountability and Transparency While Making Compliance and Enforcement Easier***

This section contains recommendations that speak to fairness, accountability, transparency, and key principles to ensuring the integrity of elections. This section contemplates making compliance with electoral rules easier to follow for candidates and where these rules are deliberately broken, suggests recommendations that allow efficient enforcement of remedies and penalties. As the local “Chief Electoral Officer”, the clerk should have the authority to make decisions about administrative and operational matters. This will ensure that there is no real or apparent conflict for council members who may be standing for election while making decisions about the electoral process. This may also help to improve overall municipal staff-council relations.

### ***Priority Recommendations***

#### **1. Remove the 25-signature endorsement requirement.**

Everyone has the right to stand as a candidate for election if they meet the qualifications set out in the relevant Acts. However, particularly in larger urban municipalities, candidates often run for office without any intention of campaigning, without setting out policy proposals, or legitimately participating in the democratic process.

The [original intent behind this provision](#) of obtaining a 25-signature endorsement was to try to reduce frivolous candidates from ending up on the ballot which could result in split votes<sup>22</sup>. Ultimately, requirements for 25 signatures in medium and large municipalities have not addressed this issue as signatures are easy to collect with a declaration that signees are eligible electors. This does not dissuade people from launching non-serious campaigns and adds an administrative burden for election administrators who must review and attempt to check required information on candidate forms and eligibility.

<sup>21</sup> Wollaston Township. Letter to Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing with Council Resolution. Dated September 16, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Ontario. Legislative Assembly, *Hansard*, 41st Leg, 1st Sess, No 158 (11, April 2016) at 1440. <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/house-documents/parliament-41/session-1/2016-04-11/hansard#para577~:text=Some%20people%20have,than%20100%20votes.>



**2. Investigate incentives to support genuine candidacy while addressing frivolous campaigns, including the nomination filing fee refund.**

Instead of the 25-signature requirement, the Province should look at other ways to support serious candidates while disincentivizing non-serious candidates. The current process of refunding anyone who files a financial statement is ineffective at dissuading frivolous candidates and there may be better mechanisms to ensure compliance with campaign finance rules.

Potential areas to explore are nomination fee refund eligibility to candidates who receive a certain vote share or removing the right to receive a refund of the nomination filing fee if the financial statement is not filed on time. Consideration should be given to whether certain rules favour incumbents as opposed to their challengers. Overall, there must be a balance between supporting genuine candidacy, reducing administrative burden, and applying penalties to those who deliberately skirt electoral rules.

**3. Amend the Act so that no candidate shall accept a contribution over \$1,200 from a single resident.**

While we recommend reviewing the campaign finance framework in its entirety (see long-term recommendations in this section), the Province should immediately review the Act to identify and close loopholes in campaign finance rules.

For example, [subsection 88.9<sup>23</sup>](#) prohibits individuals from contributing over \$1,200 to a single candidate, however there is no complementary provision that explicitly prohibits a candidate from accepting such a contribution. Contributors are not necessarily familiar with the Act in the same way candidates are, and with the Act in its current form, the rules around contributions are not easy for residents to understand.

**4. Clarify that any resident of Ontario may submit a compliance audit application, consistent with contribution rules.**

There is confusion among candidates and the public about who can submit a compliance audit application. Currently, [subsection 88.33<sup>24</sup>](#) states that an elector who is entitled to vote may make an application, but it is not clear whether an elector must reside in the municipality in which they are making an application. This has been [raised and challenged most recently<sup>25</sup>](#) in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, where an Oakville candidate appealed an elector's request for an audit of their finances, stating that the elector resides in a different ward than them, and is therefore ineligible to file a compliance audit request.

As contributions are open to residents of Ontario (i.e. not limited to electors), there should be a mechanism by which electors as residents of Ontario may seek remedy from the compliance

<sup>23</sup> See ss.88.9 in the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

<sup>24</sup> See ss.88.33 in the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

<sup>25</sup> See <https://www.oakvillenews.org/local-news/ward-7-councillor-nav-nanda-appeals-decision-to-audit-her-campaign-finances-8482086>



audit process regardless of where they reside. If applications are not frivolous and vexatious, any resident of Ontario with the means of seeing through an application should be able to bring one forward to ensure the integrity of the electoral process.

**5. Consider setting one 90-day period for compliance audit applications for initial and supplementary financial statements to simplify the process.**

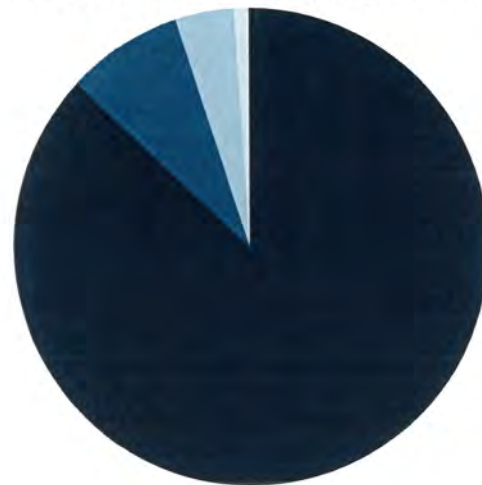
The current structure creates many overlapping deadlines which is challenging to communicate to electors, the public, and for municipalities and school boards to track. This becomes more challenging in larger municipalities with hundreds of candidates. Streamlining application deadlines will make communication, administration, and compliance easier.

**6. Roll the review of contributions and over-contributions to candidates and third-party advertisers into the Compliance Audit Committee (CAC) process and permit the committee to decide whether to commence a legal proceeding against a candidate or third-party advertiser for an apparent contravention.**

Consistent with our recommendations on [Bill 181 to Standing Committee](#)<sup>26</sup> in 2016, having municipal clerks review contributions to candidates and third-party advertisers is problematic for a number of reasons:

- The CAC already exists to review financial statements
- The current process jeopardizes the independence and the impartiality of clerks during elections
- The current process places clerks in potential conflict with members of council
- Most municipalities do not have mature electronic filing systems for candidate and third-party advertiser financial statements
- The current process imposes additional administrative and resource burden on clerks who are already busy running local elections

Rolling the review of contributions into the established mandates of CACs would also allow an elector to make an application and is a more effective way to ensure candidate and contributor accountability.



**How does your municipality determine whether any contributors exceed the maximum allowable amount? (N=220)**

- Clerk's office fulfilling it (192)
- Finance department fulfilling it (17)
- Other (8)
- Using an external consultant (3)

*Survey data collected through AMCTO's 2022 Post-Election Survey*

<sup>26</sup> See <https://www.amcto.com/sites/default/files/2023-05/AMCTO-Bill-181-Committee-Presentation-Deck.pdf>

The CAC process has traditionally not received much attention. However, the process is an important element of accountability in local elections and is starting to receive more public discussion<sup>27</sup>.

Providing the CAC with explicit authority to decide whether to commence a legal proceeding against a candidate or third-party advertiser could reduce applications made to the courts for review of CAC decisions.

Consider improving the CAC process with accountability, transparency, and operations in mind as countless hours are spent on delivering important post-election processes, which can contribute to overall increased audit costs and continue for years after the election with prosecutions and court reviews.

**7. Expand decision timelines for CACs in Subsection (8) from 30 days to 45 days.**

Further, in the interest of supporting applicants, election administrators and CAC members with carrying out their responsibilities, the decision-timelines for CACs should be expanded from 30 days to 45 days. This additional time is especially helpful where the CAC process may fall around a holiday (especially in cases of by-elections). 45 days would remain a reasonable decision timeframe consistent with references in other statutes for required meetings.

**8. Clarify roles with respect to CACs wherein council is responsible for establishing the committee and the clerk is responsible for making appointments.**

The MEA assigns responsibility of administering elections, including establishing necessary policies and procedures, to the clerk. However, there are several sections throughout the Act where the responsibility for what are, in effect, administrative decisions, is vaguely distributed between both council and staff. Administrative responsibilities for elections should rest with the clerk.

For instance, section 88.37(1)<sup>28</sup> gives council responsibility for "establishing" a compliance audit committee to review potential campaign finance violations. In practice, however, this section has been interpreted broadly, giving council a more expansive mandate that includes appointing committee members. It is not appropriate for council to appoint members of a committee that is created to review the election finances of candidates, some of whom may end up filing as candidates and sitting as councillors. To maintain clarity and objectivity, all administrative responsibilities related to CACs should reside with the clerk.



<sup>27</sup> Coyne, Andrea and Andrew Lawlor. "Building voter confidence in the municipal electoral process," *Policy Options*. 21, Feb. 2024. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/february-2024/municipal-elections-safeguards/>

<sup>28</sup> See section 88.37(1) in the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

## Secondary Recommendations

9. Clarify the role of scrutineers where alternative (unsupervised or remote) voting is in place and collaborate with AMCTO and others on the definition of scrutineer and what they may or may not do.

The process of scrutineering is changing in every municipality that incorporates the use of internet voting into their election. As voting in the digital age is no longer neatly contained to recreation centres, school auditoriums or church basements, the rules are not as clear as they once were. The Act provides significant attention to the role of scrutineers during an election, ensuring that candidates are permitted to appoint a scrutineer for each ballot box and voting place. But what happens when there are thousands of polling places and no formal ballot box? There is currently no clarity about how election results can be scrutineered in jurisdictions that use online or alternative voting methods. This is a gap in the current process that needs to be addressed.

10. Review the scope of election offences and related penalties to address gaps. Consider providing support and guidance to clerks on best practices for implementation and enforcement of serious offences.

Offences and related penalties should be reviewed. More specifically, for the coercion or intimidation of an elector, preventing or impeding an elector from voting, and from false representation or aiding a person in committing offences. A review needs to address these gaps - many of which are a result of changes to technology.

In consideration of new offences and related penalties, the Province must of course consider the burden of proof and enforceability of penalties for such offences. The Province should also provide more support and guidance to clerks on best practices for implementation and engaging law enforcement for the more serious offences.

## Long-Term Recommendations

Due to gaps in rules and penalties, the lack of standardization of compliance audits, and the increased use of the courts to review compliance audit committee decisions<sup>29</sup>, there has been increased frustration among administrators and an inconsistent approach to post-election activities meant to ensure transparency and accountability. As an Association, we have highlighted several of these member concerns about role clarity, conflict of interest and capacity issues.

Not only is the current process frustrating for municipal staff but for candidates who are not clear on their responsibilities. This can also be frustrating for residents and electors who are doing their due diligence in holding candidates accountable for improper activities. If the rules are not clear, and the process becomes convoluted, why would anyone participate in the electoral process?

<sup>29</sup> Coyne and Lawlor.



**11. Establish a working group with AMCTO and other municipal partners to review and improve the campaign finance framework, including rules, guidance, forms, processes, and penalties.**

While we have put forward several recommendations as interim measures to address financial issues, there remain underlying concerns that only a full review of the campaign finance framework can properly address.

Whether it is on the campaign finance framework or the below noted third-party advertising framework, there needs to be a balance struck: any new rules should avoid making it difficult for people to participate in local democracy. Making compliance easier while also ensuring that there is proper accountability, makes the rules and processes easier to enforce and to prosecute where rules have been broken.

Given the complexity of administration, compliance, and enforcement, a wider conversation about these frameworks is needed with our members and other stakeholders to understand the issues, challenges, and opportunities from varying perspectives. Together, we can co-design a framework that benefits everyone.

**12. Establish a working group with AMCTO and other municipal stakeholders to review and improve the third-party advertiser regime for ease of compliance and enforcement.**

Similarly, the third-party advertiser framework needs to be updated and improved. The current measures were introduced to regulate third-party advertising, which includes contribution and spending limits, and to help create flexibility for groups doing advocacy work throughout the campaign period<sup>30</sup>. However, there remains room for improvement, including better defining qualifications for third-party advertisers. Improvements should ensure the regime is less cumbersome and easier for advertisers, administrators, and compliance audit committees to comply with and enforce.

**13. Within the campaign finance and third-party advertiser frameworks, review the mechanisms for enforcement, and related penalties to address gaps in accountability and transparency measures.**

Related to our secondary recommendation in this section, there are gaps in penalties related to overcontributing to a candidate's own campaign and accepting overcontributions from residents. There are nuances within the legislation that must be considered as well. For instance, there should be assurances that changes to campaign finance rules and penalties are balanced with the ability of candidates to pay off campaign debts.

Ultimately, a review of the campaign finance and third-party advertising frameworks, along with the compliance audit, offences, penalties, and enforcement processes must be looked at holistically as these are intertwined with changes to one section or subsection potentially requiring subsequent changes elsewhere in the Act.

<sup>30</sup> Ontario Newsroom. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Backgrounder. June 7, 2016. "Changes to the Municipal Elections Act," Accessed: <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/39111/changes-to-the-municipal-elections-act>.



14. Consider increasing maximum campaign spending limits and its related formula to consider inflation outlined in O Reg 101/97.

The Province should consider revising the spending limit formula in [Ontario Regulation 101/97](#)<sup>31</sup> which has been stagnant since 2018 and does not consider inflationary pressures on campaign costs.

15. Explore establishing an independent office to manage investigation and prosecution of offences under the Act.

Local election administration enforcement is nuanced and often differs municipality to municipality as does capacity and resourcing, whereas federal and provincial elections are administered by one centralized body. In reviewing the campaign finance, third-party advertising and enforcement frameworks in the MEA, the Province should also consider promising practices from election administrators at other levels of government, such as an independent office like the Commissioner of Canada Elections.

Municipalities face challenges proceeding with prosecutions under the MEA. For instance, the conflicting nature of local police governance is responsible for the investigation of criminal activity, and municipal elected officials sit on these police boards. Anecdotally, in instances where local forces are engaged, they have recused themselves and referred matters to the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) who may or may not involve themselves in local matters. Barring a provincially appointed official, more clarity around MEA offences being investigated by the OPP would help address existing concerns.

Similarly, prosecution through the courts is a time-consuming process that can take multiple years to get to trial, the process for which takes up staff time and resources to prepare for, prosecute, and await judgement before applying penalties.

A separate body could allow for an alternative dispute resolution mechanism with procedures that are applied consistently across municipalities. This would remove potential conflicts and friction between municipal staff as election administrators, candidates, and members of council who may have contravened the Act, leading to quicker resolutions. At the provincial-level for instance, the [Election Finances Act, 1990](#)<sup>32</sup> includes mechanisms such as referrals to the Ministry of the Attorney General for prosecution and the use of administrative monetary penalties.



<sup>31</sup> See section 5 of O.Reg 101/97 under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

<sup>32</sup> See the *Elections Finances Act, 1990* <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e07>

## **Recommendations to Reduce Administrative Complexity**

AMCTO supports modernizing legislative and regulatory environments that enable the work of municipal public servants, while allowing innovation with policies and practices that reflect current needs and focuses on outcomes.

Legislation needs to strike the right balance between providing clear rules and frameworks to ensure the integrity of the electoral process, while also reducing administrative and operational burden for municipal staff. Local election administrators need to be able to run elections in a way that responds to the unique circumstances of their local communities. Thereby, providing the right rules and frameworks for administrators will result in benefits for electors, candidates, advertisers, and others involved in local elections.

### **Priority Recommendations**

1. **Bring the language of the Act and regulations into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by removing gendered references and including references to encompass all voting methods.**

To ensure more inclusive language within the Act, the Province should remove gendered references. Clerks receive complaints from non-binary persons about the use of language in the Act which they feel is exclusionary. Moreover, as more municipalities are turning to alternative voting methods to reach voters and run efficient elections, language in the Act across numerous sections and within regulations should encompass all voting methods rather than referring to traditional paper ballots or in-person voting. Changes are required in sections 43, 47, 48, 49, 52, and 89, among others.

2. **Ensure all definitions that appear in the Act are captured in and limited to Section 1 and update definitions to add clarity.**

One way to improve clarity and interpretation is to ensure that all key terms are captured in the definition section of the Act. There are several instances wherein a definition appears later in the legislation while others are captured in the definition section. Definitions for several terms also require clarity. For instance, municipalities are left to define "retirement homes" resulting in inconsistencies across municipalities. As we have noted elsewhere in this submission, definitions of "tenants" and "occupancy" also lack clarity.

It is also important that language clarifies the definition of "municipality" so that it consistently applies to operational and administrative tasks undertaken by municipal administration, whether by the clerk or other municipal staff.



**3. Clarify references to municipal business hours as well as dates that constitute a weekend or holiday as defined pursuant to the *Legislation Act, 2006*.**

Candidates, voters, and other interested parties are not familiar with the traditions and nuances of legislation and regulations. Without a reference to other legislation, voters and candidates are unlikely to know that they should refer to the *Legislation Act* for definitions. Moreover, it should be clarified that references to specific deadlines within the *Act* are to reflect regular municipal business hours especially where these hours may fall on weekends and holidays.

**4. Move nomination day to July, shortening the campaign period to be more consistent with federal and provincial nomination periods.**

As noted previously, local elections are complex multi-year projects often undertaken by a handful of municipal staff who are also responsible for numerous other statutory and operational responsibilities. In 2020, the [nomination period was extended to August from July](#)<sup>33</sup>. Extending this period runs contrary to the changes the Province made in 2016 [shortening the nomination period](#)<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, the municipal nomination period is longer than those at the provincial and federal levels where this process is managed by agencies whose sole focus is election administration.

Shortening the length of the nomination period would give municipalities more time to prepare ahead of the election. There is significant strain on municipal staff and resources with longer nomination periods, with legislative and business deadlines for printing ballots, quality assurance, security, and testing, among other activities. While this may sound straightforward, municipalities are often working with tight, limited supply chains and vendors, and in larger municipalities, staff are often dealing with multiple ballot types, and in many cases, managing hundreds of candidates. A longer nomination period means there is less time between the close of nominations and the first day of voting to finish the nuanced tasks and activities required of local elections.

Longer elections are more expensive for candidates, harder to run for administrators, and can be a potential cause of fatigue from an already disengaged electorate. Moving the nomination period back to at least July would make the nomination period shorter, while also giving candidates in smaller municipalities—who may still be working full-time jobs with less sophisticated campaign infrastructure—enough time to campaign.

**5. Enable clerks to determine what voting method is best as the local chief electoral officer and align timelines related to clerk's procedures.**

[Building on the updates made in 2016](#)<sup>35</sup> which began to untangle council's role in election administration, the *Act* should be updated to authorize the clerk to choose what voting method is best. Requiring council to pass bylaws on voting methods in section 42 gives council members and the public the impression that council is responsible for election administration issues.

<sup>33</sup> See <https://www.amcto.com/network-community/blog/advocacy-update-bill-218>

<sup>34</sup> See <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/39113/ontario-passes-legislation-to-allow-ranked-ballot-option-for-municipal-elections>

<sup>35</sup> See section 41(4) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.



[Section 42](#)<sup>36</sup> should further be amended to resolve the conflict in timelines between when procedures need to be completed and when they must be provided to candidates. For instance, June 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for the procedures in a regular election year, but 42(3)(b) requires these must be provided when a candidate files their papers, which could be as early as May 1<sup>st</sup>.

**6. Change the timeline for proxy appointment to begin September 1<sup>st</sup> for a regular election.**

A similar timeline alignment issue occurs between making the voters' list available to voters to confirm if they are on the list and/or update their information and the appointment of proxies. In the 2022 election, the first day for proxy appointment was August 22<sup>nd</sup>. However, the voters' list was not available until September 1<sup>st</sup>. In this scenario, staff were not able to necessarily confirm whether an individual appeared on the voters' list as a qualified elector until September 1<sup>st</sup>. Thus, allowing proxy voters to be appointed earlier than receipt of the voters' list is problematic.

In the case of a by-election, consider changing the timing for proxy appointments to when the clerk has made corrections.

**7. Expand the timeline for reporting on accessible elections from 90 days to 120 days.**

[Section 12.1 \(3\)](#)<sup>37</sup> requires the public posting of a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities within 90 days of voting day. We recommend that this be extended to 120 days. Providing additional time to municipalities would allow them to look at reporting on the election holistically in one comprehensive post-election report that includes factors impacting accessibility.

**8. Consider aligning the spending limit certificate requirements and timelines between candidates and third-party advertisers for consistency.**

The Act states that candidates are to receive the certificate of permitted amounts of their own expenses and contributions to their campaigns upon the filing of their nomination forms. The MEA does not require the certificate for maximum amount for parties, etc., after voting day to be issued until or before September 30<sup>th</sup> along with all final certificates. In comparison, third-party advertisers are to receive the certificate of maximum amount for parties, etc., after voting day upon filing their Notice of Registration. Providing consistent timelines across various participants in the electoral process makes it easier for municipal staff to adhere to legislative requirements and ensure that candidates and parties are adhering to timelines.



<sup>36</sup> See section 42 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

<sup>37</sup> See section 12.1(3) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

9. Update existing provincial guides and forms and provide additional guidance to voters, candidates, third-party advertisers, and election administrators.

The following points outline areas where we believe further clarification can be provided to ensure continued progress, transparency, and accountability in local election administration.

**Voters' Guide**

- Include more details on voter identification (ID) requirements to provide clearer information about acceptable ID.

**Candidate and Third-Party Advertiser Guides**

- Specify the documentation that can be accepted as proof an individual is authorized to act on behalf of a trade union for third-party advertising purposes.
- Clarify whether promoted social media posts count as third-party advertising.
- Provide clarification on whether contributions can be sought via platforms such as GoFundMe that process online payments.
- Add further clarity in candidate guides on how to interpret the Act from a campaign finance perspective (i.e. using personal credit cards to reimburse campaign expenses, setting up and managing banking accounts) and where to seek advice for filling out the required forms.
- Add content to guides related to individuals who are supported by their corporations/organizations and stipulate that in these cases, campaign volunteers could be perceived as 'in-kind' contributions. Any stipends provided to volunteers should be captured in financial documents.



**Forms**

- Ensure clarity and consistency regarding the use of a single name on the ballot under [section 41 \(2\)](#)<sup>38</sup>. Nomination forms allow the use of a single name on the ballot while section 41 does not provide guidance on how names should be listed on the ballot.
- Conduct extensive external-to-government systems testing of provincial government forms to ensure they are accessible and useable. Our members advised of candidate challenges with downloading and filling in prescribed forms as they were in a format that was not supported by their computer system. We understand that several municipalities raised this issue with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), but no remedy was applied.
- Update Declaration of Identity - Form 9 so that it can be used to serve voters who have no identification (e.g. those who may be homeless, seniors who have not updated their government-issued identification, etc.)

<sup>38</sup> See section 41(2) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

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## Secondary Recommendations

### 10. Extend the timeline to submit final changes to the voters' list from 30 days to 60 days.

Section 27(2)<sup>39</sup> requires that the final changes clerks make to the voters' list be submitted 30 days following election day. In the post-election period, it can be challenging for clerks to meet this deadline given that they are busy managing orientation and onboarding of councillors as well as handling compliance activities. In larger municipalities where thousands of revisions are processed during the election period, it is very challenging to meet the current 30-day timeline. It has never been clear from an operational perspective why this must be done in 30 days. 60 days would provide clerks with a more reasonable post-election timeline to account for and submit final changes.

### 11. Consider extending discretion to remove a name from the voters' list and the correction of errors to voting day.

The Act should be clear that if the clerk is satisfied, a correction can be made regardless of when that is. A similar mechanism should be included regarding school board support especially where an elector has completed a declaration. This would facilitate a smoother experience on election day for electors whose information may not be correct.

AMCTO's advocacy efforts<sup>40</sup> to fix the voters' list resulted in Elections Ontario taking over responsibility for a single register of electors, consolidating elector information across the province and removing overall responsibility from MPAC, which retains responsibility for school support data. We are hopeful that in 2026, the first election in which voters' lists will be compiled using Election Ontario's information, there will be a significant improvement in data quality of the voters' list.

Clerks should be extended the authority to make changes to elector information beyond what is currently allowed under section 22<sup>41</sup> to update voter information, including school support, on election day, if they are satisfied that the information provided by an elector is correct. Without this authority and as the legislation stands currently, an elector may be unable to exercise their right to vote.

Permitting changes to the voters' list on election day should not prevent any improvement to processes for accepting revisions at the single register or at MPAC's level related to school board support. The end goal should always be to have corrections addressed adequately at all levels to ensure voters have a seamless, quick, and overall positive experience on election day.

<sup>39</sup> See section 27(2) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

<sup>40</sup> See <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/local-govt-association-applauds-elections-ontario-report-887387112.html>

<sup>41</sup> See section 22 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.



**12. Establish a province-wide registry for MEA offenders, maintained by the MMAH or another provincial body, and provide this registry to election administrators.**

The Act makes it clear that candidates, contributors, and third-party advertisers are responsible for ensuring that they comply with the Act. While the Act also requires clerks to certify nomination papers and registrations, clerks do not have the tools or resources such as public and centralized information about electoral histories and sanctions imposed on candidates, contributors, or third-party advertisers. How is a clerk from southwestern Ontario to know whether a candidate or third-party registering in their municipality has been disqualified in northern Ontario?

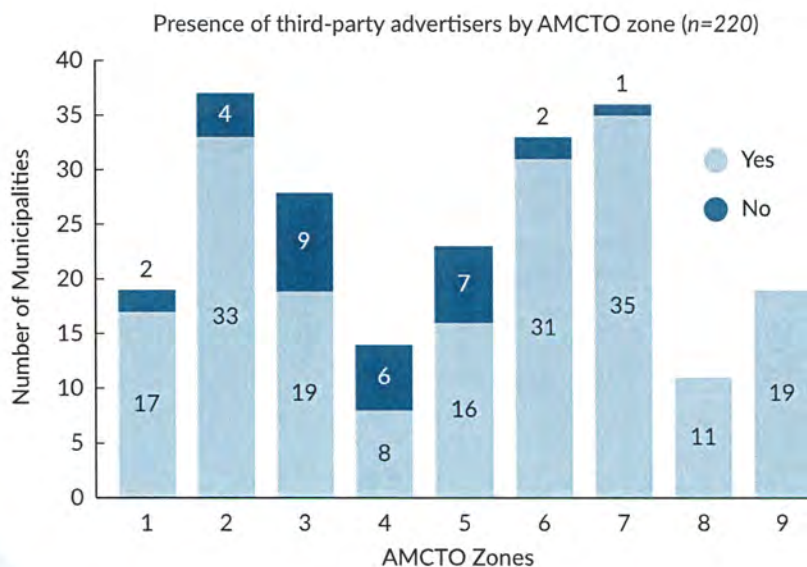
To assist municipalities in completing reviews, there should be a province-wide registry of MEA offenders. Such a central repository kept and maintained by a separate body would include information about qualifications, records of compliance audit and court decisions. Information should be available to ensure clerks, compliance audit committees, and others have access to information about those who have contravened the Act.

**13. Amend the Act to consolidate rules between regular elections and by-elections specifying what must be different.**

The Act provides that by-elections should be conducted “as far as possible in the same way as regular elections”. However, it does not provide further guidance. Are there ways in which by-elections should not run like regular elections? This is an area where the Act can be streamlined to clarify, where necessary, what activities may be different in a by-election. This would ensure municipalities are conducting by-elections consistently across the province.

**14. Consider a threshold amount for registering as a third-party advertiser that is in line with provincial and federal thresholds.**

Third-party advertiser registration primarily occurs in medium to larger municipalities and few, if any, are registered in smaller municipalities.



The entire process from registration to compliance is cumbersome and may prevent smaller actors from engaging in the political process for fear of being labelled third-party advertisers. If the intent is to retain the current framework, amendments need to be made so that there is a line in the sand for who and when someone becomes a third-party advertiser. For instance, is a 'mom and pop restaurant' a third-party advertiser because they hand out flyers for a

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candidate at their restaurant? A threshold amount for registering as a third-party advertiser that is in line with provincial and federal thresholds would help ensure local voices without resources can participate without unnecessarily triggering ad status.

Moreover, calculations for third-party spending limits are cumbersome and lack clarity especially for by-elections. The current wording of section [88.21](#)<sup>42</sup> suggests that the number of electors in the entire municipality, instead of the ward that is the subject of the by-election, is used to calculate spending limits for third-party advertisers. This gives third-party advertisers a disproportionately higher spending limit than candidates in a by-election.

### 15. Consider amending the deadline for third-party advertiser registration to be more reasonably in advance of an election.

There are also timeline issues with third-party advertising registration. Allowing third-party advertisers to register up to the Friday before election day is problematic from an operations perspective. At this time, municipal staff's attention should be focused on the successful execution of voting and the electoral process, rather than additional paperwork.

### 16. Require those who file a Notice of Extension of Campaign Period - Form 6 to also file a Supplementary Financial Statement.

Often candidates and third-party advertisers believe that because they did not campaign, raise or spend money in the extended period, they are not required to file a supplementary financial statement even though they filed a notice of extension. This is the interpretation which inevitably causes confusion. Stronger language should be applied to those who file a Form 6 to specify that a Supplementary Financial Statement is required.



## Long-Term Recommendations

### 17. Clarify the process for removing a name from the voters' list by a relative.

Providing the clerk with more flexibility to determine procedures on how a family member may request to remove someone from the municipality's voters' list (provided the clerk is satisfied that the individual should be removed) would assist in the clean-up of municipal voters' lists.

However, we are hopeful that the single register of electors managed by Elections Ontario will improve the quality of the voters' list given that there is one register and duplications should be reduced. The Province could re-evaluate this post-2026 to determine whether any legislative changes are necessary.

<sup>42</sup> See section 88.21 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

## 18. Decouple school board support for electoral purposes from school support for assessment purposes.

Despite Elections Ontario taking responsibility for a single register of electors, under the *Assessment Act*, MPAC remains responsible for collecting information about school board support. This may be attributed to the leading legislative interpretation that school support may have dual purposes: electoral and assessment. However, as the Ombudsman noted in [the 2021-2022 Annual Report](#)<sup>43</sup>, this data from MPAC is no longer used to determine school board funding but rather who can run and vote in school board elections.

Currently, the single register of electors is not expected to resolve this issue as MPAC remains responsible for collection of school support information. As a result, there are two separate portals through which voters must check and update their information: one from Elections Ontario for qualification and one from MPAC for school support. This dual process will cause confusion for the voter without resolving issues related to incorrect assignment of school support.

Municipalities receive school support information, relying on this data to develop their voters' lists. The problem resides in processes that assume an elector to be an English Public supporter unless a supporter has submitted forms or updated information on an online portal to declare otherwise. This particularly impacts French-language rights holders and separate school supporters who may have moved between wards or between municipalities but did not fill out a form.

This issue continues to blur the electoral picture for candidates, electors, and administrators when it comes to linking electors and the school boards for which they are entitled to cast their ballots. This blurring sometimes results in an elector being assigned an incorrect school board ballot which slows the voting process, frustrates the elector, and means more work for election officials. Making school support for electoral purposes distinctive in legislation and providing Elections Ontario with the authority to collect this information would improve the quality of school support data.

The Province should update candidate and voter guides to make it clear that school support amendments cannot be made by municipalities as a result of Provincial legislative barriers. It is important that candidates and voters are able to direct their concerns to the Province rather than to municipal staff who do not control these processes.

## 19. Amend the *Education Act* to clarify who is a French-language rights holder and who is a separate school rights holder.

As we noted previously, local elections are complex endeavours, and not only do clerks run municipal elections, but they are also required to run the election for trustees across five school boards. Increasingly, candidates who may not be qualified to run for school trustee (i.e. do not hold the language or religious rights to qualify) are submitting papers to run. This has resulted in

<sup>43</sup> Ontario Ombudsman. 2022, *Annual Report 2021-2022*, <https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/resources/reports,-cases-and-submissions/annual-reports/2021-2022-annual-report> p 43

void school board trustee elections. It is no wonder why there is confusion when the *Education Act*, *Assessment Act* and the *MEA* must be read to figure out the nuances of qualification. Clearer rules around language rights qualifications would help people understand whether they qualify as a candidate.

**20. Clarify that school board trustee candidates must file their nomination papers in the municipality in which they reside.**

Given that school board boundaries cross municipal boundaries, when trustee candidates do not submit their nomination papers in the municipality in which they reside, it complicates the situation. Clerks are left trying to figure out residential qualification in addition to general candidate qualification. This is burdensome for candidates and municipal staff and must be addressed.



**21. Consider readjusting school board boundaries to align with municipal boundaries.**

Given the complications between jurisdictional boundaries, one consideration may be to better align school board boundaries with municipal boundaries.

**22. Conduct a review of identification requirements in the regulation and consider the availability of digital and hard copy identification as well as identification challenges for segments of Ontario voters.**

Voters and administrators require more guidance and clarity on what types and forms of acceptable identification can be used in local elections. It is a persistent challenge for municipalities educating members of the public about what can be used, particularly because accepted identification is different than provincial and federal elections due to residency requirements. Moreover, certain voters also lack identification and documentation to be able to exercise their right to vote.

As part of the Province's work on [Digital Identity](#)<sup>44</sup> under the Ontario Onwards Action Plan, there should be collaboration and consultation with the municipal sector, including AMCTO, on the specific needs of identification for electoral and other local service provision purposes.

<sup>44</sup> See <https://www.ontario.ca/page/digital-id-ontario>





## Trends AMCTO Continues to Monitor

Our Working Group also discussed several trends that may impact electoral administration. While there are no specific recommendations at this time, we want to highlight some of what the group identified to inspire continued conversations about the tools, resources and supports local election administrators may require in the future.

### Electoral Participation

Declining voter turnout has been discussed as an indicator of democratic health. Our 2022 Post-Election Survey, which included data from [MMAH's municipal election survey](#), found a 4% decline in overall voter turnout between 2018 and 2022<sup>45</sup>. In 2018 and 2022, electors also voted in a provincial election, and in the fall of 2021, voted in a federal election as well.

[Our 2014 Post-Election Survey](#) found the average turnout was approximately 43%<sup>46</sup>. [As we noted in previous submissions](#), there may be some element of voter fatigue<sup>47</sup> which is also why we recommend shortening the election period.

While voter turnout has decreased, the number of acclamations has increased. [As AMO noted](#):

with fewer candidates, there are also more positions being acclaimed, especially in smaller, rural municipalities. This year, 548 council positions were acclaimed, including 139 mayors and reeves. Compared to 2018, total acclamations are up 15% over 2018 and up 16% for mayors and reeves (heads of council). A total of 32 councils will be entirely acclaimed this year, 3% more than 2018, when 26 councils were acclaimed. All of [sic] the fully acclaimed municipalities in 2022 have populations of 10,000 residents or less.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> AMCTO. February 2024, *2022 Post Election Survey*, <https://www.amcto.com/about-amcto/news-announcements/2022-municipal-elections-survey-key-findings>

<sup>46</sup> AMCTO. August 2015, *2014 Post Election Survey* <https://amctopolicy.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/amcto-2014-post-election-survey-results.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> AMCTO, July 2015, *AMCTO Submission on the Municipal Elections Act* <https://www.amcto.com/sites/default/files/2023-05/AMCTO-MEA-Submission.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). News Release. September 27 2022, "Municipal elections data available on AMO website" Accessed: <https://www.amo.on.ca/policy/municipal-governance-indigenous-relations/municipal-election-data-available-amo-website>



It is understood that in making voting easier and more accessible, it is possible to increase participation in local democratic processes which is why municipalities have looked at implementing alternative voting methods in their communities.

### Digital Identity

As an Association, we continue to be interested in the Province's [Digital Identity](#) project<sup>49</sup> given the operational implications to local service delivery. Photo identification is used for recreation programming registration, paying property tax, resolving parking offenses, and confirming residency for local elections. The degree to which Ontario follows other jurisdictions in implementing digital identities will determine how local service delivery, including elections\*, may benefit or be challenged by such an initiative. Any introduction of digital identities will need to work for elections and be reflected in the *MEA*.



### Misinformation

We are also keeping an eye on more subversive and potentially harmful trends including the spread of misinformation that threatens democratic institutions. This is an increasing concern for election administrators at all orders of government.

For instance, a report from the [Canadian Election Misinformation Project](#)<sup>50</sup> documents and evaluates misinformation during the 2021 Canada federal election. While there was widespread misinformation during this election, the overall impact was minimal as the campaign period and results were not driven by misinformation. However, there was a rise in misinformation through groups who hold conspiratorial beliefs about various topics. The report also highlights certain vulnerabilities that need to be addressed including the increasing difficulty in detecting what qualifies as misinformation and the continued distrust of democratic institutions by increasing segments of Canadians.

There has also been reporting on distrust and misinformation, among other threats outlined by the [Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force](#)<sup>51</sup> that are a cause for concern.

While there are tools and resources offered by organizations like the [Canadian Centre for Cybersecurity](#)<sup>52</sup> to help the public and others identify this pervasive information, decentralized elections such as those run by municipalities, could benefit from more specific resources and supports for managing these threats.

<sup>49</sup> See <https://www.ontario.ca/page/digital-id-ontario>

\* There are a range of identification requirements outlined in regulation that may be accepted as proof of identity.

<sup>50</sup> See [https://www.mcgill.ca/maxbellschool/files/maxbellschool/meo\\_election\\_2021\\_report.pdf](https://www.mcgill.ca/maxbellschool/files/maxbellschool/meo_election_2021_report.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> See <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/threats-of-violence-canada-elections-1.7153960>

<sup>52</sup> See <https://www.cyber.gc.ca/en/guidance/how-identify-misinformation-disinformation-and-malinformation-itsap00300>

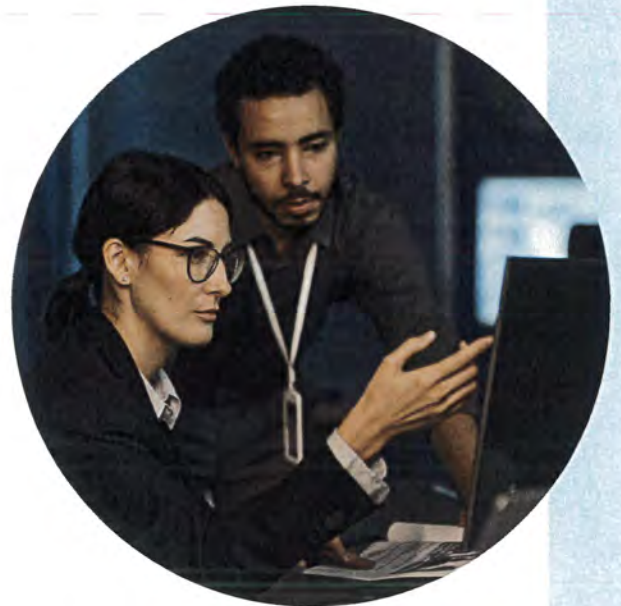
## Foreign Interference

Misinformation created and distributed by domestic actors is concerning enough but with the threat of foreign interference, the scale of risk is at a magnitude that must be dealt with at a national level. [The Government of Canada](#) consulted with Canadians on foreign interference and potential government action starting in late 2023<sup>53</sup>. As an Association and to represent our members' interests, [we wrote to the Ministers of Justice Canada and Public Safety](#)<sup>54</sup> to advise that changes made at the federal level will require complementary provincial legislation. Local election administrators will require support in managing threats and potential incidents.

We also continue to watch with interest the [Public Inquiry](#) into *Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions*<sup>55</sup> for findings and recommendations.

## Artificial Intelligence (AI)

While governments are beginning to take measures that provide frameworks and rules around the development and use of AI, there are few sources that deal specifically with elections. Administrators need the right legislative tools and guidance to ensure they can manage the impacts of AI on local democratic processes and ensure there is the right support to enforce such provisions. The Act must provide the rules and frameworks to support election administrators who may choose to leverage these technologies to improve electoral services.



<sup>53</sup> CSIS. 2021. *Foreign Interference: Threats to Canada's Democratic Process*. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/2021/foreign-interference-threats-to-canada%27s-democratic-process.pdf>; Government of Canada. Public and Emergency Preparedness Canada. News Release. November 24, 2023. "Government of Canada launches consultation on legislative amendments to counter foreign interference in Canada" <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/government-of-canada-launches-consultation-on-legislative-amendments-to-counter-foreign-interference-in-canada-868566675.html>

<sup>54</sup> See AMCTO letter, January 2024 re: AMCTO Letter to Ministers of Justice Canada and Public Safety re Foreign Interference <https://www.amcto.com/letter-to-ministers-re-foreign-interference>

<sup>55</sup> See <https://foreigninterferencecommission.ca/>



## Conclusion

For many reasons, election administrators at all orders of government face several heightened challenges and our clerk members are no different. [Increasing distrust in public institutions](#)<sup>56</sup> beyond just healthy skepticism<sup>57</sup> means that democratic processes delivered through election administration are more important than ever. There are decreasing rates of democratic participation reflected in low voter turnout, electoral support, and an increased number of acclamations that [impact the efficacy of elections](#)<sup>58</sup>.

The good news is that there are opportunities as well: voting methods can reach more qualified electors which may result in increased rates of voter participation. Improvements to technology can result in more automated and quicker service delivery if balanced with the necessary security precautions. Clarifying rules can make compliance and enforcement more straightforward, paving the way for more diverse pools of candidates.

The Act should reflect the digital challenges and opportunities of today and tomorrow, and discussions should occur via legislated four-year reviews to ensure clarity, consistency, accountability, transparency, and trust remain top of mind. The legislation should be more enabling while providing important guidance, standards, and support with the right mix of tools to make compliance and enforcement streamlined.

The Province should build on the [MEA modernization work from 2016](#)<sup>59</sup> by rewriting and restructuring the Act to address existing and new challenges and opportunities. The issues weighing most on the minds of election administrators would be served by transformational change to the Act to provide a better overall framework for local elections. This requires bringing a 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset to improving service delivery to voters, candidates, and the public, while providing election administrators with more flexibility, certainty, and clarity to do the important work of delivering fair, accountable, and transparent municipal and school board elections.

AMCTO looks forward to discussing our recommendations with the Province and collaborating on priority legislative and regulatory improvements.

<sup>56</sup> Edelman Canada. May 2023. "2023 Edelman Trust Barometer," <https://www.edelman.ca/sites/g/files/aatuss376/files/202303/2023%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20EN.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> Norris, Pippa. *In Praise of Skepticism: Trust but Verify*. Oxford University Press, 2022.

<sup>58</sup> See <https://www.amo.on.ca/policy/municipal-governance-indigenous-relations/analysis-2022-municipal-post-election-data>

<sup>59</sup> See <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-41/session-1/bill-181/debates>



### AMCTO MEA Working Group

AMCTO formed the MEA Working Group in 2023 to review, analyze, and discuss a suite of reforms to the *Municipal Elections Act (MEA)*. Together, the Group brought forward best practices and lessons learned from municipal and school board elections administration to identify challenges and opportunities for solution-orientated improvements to existing election rules and regulations. Their work informed this submission and continues to support our members and municipal professionals in local election administration.

AMCTO would like to thank the following individuals for their time, contributions, and expertise as part of our MEA Working Group:

Martina Chait-Hartwig  
(Chair)  
Township of Douro-Dummer

Florence Witherspoon  
(Vice-Chair)  
Township of Ashfield-  
Colborne-Wawanosh

Shawnica Hans  
City of Brampton

Veronique Hie  
City of North Bay

Terri Knight-Lepain  
City of Windsor

Antonia Mancuso  
Town of Oakville

Lori McDonald  
Town of Bracebridge

Fiona Murray  
City of Toronto

Evan Read  
City of Vaughan

Pam Walsh  
Town of Blind River

For more information about this Working Group, the submission and AMCTO advocacy initiatives, please contact [advocacy@amcto.com](mailto:advocacy@amcto.com).

The following appendix includes a line-by-line breakdown of our recommendations and the corresponding section of the MEA in its current form. We invite the Province to consult with us, our members and other sector organizations on reviewing and updating the current legislation to better serve local elections administration now and into the future.



## Appendix: Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation	Legislative Reference(s) if applicable	Rationale
Overhaul and update the <i>Act</i> to ensure that it is future-proof, addresses current gaps, streamlines rules, and brings added clarity well ahead of the 2030 election.	Act and regulations	The <i>MEA</i> contains a patchwork of amendments, sections, provisions and other structural issues that make it difficult for people to understand and manage.
Include a legislative requirement to review the <i>Act</i> after every scheduled municipal and school board election year.	New section	The <i>Act</i> should be updated on a regular cycle to ensure that it is responsive to new and emerging technology and trends.
Review how the current legislation, regulations, and prescribed forms treat personal information, considering a digital privacy lens.	Act and regulations	Protection of privacy is becoming an increasing concern and is central to ensuring public trust.
91 Amend the <i>Act</i> to include a preamble that captures the principles of elections recognized by the court and the intended outcomes of the <i>Act</i> .	New preamble	A preamble inclusive of these principles should set out the intended outcomes of the legislation and provide foundational understanding of elections.
Establish a mechanism that permits the Minister of Municipal Affairs, in consultation with affected communities, to alter municipal and school board election day if it falls on a day of cultural or religious significance.	Section 4 Regular elections	In future years, it could be the case that election day falls on another culturally or religiously significant festival or event impacting voter turnout and staffing resources.
Require school boards to schedule one of the provincially required Professional Activity (PA) days on municipal and school board election day.	New sub/section	Confirming availability of school facilities for election day is one less thing for clerks to have to determine and provides voters with a large, central, accessible facility to cast their ballots. Ensures that election administrators can focus on providing electoral services to residents and municipal and school trustee candidates.
Amend the <i>Act</i> so that, if requested, schools and institutions must allow space for advance polls and voting day free of charge.	Section 45 Number and location of voting places	Clerks require a legislative basis to work with heads of institutions to address resident voting requirements providing more opportunities for the most vulnerable to cast their vote.

A136

Recommendation	Legislative Reference(s) if applicable	Rationale
Remove the requirement for employees of a municipality or local board to provide notice of their intention to stand for election to council.	Section 30 Employee of a municipality	Potential candidates for municipal office, who happen to work for a municipality or a local board, should be provided the same, equal opportunity as other candidates who are not required to declare their intentions until they submit their paperwork.
Clarify the Act to reflect that a voter's absence from work may be on any day voting is available (i.e. advance voting days).	Section 50 Electors' absence from work	The current definition of voting day is limited to Election Day only and could be interpreted to not include advance voting days.
In consultation with AMCTO and other municipal stakeholders, consider how the work by the Digital Governance Standards Institute related to electronic voting may be formalized to support election administration in Ontario.	New section	With an increasing number of municipalities considering e-voting methods to make voting easier and be "where the voters are" there should be a provincial interest in adopting some standards.
92 Establish a working group with AMCTO and other municipal stakeholders to inform the development of a regulation for electoral definitions of "tenant", "spouse of a non-resident" and "occupancy".	Section 17 Qualification of electors (with possible implications for Section 2 Residence)	The current definitions provided in the Act are not sufficiently clear, and create potential confusion for electors, candidates, and administrators.
Remove the 25-signature endorsement requirement.	Section 33 Filing Nomination	Signature requirements in medium and large cities has not addressed its stated intent as signatures are easy to collect with a declaration that signees are eligible electors and adds an administrative burden.
Investigate incentives to support genuine candidacy while addressing frivolous campaigns, including the nomination filing fee refund.	Section 34 Refund	The current process of refunding anyone who files a financial statement does not dissuade frivolous candidacies. Other mechanisms should be investigated.
Amend the Act so that no candidate shall accept a contribution over \$1,200 from a single resident.	Section 88.9 Maximum contributions to candidates	Fill the gap that does not specifically prohibit candidates from accepting a contribution.
Clarify that any resident of Ontario may submit a compliance audit application, consistent with contribution rules.	Section 88.33 Compliance audit of candidate finances	Clarify that any resident in Ontario can file a compliance audit application consistent with rules on contributions.



A13b

Recommendation	Legislative Reference(s) if applicable	Rationale
Consider setting one 90-day period for compliance audit applications for initial and supplementary financial statements to simplify the process.	Section 88.33(3)	The current structure creates many overlapping deadlines that is challenging to communicate to electors and candidates and for purposes of tracking.
Roll the review of contributions and over-contributions to candidates and third-party advertisers into the Compliance Audit Committee (CAC) process and permit the committee to decide whether to commence a legal proceeding against a candidate or third-party advertiser for an apparent contravention.	Section 88.34 Review of contributions to candidates	This provision jeopardizes the independence and impartiality of the clerk, places the clerk in conflict with members of council and there already exists a process on the Compliance Audit Committee to review statements.
Expand decision timelines for CACs in Subsection (8) from 30 days to 45 days.	Section 88.34 Review of contributions to candidates	To support applicants, election administrators and CAC members with carrying out an application, moving the decision-timelines from 30 days to 45 days may be more reasonable especially where the CAC process may fall around the holidays and is consistent with references in other statutes for required meetings.
93 Clarify roles with respect to CACs wherein council is responsible for establishing the committee and the clerk is responsible for making appointments.	Section 88.37 Compliance Audit Committees	The MEA gives the responsibility for administering elections, including establishing necessary policies and procedures, to the clerk. However, there are several sections throughout the Act where the responsibility for what are, in effect, administrative decisions is unclearly distributed between both Council and staff. This is one area where there is a clear conflict in members of council who may be subject to an application are involved in the administration of the committee reviewing that application.
Clarify the role of scrutineers where alternative (unsupervised or remote) voting is in place and collaborate with AMCTO and others on the definition of scrutineer and what they may or may not do.	Section 16 Scrutineers	Qualifications of scrutineers continues to be challenged. Moreover, as alternative voting methods are increasingly used, the role of scrutineering is less understood and should be addressed.
Review the scope of election offences and related penalties to address gaps. Consider providing support and guidance to clerks on best practices for implementation and enforcement of serious offences.	Section 89 Offences	Fill existing and new gaps because of changes to technology. Any changes to offences and penalties would require additional guidance and support for election administrators on how to enforce these matters.

Recommendation	Legislative Reference(s) if applicable	Rationale
Establish a working group with AMCTO and other municipal partners to review and improve the campaign finance framework, including rules, guidance, forms, processes, and penalties.	Section 88.8 Campaign Contributions to Section 94.2 Limitation Period	The campaign finance framework is complex to administer and comply with and should be reviewed to make it easier to follow while ensuring accountability.
Establish a working group with AMCTO and other municipal stakeholders to review and improve the third-party advertiser regime for ease of compliance and enforcement.	Section 88.4 Third Party Advertisers	The third-party advertising framework is complex to administer and comply with and should be reviewed to make it easier to follow and comply with.
Within the campaign finance and third-party advertiser frameworks, review the mechanisms for enforcement, and related penalties to address gaps in accountability and transparency measures.	Section 89- Section 94.2	A holistic review needs to consider enforcement mechanisms, penalties and the prosecution process for candidates and contributors.
Consider increasing maximum campaign spending limits and its related formula to consider inflation outlined in O Reg 101/97.	O Reg 101/97	The Province should consider reviewing and updating the spending limit formula in regulation which has been stagnant and does not consider inflationary pressures on campaign costs.
Explore establishing an independent office to manage investigation and prosecution of offences under the Act.	New section	Municipalities have faced challenges proceeding with investigations and prosecutions due to capacity, resourcing and time-consuming processes through the courts. A separate body would allow for alternate dispute resolution that avoids placing municipal staff in conflict with candidates and members of council.
Bring the language of the Act and regulations into the 21 <sup>st</sup> century by removing gendered references and including references to encompass all voting methods.	Act and regulations	To ensure more inclusive language within the Act, remove gendered references. Moreover, as more municipalities are turning to voting methods to reach voters and run efficiency elections, language in the Act across numerous sections and within regulations should contain language that encompasses all voting methods rather than referring to paper ballots.
Ensure all definitions that appear in the Act are captured in and limited to Section 1 and update definitions to add clarity.	Section 1	One way to improve clarity and improve interpretation in the Act is to ensure that key terms within the Act are captured in the definition section. There are several areas wherein a definition appears later in the Act and others are captured in the definition section.

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A13D

Recommendation	Legislative Reference(s) if applicable	Rationale
Clarify references to municipal business hours as well as dates that constitute a weekend or holiday as defined pursuant to the <i>Legislation Act, 2006</i> .	Section 10 Saturdays and Holidays and other sections dealing with filing deadlines.	Inconsistency between business hours and the legislation can lead to frustration for candidates, administrators and others engaging in local democratic processes.
Move nomination day to July, shortening the campaign period to be more consistent with federal and provincial campaign periods.	Section 31 Nomination Day	The municipal nomination period is longer than those at the provincial and federal levels which are run by agencies whose sole focus is election administration while municipal staff are managing day-to-day operations while running elections simultaneously. Revert back to the 2016 nomination deadline of July or earlier.
Enable clerks to determine what voting method is best as the local chief electoral officer and align timelines related to clerk's procedures.	Section 42 Bylaws re voting and vote counting equipment	Clarify areas of responsibility between the clerk as the administrator of elections and council as overseers of the municipality.
Change the timeline for proxy appointment to begin September 1 <sup>st</sup> for a regular election.	Section 44 Appointment of Proxy	Fix the disconnect between voters' list availability and appointment of proxies, qualifications for which cannot be confirmed as electors until the list is available.
Expand the timeline for reporting on accessible elections from 90 days to 120 days.	Section 12.1 (3)	Extending the timeline would allow more time to compile a comprehensive post-election report which is typical practice.
Consider aligning the spending limit certificate requirements and timelines between candidates and third-party advertisers for consistency.	Section 88.20 Candidate Expenses and s 88.1 Registered Third parties' expenses	Providing consistent timelines across various participants in the electoral process makes it easier for municipal staff to adhere to legislative requirements and ensure that candidates and parties are adhering to timelines.
Update existing provincial guides and forms and provide additional guidance to voters, candidates, third-party advertisers, and election administrators.	Voters' Guide; Third Party Advertisers Guide; Candidate's Guide	There are several opportunities to update and provide more information to support voters, third party advertisers and candidates in Provincial guidance materials. There have also been several challenges with usability of provincial forms and inconsistencies between the legislation and forms that should be addressed.
Extend the timeline to submit final changes to the voters' list from 30 days to 60 days.	Section 27 List of changes	Provide more time for clerks to provide final changes after the election period given the number of activities and tasks required to be completed post-election.

95

Recommendation	Legislative Reference(s) if applicable	Rationale
Consider extending discretion to remove a name from the voters' list and the correction of errors to voting day.	Section 22 Correction of Errors	Electors who move must fill out forms or go to a portal to update their residency and school support information, and despite improvements made to make this process easier, there will be electors who do not do this. Permitting clerks to remove names to voting day would allow for a cleaner voters' list.
Establish a province-wide registry for MEA offenders, maintained by the MMAH or another provincial body, and provide this registry to election administrators.	Section 35 Examination of nominations	While candidates are ultimately responsible for declaring their eligibility, clerks are required to certify nominations. Providing centrally available information about qualifications of candidates, and of those who may have contravened the MEA available to clerks will support this process.
Amend the Act to consolidate rules between regular elections and by-elections specifying what must be different.	Section 65 By-elections	Should the Act continue to distinguish between regular and by-elections, then there must be more guidance and information on how these elections are run to ensure more consistency in how by-elections are run across the province.
Consider a threshold amount for registering as a third-party advertiser that is in line with provincial and federal thresholds.	Section 88.4 Third Party Advertisers	The process is cumbersome and may prevent smaller actors from engaging in the political process for fear of being labelled as a third-party advertiser.
Consider amending the deadline for third-party advertiser registration to be more reasonably in advance of an election.	Section 88.4 Third Party Advertisers	There are also timeline issues with registration. Allowing third-parties to register up to election day is problematic from an operations perspective when municipal staff's attention has shifted from paperwork to execution of voting.
Clarify the process for removing a name from the voters' list by a relative.	Section 24 Application for Name Change	Electors who move must fill out forms or go to a portal to update their residency and school support information, and despite improvements made to make this process easier, there will be electors who do not do this. Permitting clerks to remove names to voting day would allow for a cleaner voters' list.
Decouple school board support for electoral purposes from school support for assessment purposes.	<i>Education Act, 1990 and Assessment Act, 1990</i>	Cumbersome rules across multiple acts can result in an elector being assigned an incorrect school board ballot which slows the voting process, frustrates the elector, and means more work for election officials.
Amend the <i>Education Act</i> to clarify who is a French-language rights holder and who is a separate school rights holder.	<i>Education Act, 1990 and Assessment Act, 1990</i>	Clearer language around qualifications would help people understand whether or not they qualify as a candidate.

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A13b

Recommendation	Legislative Reference(s) if applicable	Rationale
Clarify that school board trustee candidates must file their nomination papers in the municipality in which they reside.	<i>Education Act, 1990 and Municipal Elections Act</i>	School board boundaries cross municipal boundaries, and trustee candidates do not always submit their nomination papers within the municipality in which they reside, meaning clerks are left trying to figure out residential qualification as well. The complexity is burdensome for candidates and for municipal staff and must be addressed. Rules for elections need to be clear and straightforward.
Consider readjusting school board boundaries to align with municipal boundaries.	<i>Education Act, 1990 and Municipal Act</i>	Given the complications between jurisdictional boundaries, one consideration may be to better align school board boundaries with municipal boundaries.
Conduct a review of identification requirements in the regulation and consider the availability of digital and hard copy identification as well as identification challenges for segments of Ontario voters.	O Reg. 304/13 Voter Identification	There are numerous ways people carry identification requirements and there are segments of the population without proper identification. The Province has also been working on digital identity which needs to be accounted for.

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A13b



The Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) represents excellence in local government, management and leadership. Over the past 85 years, AMCTO has provided education, accreditation, leadership, and management expertise for Ontario municipal professionals. With 2,200+ members working in municipalities across the province, AMCTO is Ontario's largest association of local government professionals, and the leading professional development organization for municipal professionals.

Our mission is to deliver professional growth, networks, advocacy, and leadership to support and strengthen the knowledge, skills, and capabilities of municipal professionals now and into the future.

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October 8, 2024

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Hon. Paul Calandra

**Sent by Email:** — [minister.mah@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.mah@ontario.ca)

**RE: Support Resolution – Updates to the Municipal Elections Act**

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Please be advised at its meeting held on October 7, 2024, Council of the Township of Clearview passed the following resolution supporting AMCTO's advocacy for updates to the Municipal Elections Act:

Moved by Councillor Broderick, Seconded by Councillor Walker, Whereas, election rules need to be clear, supporting candidates and voters in their electoral participation and election administrators in running elections;

Whereas, legislation needs to strike the right balance between providing clear rules and frameworks to ensure the integrity of the electoral process;

Whereas, the legislation must also reduce administrative and operational burden for municipal staff ensuring that local election administrators can run elections in a way that responds to the unique circumstances of their local communities;

Whereas, the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (MEA) will be 30 years old by the next municipal and school board elections in 2026;

Whereas, the MEA sets out the rules for local elections, the *Assessment Act, 1990* and the *Education Act, 1990* also contain provisions impacting local elections adding more places for voters, candidates, and administrators to look for the rules that bind the local democratic process in Ontario;

Whereas, with rules across three pieces of legislation, and the *MEA* containing a patchwork of clauses, there are interpretation challenges, inconsistencies, and gaps to fill;

Whereas, the Act can pose difficulties for voters, candidates, contributors and third-party advertisers to read, to interpret, to comply with and for election administrators to enforce;

Whereas, while local elections are run as efficiently and effectively as can be within the current legislative framework, modernization and continuous improvement is needed to ensure the Act is responsive to today's needs and tomorrow's challenges;

Whereas, to keep public trust and improve safeguards the Act should be reviewed considering the ever-changing landscape which impacts elections administration including privacy, the threats of foreign interference, increased spread of mis/disinformation and the increased use of technologies like artificial intelligence and use of digital identities;

Whereas, the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) reviewed the Act and has provided several recommendations including modernizing the legislation, harmonizing rules, and streamlining and simplifying administration;

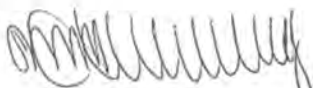
And Whereas, AMCTO put forward recommendations for amendments ahead of the 2026 elections and longer-term recommendations for amendments ahead of the 2030 elections;

Therefore, Be It Resolved That Council of the Corporation of the Township of Clearview calls for the Province to update the MEA with priority amendments as outlined by AMCTO before Summer 2025 and commence work to review and re-write the MEA with longer-term recommendations ahead of the 2030 elections;

And Be It Further Resolved that this resolution will be forwarded to all municipalities in Ontario for support and that each endorsement be then forwarded to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing ([minister.mah@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.mah@ontario.ca)), the Minister of Education ([minister.edu@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.edu@ontario.ca)), the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery ([todd.mccarthy@ontario.ca](mailto:todd.mccarthy@ontario.ca)), Minister of Finance ([Minister.fin@ontario.ca](mailto:Minister.fin@ontario.ca)) the Premier of Ontario ([premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca)), Simcoe-Grey MPP ([brian.saunderson@pc.ola.org](mailto:brian.saunderson@pc.ola.org)) and AMCTO ([advocacy@amcto.com](mailto:advocacy@amcto.com)). Motion Carried.

We look forward to hearing of the continued advocacy regarding this matter and updates on when the Ministry will move ahead with amending the Municipal Elections Act.

Sincerely,



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Sasha Helmkay-Playter, B.A., Dipl. M.A., AOMC  
Clerk/Director of Legislative Services

Clerk's Department

October 8, 2024

AIH

cc: Minister of Education  
Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery  
Minister of Finance  
Premier of Ontario  
Simcoe Grey MPP  
AMCTO Advocacy