



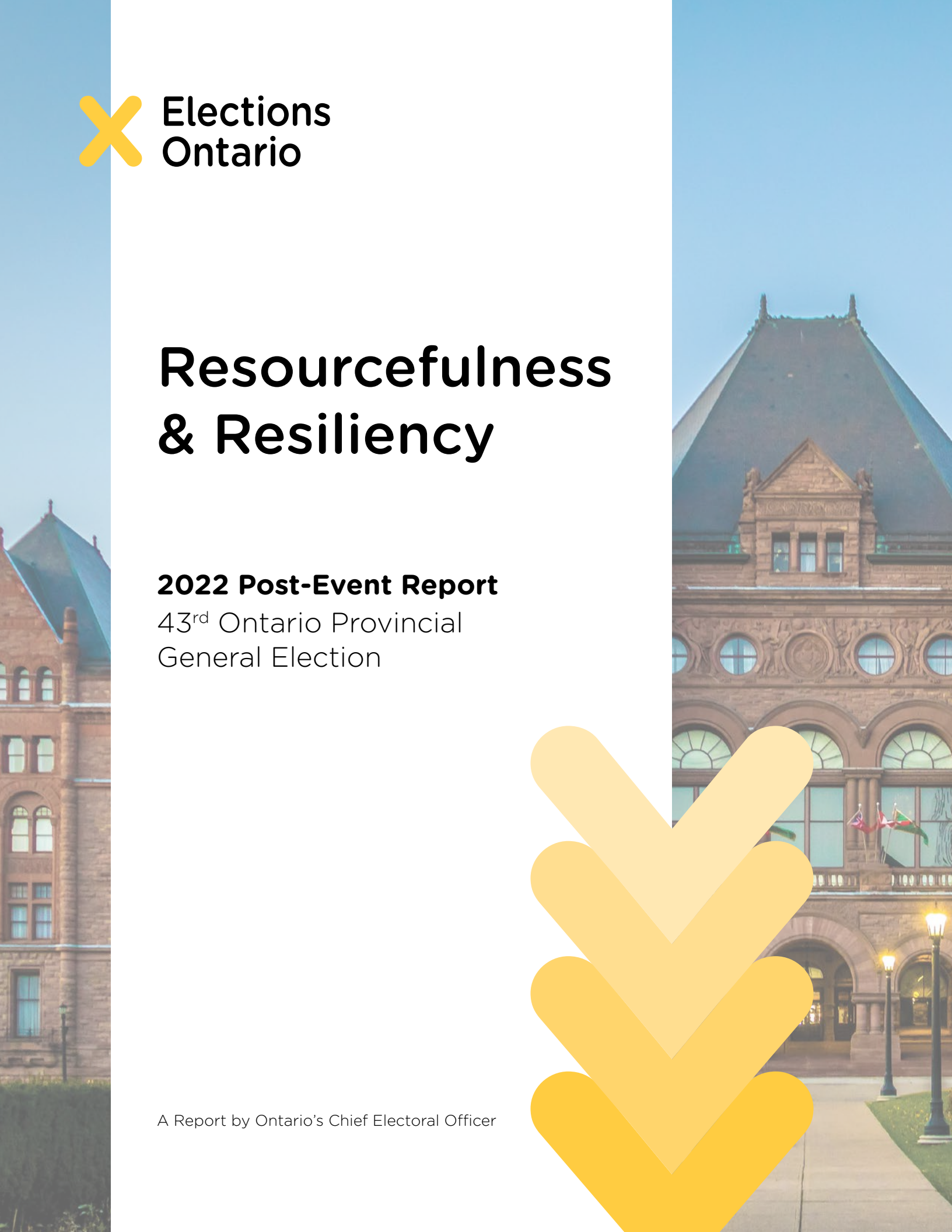
**Elections
Ontario**

Resourcefulness & Resiliency

2022 Post-Event Report

43rd Ontario Provincial
General Election

A Report by Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer







Legislative Assembly of Ontario
Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer
Bureau du directeur général des élections de l'Ontario

The Honourable Ted Arnott
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Room 180, Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1A2

Dear Mr. Speaker:

It is my pleasure to submit the post-event report of Ontario's 43rd provincial general election, as prescribed under the *Election Act* and *Election Finances Act*.

This report offers a summary of election proceedings and an evaluation of the alternative voting methods, processes, equipment, and technology used in the 2022 election, incorporating the requirements as set out in subsections 4.1(5), 4.4(11), 44.1(9), and 44.2(5), and sections 67.2 and 89 of the *Election Act*. In addition, I have provided a summary of the reports on accessibility submitted to me by the Returning Officers under section 55.1 of the *Act*.

Respectfully submitted,

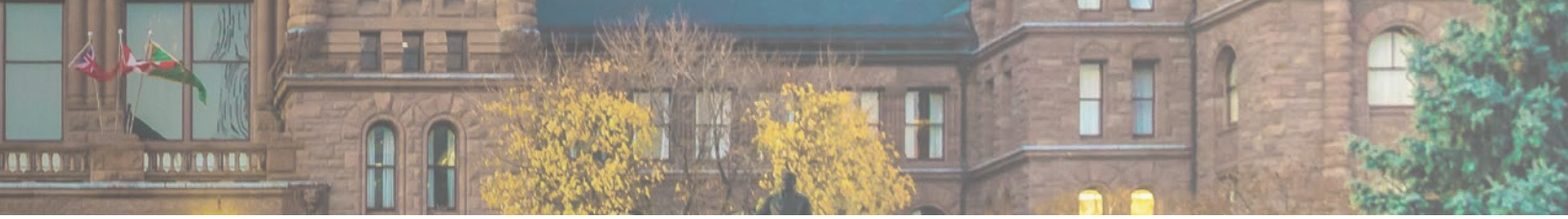
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Essensa".

Greg Essensa
Chief Electoral Officer



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Message from the Chief Electoral Officer



THROUGH THE ADMINISTRATION of fair and efficient elections, my primary objective has always been to make the voting process easier and more accessible for all Ontario electors. While this mandate remains true today, the political landscape has changed considerably since the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer was established more than 100 years ago.

Keeping pace with the waves of societal change requires constant monitoring of the provincial, national, and global environments in which we operate so that we can continue to modernize our processes in response to the changing needs and expectations of electors. These adjustments, however, cannot be completed by electoral agencies alone. Electoral management bodies work in tandem with several key players who support the delivery of fair and impartial elections.

In 2020, we celebrated the centenary of the Chief Electoral Officer position in Ontario. While we have witnessed changes over the past 100 years to the way we administer elections in this province, none has been more profound than the shift we experienced in this election due to the COVID-19

pandemic, testing not only our resilience, but also our agility to continue to deliver an election that was both safe and efficient.

COVID-19 restrictions and intermittent lockdowns required shifting our operations to a virtual environment, monitoring frequent updates to health and safety protocols, and managing supply chain issues in every sector that resulted in procurement delays and longer lead times. Our preparations leading up to the 2022 election also involved safeguarding the integrity of the election and the privacy of elector information in partnership with cybersecurity and law enforcement agencies.

In these past few years, electoral management bodies and key players in the democratic ecosystem have learned to adapt to abrupt global events such as COVID-19, yet there is another epidemic afflicting democracies worldwide—that of declining voter engagement and turnout. Although there are now more countries that host elections for a growing number of electors, voter turnout has decreased significantly since the early 1990s¹. Ontario was not exempt from this trend

¹ Abdurashid Solijonov, "Voter Turnout Trends around the World," International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2016: 24, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/voter-turnout-trends-around-the-world.pdf>.

Players in a democratic system



Electoral Management Bodies



Electors



Political Entities



Legislative Bodies



Media



Advocacy Groups

This post-election report outlines my legislative recommendations that serve as a step forward in addressing some of those concerns. It will take you through our four-year journey that culminated in Ontario's 43rd provincial general election on June 2, each section designed to highlight the meticulous planning and strategic partnerships involved in serving this province's 10.7 million electors across its 124 electoral districts. Throughout this report, we will also illustrate how the events of the last election cycle have altered the election business in Ontario, including the impact on our future operations as we prepare for elections in the years to come.

Greg Essensa
Chief Electoral Officer

and, in this last election, 44 per cent of Ontarians cast their ballot, marking the lowest recorded voter turnout in the province's history. While I have always maintained that voter turnout is a shared responsibility, more can and should be done to address elector engagement. From political parties and candidates, to electors, legislators, and administrative bodies such as Elections Ontario, we all have a role to play in Ontario's democratic process. This means not just acknowledging the declining electoral participation that we see in democracies around the world and here at home, but also doing our part to protect and to strengthen the health of our democracy.





The four-year election cycle: Planning in a time of uncertainty

PLANNING FOR AN ELECTION begins long before the writs are drawn up and campaign signs are staked into the ground. The fanfare and excitement of an election period is the culmination of extensive preparation and stakeholder collaboration, and a combination of broad-based strategic planning and detailed tactical groundwork that takes place throughout our four-year election cycle. The delivery of an election is never a small feat, especially in Ontario, a province which rivals entire countries in both size and population. For the 2022 election, we prepared to serve 10.7 million electors in urban, rural, and remote communities

across Ontario's 1.076 million square kilometres. We supported 25 political parties, almost 900 candidates, and 124 Returning Officers and their teams across 124 electoral districts.

Servicing a province as large as ours involves complex logistical planning, innovation, and training over the course of a four-year election cycle. Each year marks a phase in our preparations, beginning with a review of the last general election and culminating in the delivery of another. During those four years, we engage in an intricate cycle of developing, testing, and refining our processes.

The four-year election cycle

Year 1 Closing out and learning from the previous general election

Year 2 Planning the next election

Year 3 Implementing the plan for the next election

Year 4 Preparing and executing the election

Developing our 2019-23 strategic plan

Every five years, we develop a strategic plan that is based on our core values and lays out our priorities for the coming years.

The 2019-23 strategic plan² is built on the findings from the 2018 election, setting benchmarks and responsibilities to our stakeholders. This includes balancing the use of public funds and elector expectations while upholding the integrity of the electoral system.

This plan, along with the 2018 post-event report³, informed the development of five key strategic priorities that led to the introduction of technology in the polls.

The five key strategic priorities are as follows:

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

In addition to these priorities, we included key performance indicators (KPIs) in the strategic plan for the first time, which identify concrete goals for the future. Together, they establish a strategic, evidence-based approach to advancing Ontario elections.

Modernizing the voting processes for the 21st century

Modernization is an integral part of our mandate. Ahead of the 2018 election, we looked to other industries whose processes had changed with the introduction of technology. Banking, point-of-sale payment, and basic business practices indicated that our paper voting processes were out of touch with common business practices to which the populace had grown accustomed. In response, we introduced vote tabulators and electronic poll books (ePoll books) to service electors more efficiently and in a way that matched societal expectations of modernized service delivery⁴. Technology has enhanced the voting process in our province and now serves well over 90 per cent of Ontario's electorate during each provincial general election⁵.

The journey to modernizing Ontario's election process began in 2008 following the appointment of Greg Essensa as Chief Electoral Officer, who established a mandate to build modern services to improve voter experience at the polls. After 10 years of advocating for legislative change and conducting extensive research and testing, this vision was finally realized. In 2018, for the first time in our history, voting technology was used to administer a provincial general election in Ontario. This initiative improved the efficiency of the election process, including our staffing model to reduce the risk of administrative error. Additional benefits to the implementation of technology included the ability to report election results quicker and gathering data on voting trends to help us improve processes. This was achieved with the use of 22,000 ePoll books and 6,000 vote

² "Strategic Plan 2019-2023," Elections Ontario, 2019, <https://www.elections.on.ca/content/dam/NGW/sitecontent/2019/Reports/2019-2023%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>.

³ "Modernizing Ontario's Electoral Process," Elections Ontario, 2018, <https://www.elections.on.ca/content/dam/NGW/sitecontent/2019/Reports/2018%20General%20Election%20-%20Post-Event%20Report.pdf>.

⁴ "Proposal for a technology-enabled staffing model for Ontario Provincial Elections," Elections Ontario, 2014: 10, [https://www.elections.on.ca/content/dam/NGW/sitecontent/2016/2016-whitby-oshawa-by-election-report/2016 Whitby-Oshawa By-election - Post-Event Report.pdf](https://www.elections.on.ca/content/dam/NGW/sitecontent/2016/2016-whitby-oshawa-by-election-report/2016%20Whitby-Oshawa%20By-election%20-%20Post-Event%20Report.pdf).

⁵ "Modernizing Ontario's Electoral Process," Elections Ontario, 2018: 16, [https://www.elections.on.ca/content/dam/NGW/sitecontent/2019/Reports/2018 General Election - Post-Event Report.pdf](https://www.elections.on.ca/content/dam/NGW/sitecontent/2019/Reports/2018%20General%20Election%20-%20Post-Event%20Report.pdf).



tabulators serving over 90 per cent of electors at voting locations across the province. This marked the most significant change to Ontario's electoral process in over a century.

Evaluating the 2018 general election

Following the 2018 election, we launched into the first year of our four-year election cycle. During this period, we conducted a thorough audit of the election by reviewing all materials shipped back from our 124 returning offices, checking the results, and updating the register. We also administered surveys and conducted debriefs with each of our stakeholder groups, responded to elector feedback, and assessed the new data received through the introduction of technology.

The successful implementation of technology in the polls meant an improvement in the elector experience, a reduction in staffing, which alleviated past recruitment challenges, and an unprecedented amount of data to inform our future processes. Underlying these benefits of modernization was the inherent flexibility that technology offered to adjust our processes, which were immensely valuable while modifying our processes ahead of the 2022 general election.

This organization-wide assessment allowed us to document each stage of preparation and execution of the 2018 election, to identify successes and opportunities for future improvement. Working groups at our head office shared these findings during cross-divisional collaboration sessions by leveraging research, presentations, and demonstrations. By the end of the 2019 calendar year, we had finalized our 2022 election plans, including our voting location footprint and a budget that would facilitate our operations. We had solidified the framework and we knew precisely how we were going to plan and execute Ontario's 43rd provincial general election on June 2, 2022.



We were presented with several international awards celebrating the delivery of the 2018 Ontario provincial general election:

- *Electoral Commissioner of the Year Award*
- *Election Management Award*
- *Electoral Commission of the Year Award*
- *Minority Participation Award*
- *First Time Voter Award*
- *Electoral Ergonomy Award*

Always Be Ready

Part of our mandate is to always be prepared to deliver fair and efficient elections. After the 2018 election, we began working on a new strategy to determine how to plan, implement, track, and maintain readiness for by-elections and general elections.

We established quarterly readiness target dates which allowed us to be ready to deliver an election event anytime and implement modernization initiatives simultaneously.

The success of technology in the polls in 2018 demonstrated that few alterations to the 2022 election blueprint would be required throughout our upcoming election cycle. However, mere months into our planning period, news began to spread about the novel coronavirus pandemic, and with it came societal changes that foreshadowed the electoral planning modifications that we would be required to implement in the months ahead.

2020 began as planned

The second year of our election cycle began as planned, with the delivery of concurrent by-elections in the electoral districts of Ottawa—Vanier and Orléans on February 27, 2020. In preparation for the by-election events, we updated processes and policies to align with changes made during the 2018 election.

Ahead of the by-elections, we closely monitored the emergence and spread of COVID-19. Although the domestic infection rate was low at the time

and community spread of the virus had not yet begun, our staff worked collaboratively with Ottawa’s public health officials to prioritize the health and safety of both staff and the public in these by-elections. As a result of their recommendations, we made hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes available at all voting locations.

“What we can control is our readiness.”

— Dan Quinn, NFL Coach

On February 27, 2020, all polling locations opened on time, with field staff supporting 25,581 electors in Orléans and 20,033 electors in Ottawa—Vanier as they cast their ballots. The successful execution of these two by-elections provided validation that the changes we made following our evaluation of the 2018 election targeted the correct areas for improvement to our processes.



Between elections, we engage in extensive planning exercises that begin with a thorough assessment of the most recent election. Pictured here is assessment activity that took place following the 2018 general election.



Adapting to a changing environment

In March 2020, mere weeks following the delivery of the Orléans and Ottawa—Vanier by-elections and the finalization of our 2022 election blueprint, the novel coronavirus pandemic took hold. On March 17, 2020, the Government of Ontario declared a state of emergency in response to the spread of COVID-19 across the province. This required the closure of all non-essential businesses and forced Ontario into the first of several intermittent lockdowns, shifting our entire business to a virtual environment within the span of 24 hours.

Despite the sudden shift, the changes we had already been making to our systems and working arrangements ahead of the election meant that we were well-equipped to move our operations online. Since 2019, we had been implementing upgrades to our digital tools to enhance the flexibility and scalability that our election cycle demands. Migrating to an enterprise office suite of software that uses cloud computing allowed us to easily upload, store, and share our work. This change provided staff with access to network files and supported remote collaboration through web-based teleconferencing software, which enabled us to commence a telework pilot program in 2019, in alignment with options available across the Ontario Public Service. During the intermittent office closures leading up to 2022, our teams were already accustomed to operating in an exclusively virtual environment.

Once we were permitted to return to our office space, staff were reintroduced through a phased approach developed by our designated return-to-office committee, who monitored and adhered to provincial health and safety guidelines. Despite the cyclical pattern of loosening and tightening

pandemic restrictions that took place between 2020 and 2022, the adaptability of our processes and flexibility of our staff meant that onboarding and many of our projects were able to proceed as planned.

“Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.”

— Alexander G. Bell

The common assumption in the early days of the pandemic was that the virus would not present any substantial risk to the execution of the 2022 general election. However, as 2020 progressed, we witnessed several of our national and subnational electoral administration colleagues postpone their elections and referenda in response to COVID-19⁶. It became clear that the pandemic would impact our plans for 2022 and, consequently, we revisited our 2022 election blueprint to determine areas for change in our election and by-election processes.

In response to COVID-19, we developed an impact assessment framework to review each key deliverable of our election. This helped us to determine the required changes to our election plan, factoring in capacity restrictions at our head office, field offices and voting locations in alignment with new health and safety guidelines.

As a result of the assessments that each of our teams undertook, we were able to establish a new plan for the 2022 election in a fraction of the time that it had taken us to develop our initial plan following the 2018 election.

⁶ “Global Overview of COVID-19: Impact on Elections,” Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, last modified January 12, 2022, <https://www.idea.int/news-media/multimedia-reports/global-overview-covid-19-impact-elections>.

Key measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic



1. Physical distancing in the polls



2. Capacity limitations



3. Frequent cleaning



4. Hand sanitizing stations



5. Masks for electors and poll workers



6. Promoting early voting to flatten the election curve



7. Protocols around the use of ballot markers/pens

Identifying areas for change

Electoral management bodies spend years preparing for an election period that lasts just a few weeks. In the two years leading up to the 2022 election, we had the privilege of watching our electoral management colleagues adjust their processes while successfully executing elections in their respective jurisdictions, both within and beyond Canada's borders. Our main objective while adjusting our own processes was to ensure that every participant in the election would feel safe, no matter their role.

While observing our election partners, emerging trends indicated the need for us to become better equipped to face several anticipated challenges, including:

- Evolving COVID-19 safety protocols;
- Recruiting adequate staff in the field;
- Difficulties securing voting locations;
- A predicted surge in the utilization of vote-by-mail;
- Equipment shortages due to supply chain issues;
- Increased interest in advance voting options; and
- Potential security incidents resulting from societal change and increasingly polarized viewpoints.

Collaborating with Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health

The unpredictable nature of the pandemic meant that we could not foresee the health and safety requirements that would be in place during the



election period, so we took a proactive approach. In the summer of 2020, the Chief Electoral Officer wrote to the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) with the objective of forming a partnership to ensure we were doing everything we could to prioritize the health and safety of all election participants.

Leading up to the 2022 election, we held 18 consultation sessions with the OCMOH, some of which included representatives from additional ministries such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care.

While we had previously worked with the OCMOH on an ad hoc basis, this was the first time we established an ongoing relationship. With the steadfast support of the OCMOH advisors, we developed guidelines for staff and voting locations so that any modifications to our processes would continue to prioritize the health and safety of both election officials and the voters they served.

We also followed advice from the OCMOH's team while preparing the return-to-office plan for our headquarters, implementing best practices for upgrading our offices and acclimatizing staff to an in-office work environment after the prolonged period of operating in a purely virtual space.



Staff at our headquarters practicing our health and safety protocols.



Signage at our headquarters.

In-person office presence is essential in the final period leading up to an election and working with the OCMOH to implement these practices allowed us to keep staff safe during reintegration.

The OCMOH connected us with several health agencies to enable us to reach electors in high-risk settings. In the months preceding the election, we met with subject matter experts within the Ministry of Health, including the Hospitals Branch and the Testing Strategy Coordination Branch to discuss COVID-19 protocols in hospital settings and requirements for rapid antigen testing. We also connected with the Ministry of Long-Term Care to discuss protocols in long-term care homes and congregate care settings, and to learn how to work with administrators within those facilities to support safe voting processes for their residents.

COVID-19 safety protocols

Despite the challenges of the changing response from provincial health authorities due to our evolving understanding of COVID-19, we were prepared to implement measures in accordance with the OCMOH's guidelines and with

routine review by our health expert partners. In October 2021, we introduced a vaccination policy for staff working at our headquarters and in our field offices.

Although the provincial government began to retract its vaccination mandates, a challenge emerged when individual operators of high-risk facilities such as hospitals, long-term care homes, and congregate settings such as retirement homes, began to implement their own mandatory vaccination policies. We chose to ask a subset of our field staff, those who would be required to enter those facilities, to be fully vaccinated. Our guiding principle on vaccination was to facilitate access for electors while limiting any disenfranchisement resulting from mandatory vaccination, and to that extent, our vaccination policy applied only to staff entering high-risk facilities where vaccine requirements existed. There were certain cases where our staff, while vaccinated, were still not permitted to enter the healthcare facilities due to individual operators' policies, or due to on-site COVID-19 outbreaks.



Directional signage was used in both our headquarters and field offices to keep all staff and electors safe.

In these cases, we trained the staff of these healthcare facilities to deliver vote-by-mail ballot kits to electors residing in those facilities.

Recommending legislative change in response to COVID-19

On November 30, 2020, the Chief Electoral Officer submitted the *Special Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on Election Administration and the COVID-19 Pandemic*⁷ to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The report highlighted three key areas of legislative change that the Chief Electoral Officer had previously recommended to make voting safer and easier during the pandemic, and to better serve voters in the future.

The three recommendations were:

1. Extend the election calendar;
2. Setting election day to a day when schools are not in session; and
3. Establishing 10 days of flexible advance polls.

The Legislative Assembly responded by adopting the recommendation to extend advance polls from five days to 10 days.

The challenge of intermittent lockdowns

While much of our election planning was unaffected, the fluctuating in-office capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements presented a distinct challenge during our preparations. The intermittent lockdowns made it

⁷ "Special report of the Chief Electoral Officer on election administration and the COVID-19 pandemic," Elections Ontario, November 30, 2020, [https://www.elections.on.ca/content/dam/NGW/sitecontent/2020/reports/Special report of the Chief Electoral Officer on election administration and the COVID-19 pandemic.pdf](https://www.elections.on.ca/content/dam/NGW/sitecontent/2020/reports/Special%20report%20of%20the%20Chief%20Electoral%20Officer%20on%20election%20administration%20and%20the%20COVID-19%20pandemic.pdf).



difficult to coordinate voting simulations to test our election processes, which require over 150 of our staff to assume the roles of polling staff and electors in a lab that mimics returning offices and voting locations. Through these simulations, we are able to provide our staff and vendors with valuable experiential learning and troubleshooting opportunities to identify and address any weaknesses and inefficiencies before an election. These trial processes are crucial, as increased modernization of electoral processes necessitate a collaboration with vendor partners, many of whom have interconnected roles in election delivery.

The 2022-26 multi-year accessibility plan

With approximately 25 per cent of Ontarians living with a disability, we are committed to identifying, preventing, and removing barriers, empowering persons with disabilities to participate in our democratic process in an accessible and inclusive manner. We initiated the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Committee, to identify their needs and address the barriers they face.

In-person meetings were moved online in 2020 during the height of the pandemic, so that we could survey individuals and agencies representing people with disabilities with regards to election and voting accessibility, in the context of the pandemic environment.

In accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), we maintain an up-to-date accessibility plan that outlines how we are compliant with accessibility standards and the steps we take to build more inclusive policies, processes, and services. In the third year of our

election cycle, we published our 2022-26 multi-year accessibility plan⁸.

Looking ahead to the next 100 years of democracy in Ontario

In 2020, as we commemorated the centenary of the Chief Electoral Officer position in Ontario, the pandemic marked the latest in a series of historic events that Chief Electoral Officers have navigated over the last 100 years.

Since 1920, we have administered 29 general elections, 149 by-elections, and two referenda. The societal context in which each of these electoral events was delivered has presented challenges to Ontario's democracy. However, each successive Chief Electoral Officer has set the course for the successful execution of each electoral event, guided by common values and a commitment to the democratic process. This spirit of flexibility and innovation continues to guide our operations.

A range of displays that highlight important moments and progress made throughout our province's democratic history are installed at our headquarters and represented as a virtual timeline on our website⁹. The installation and virtual timeline are reminders that we must ensure adaptability and resilience while respecting the traditions of our democratic institutions, so that we can continually adjust to the changing society in which we operate. The growth, size, scale, and scope of Ontario is immense and will continue to transform over time. Statistics Canada has predicted that the population of Ontario could increase by as much as 5.6 million (or 37.7 per cent) by 2046¹⁰. We remain committed to meeting

⁸ "Elections Ontario's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2022-26," Elections Ontario, 2022, <https://www.elections.on.ca/content/dam/NGW/sitecontent/2022/reports/2022-2026%20Elections%20Ontario%27s%20Multi-Year%20Accessibility%20Plan.pdf>.

⁹ "100-Year Anniversary," Elections Ontario, 2020, <https://www.elections.on.ca/en/about-us/100-year-anniversary.html>.

¹⁰ "Ontario Population Projections," Government of Ontario, 2022, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-population-projections>.

the changing needs of Ontario's voters while upholding the integrity, accessibility, and transparency of the electoral process in our province for years to come.

**A call for legislative change:
Schedule the redistribution of Ontario's
electoral district boundaries**

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that the *Representation Act, 2015* be amended to provide a regularly scheduled process for reviewing the electoral districts and boundaries.

Ontario is the only province in Canada without a regularly scheduled process for reviewing electoral districts and boundaries. Regular updates and a scheduled process for conducting reviews and adjustments to the electoral map to reflect population growth and demographic changes are essential to the democratic process. The right to effective representation is protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Without a regular review process, Ontarians face a greater risk of ineffective representation.

Ontario's population is projected to increase by 5.6 million people (37.7 per cent) by 2046, with significant regional differences. A regular and scheduled process for reviewing and adjusting electoral boundaries would account for these changes through a transparent process that aligns with standard practices for other electoral management bodies in Canada.

Most importantly, this would ensure that effective representation for all Ontarians is better maintained in the future.



The installation at our headquarters which highlights important moments and progress made throughout 100 years of our province's democratic history.

Implementing new legislation

Maintaining our agility throughout our four-year election cycle is crucial, as we are required to adjust to any legislative changes that are implemented between election periods. While responding to the pandemic, we concurrently pivoted to accommodate several legislative amendments. The agency's mandate expanded to include the municipal list of electors, the establishment of an advisory committee on technical standards for voting technologies, and the implementation of new requirements for third parties, which necessitated significant modifications to policy documentation and guidebooks for external stakeholders.

Municipal voters list

On October 1, 2020, Bill 204, *Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020* received Royal Assent. This legislation created a single register of electors for both municipal and provincial elections.



We were identified as the oversight body that will be responsible for managing and provisioning elector information to our 444 municipal partners as of January 1, 2024.

A single permanent register will make it easier for electors to register and update their information, whenever changes are required. This initiative will also ensure there is consistency in electors' information on the voters lists. This is a transformational change for us, and the expansion of our mandate will have significant operational impacts as we work alongside our municipal partners to ensure a smooth transition leading up to our assumption of full responsibility for the voters lists in 2024.

Advisory committee on standards for voting technologies

In April 2021, Bill 254, *Protecting Ontario Elections Act, 2021* was passed by the Legislative Assembly. The bill amended the *Election Act*, granting the Chief Electoral Officer the authority to establish an advisory committee that would develop standards for voting equipment and vote counting equipment.

Since its establishment in 2021, the committee has collaborated with the CIO Strategy Council, a national forum of technology experts, to set technical standards which would guide the use of vote tabulators and ePoll books. As the first of its kind in Canada, this committee's standards provide a framework that other jurisdictions may choose to adopt. The development of standards is a critical step towards positioning Ontario to become a global leader in regulating voting technologies.

Amendments to the *Election Finances Act*

On June 14, 2021, Bill 307, *Protecting Elections and Defending Democracy Act, 2021* received Royal Assent, reinstating changes to the *Election Finances Act* related to third-party political advertising rules in Ontario. This bill impacted third-party advertisers by extending the non-election period, implementing a registration requirement, defining spending limits, outlining interim advertising reporting, and adjusting the rules pertaining to collusion. In response to these changes, we revised our informational handbooks and educational resources for political entities ahead of the 2022 election.

Engaging political parties

Political parties, candidates, and constituency associations all play important roles in our democratic system. We regularly consult with political entities through our Political Advisory Committee (PAC), which consists of two identified representatives from each registered political party in Ontario.

“The basic tenet of a healthy democracy is open dialogue and transparency.”

— Peter Fenn, political strategist

In the four years leading up to the 2022 election, we hosted collaborative meetings with PAC representatives to maintain our strong relationships with this stakeholder group. In February 2022, four months ahead of the election,

we hosted a culminating meeting where political representatives had the opportunity to share their thoughts about the voting process, comment on process changes and new initiatives, and take note of important compliance requirements.

Vendor engagement

Election processes had remained largely unchanged for close to 100 years yet, as we moved into the 21st century, electors rightfully expected our services to evolve in tandem with other organizations in the public service industry. The 2018 election saw the first of many significant shifts in our operations, as we progressed from paper-based to automated processes. As we gradually modernize, we continue to expand our business model to include new election delivery partners.

Part of our role as a modern election administrator is to align all our partners to the same timelines and objectives prior to an electoral event. In the months preceding the 2022 election, we hosted collaborative relationship-building and knowledge-sharing sessions for our vendors. The main objective of these sessions was to educate vendors about all the election processes, to help them understand how their services interconnect to ensure an efficient voting process for electors. Early engagement with vendors gave us the necessary time to build a mutual understanding of constraints and expectations, while establishing a collaborative effort to align our processes.

As we continue to modernize, vendors will become an increasingly important component of the election business. Consequently, management of these relationships is essential to ensure that vendors continue to build their expertise in election administration.

Protecting election participants and election infrastructure

We prioritize the safety of all election participants and the integrity of the election. Leading up to the 2022 election, we worked with provincial and federal government security and intelligence agencies and technology vendors to ensure we could protect voters and safeguard our systems.

Foreign interference is a growing threat to elections at all levels of government, in Canada and abroad¹¹. As we work to modernize our systems and processes, it is critical that we extend these ongoing efforts to our technological infrastructure by continually integrating innovative cyber security measures. In the 18 months prior to the election, we worked with the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security to conduct a full round of security assessments across all systems, applications, and infrastructure. We also collaborated with Ontario's Ministry of Government and Consumer Services and our vendors, to tighten our security monitoring capabilities leading up to and during the election period. Other preparations included disaster recovery testing to ensure business continuity in the event of a natural disaster or cyber intrusion, and specialized analytics to detect suspicious behaviours so that we could identify where we were vulnerable to malicious attacks. As a result of these efforts, all systems and data were successfully protected during the 2022 provincial general election.

Every eligible elector has the right to vote freely, and every poll official has the right to carry out their duties unimpeded and devoid of intimidation. However, in Canada, we are witnessing greater civil unrest due to increasingly negative political discourse and polarized societal views. To mitigate potential issues that could arise from this highly

¹¹ Canadian Security Intelligence Service, "Foreign Interference Threats to Canada's Democratic Process," Government of Canada, July 2021, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ctsis-scrs/documents/publications/2021/foreign-interference-threats-to-canada%27s-democratic-process.pdf>.



charged climate during the 2022 election, the Chief Electoral Officer and the Office of the Provincial Security Advisor established a specialized task force to conduct simulation exercises that trained staff at our headquarters in how to respond to events which could impact the integrity of the election. In addition, during the writ period, we advised all 124 Returning Officers to proactively connect with local law enforcement to establish contact in anticipation of any security incidents during the election. As a result of these efforts, the 2022 provincial general election saw no information breaches, and all electors were able to safely exercise their right to vote.

Setting the stage for the election period

With the four-year election cycle behind us, we had continued opportunities to work in tandem with our teams in the field, to ensure alignment of our processes before the writs were issued on May 4, 2022. In the weeks leading up to the election period, the warehouse at our headquarters in Toronto continually deployed skids of materials to each of the 124 returning offices and 34 satellite offices across the province. Each field office



The warehouse at our headquarters.

received approximately 29 skids of materials, which required over 500 deliveries between April 25 and May 9. These skids included all the materials that were required to establish and operate field offices and voting locations, such as office equipment and supplies, communications materials, polling kits, accessibility tools, personal protective equipment and voting technology equipment.

Equipping our staff in a pandemic environment

COVID-19 protocols, including a vaccination policy, were developed to ensure that electors, field staff and headquarters staff were all operating in the safest environments possible. We provided our field staff with the full complement of personal protective equipment (PPE) that the OCMOH recommended, and 14 pieces of signage were created to help electors safely navigate polling locations.



To enhance safety, personal protective equipment was provided to every field office and voting location during the 2022 general election.

Largely due to the precautionary measures we implemented, very few COVID-19 cases were reported by field or headquarters staff, and there were no outbreaks the entire duration of the pandemic. Following the election, all unused personal protection equipment was returned to Public Health for future use. A survey that was conducted found that 93 per cent of poll officials felt that the COVID-19 safety measures we had put in place made them feel safe while delivering the election.



Personal protective equipment deployed across Ontario



3,561,500

disposable surgical face masks



1,870,900

disposable nitrile or vinyl gloves



38,100 disinfectant wipes



188,314 safety goggles



220 250 ml alcohol-based hand sanitizer



68,175 500 ml alcohol-based hand sanitizer



28,986 plastic barriers





Delivering the election: Writ period

Drawing up the writs

On May 4, the Chief Electoral Officer met with the Lieutenant Governor at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to sign the writs for each of the province's 124 electoral districts. With the Great Seal of Ontario embossed onto each writ, this marked the start of the election period.



To formally commence a general election, writs for each of Ontario's 124 electoral districts are signed by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario and the Chief Electoral Officer.

Connecting with electors

A media conference was held at Queen's Park on May 4 to inform electors and stakeholders about the upcoming election and how to participate. The transformation of elections due to the pandemic meant that Ontarians would experience an election that would be different from any other.



Greg Essensa, Chief Electoral Officer for Ontario, addressing the media the day the writs of the election were issued on May 4, 2022.

Based on what we observed during Canadian elections that were held ahead of ours, we recognized that we would experience challenges related to recruitment, securing voting locations and implementing health and safety protocols. The media conference was an opportunity to explain the measures we had undertaken and reassure electors and the media that the election would be delivered safely, securely, and efficiently.

In addition to health and safety protocols, we introduced more days and ways to vote than any other election. The Chief Electoral Officer detailed options for electors to “mark their X” over a 29-day voting period. These included options to vote early through the special ballot program by mail, or by home or hospital visit.

Readying the field

After the writs were signed, it was time for our field staff to open all 124 returning offices and 34 satellite offices to begin servicing electors in their electoral districts. Field offices are the central hub of election activity and function as multipurpose spaces where staff are recruited and trained, voting locations are identified, candidate nominations are processed, and target revision for voter list accuracy is completed.

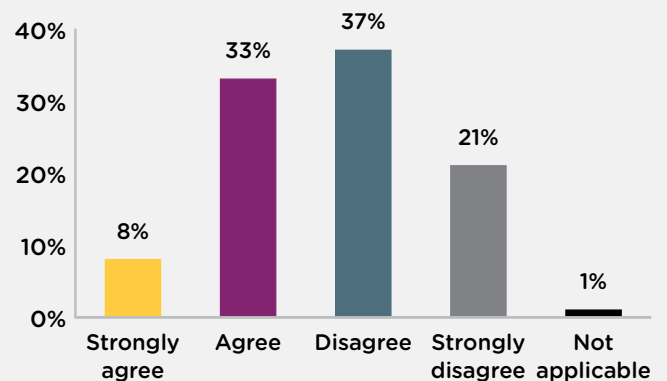
Securing field offices for a two-month period has always been a challenge in an election. The pandemic complicated this with additional criteria, including sufficient space to accommodate physical distancing. To offset these challenges, Returning Officers were able to begin securing locations in October 2021, five months earlier than in previous elections. However, 30 per cent of returning office spaces were not secured until three weeks prior to the start of the election period. This meant that Returning Officers were

unable to set up their offices in a timely manner. As such, 58 per cent of Returning Officers identified the process of securing space as a pain point.

Despite these challenges and infrastructure inadequacies, all 124 Returning Officers and their teams demonstrated innovation and resourcefulness in designing their office spaces. For example, an array of venues such as strip malls, warehouses and vacant retail stores were repurposed as returning offices.

Due to COVID-19 protocols, an inability to complete in-person voting simulations led to telephony and internet connectivity issues. Ahead of the next election, testing and simulations will resume to ensure proper configuration of technology.

**Survey of Returning Officers:
The process to secure a returning office was easy**



Survey results revealed that 58 per cent of our 124 Returning Officers found securing their returning office difficult.



The election calendar

Since 2014, the Chief Electoral Officer has recommended that the election calendar be extended from 29 to at least 36 days. At 10.7 million, Ontario has the largest number of registered voters, yet experiences one of the shortest election calendars in Canada.

Establishing a support hub at our headquarters

Our Command Centre operated as a hub that monitored each intake channel and identified trends across the province's 124 electoral districts, each of which presents unique challenges to their Returning Officers.

Over this 29-day election period:

- Our Returning Officer Support Network responded to 9,431 calls and 27,624 emails;
- Our Party Support Network addressed 368 inquiries and the Candidate Information Support Network provided 583 responses to 897 registered candidates;
- Our Public Contact Centre fielded 48,590 calls and our agents responded to 10,119 general inquiries;
- Our technology support call centre handled a total of 4,636 inquiries, to ensure that vote tabulators and ePoll books remained operational during each day of voting throughout the election period; and
- Our media team responded to more than 300 emails and 200 calls, generating 5,476 mentions.



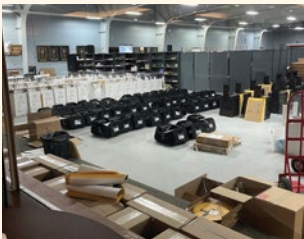
Vacant retail spaces



Former schools



Banquet halls



**Curling clubs
and other
recreational facilities**



Office spaces

To adhere to physical distancing requirements, Returning Officers secured spaces in a wider array of facilities compared to previous elections.

**A call for legislative change:
Extend the election calendar**

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends an extended election calendar to ensure a better-functioning electoral process.

The Chief Electoral Officer considers a 29-day election calendar to be insufficient to ensure the delivery of a successful election that meets the expectations of Ontario's voters.

Other Canadian provinces smaller in size and population than Ontario have comparable or longer election calendars.

We experience significant logistical challenges in providing more days and ways for Ontarians to vote due to the election calendar. Deploying materials to 124 electoral districts, accepting an increasing number of nominated candidates, and executing a plethora of other time-sensitive deliverables has become increasingly difficult to manage. Unanticipated events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, only add more complexity for us while completing all tasks in the already tight election calendar.

Returning Officers also faced challenges administering the election in the allotted time. An extended election calendar would give Returning Officers the flexibility they need to ensure a smooth and seamless voting experience.

Recruitment and training

Delivering an election for a province the size of Ontario requires hiring and training a substantial number of staff in a limited time. Our workforce expanded to more than 400 headquarters staff, 7,000 returning office staff, and 50,000 election day staff.

Recruiting and training staff for an election is inherently challenging, and this was further complicated by the pandemic. Leading up to this election, we experienced an unprecedented turnover of Returning Officers. Between 2020 and 2022, our agency onboarded 70 new Returning Officers, 60 per cent of whom were recruited less than a year ahead of election day. This meant that a significant number of field staff running the election were required to learn all processes and complete their respective assignments mere months before the election.

In response to the intermittent provincial lockdowns and health and safety protocols due to the pandemic, our training and communications



The Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, meets with staff in the field.



A call for legislative change:

Removal of Returning Officer Order in Council appointments

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending Section 7 of the *Election Act* to remove the requirement that Returning Officers be appointed for a 10-year term by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer.

The Order in Council (OIC) process is lengthy and restrictive. Removing this process would allow us to address Returning Officer vacancies in a more effective and efficient manner. This is vital leading up to and during an election as there are a number of preparatory activities that must be completed by the returning officer to ensure election readiness for the short electoral calendar of 29 days.

Ontario has a large and diverse territory and population. The local knowledge that Returning Officers have of their own respective communities ensures that a consistent election experience is delivered to each Ontarian despite where they live.

It is the most economical approach to have Returning Officers conduct election activities in the electoral districts in which they reside or an electoral district within close proximity to where they live.

OIC appointments were designed over a century ago. The labour market has since evolved, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit a diversified team of 124 Returning Officers that have up-to-date management and technical competencies that the position requires. Further, we are the only electoral management body in Canada where Returning Officers are not appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer.

The Chief Electoral Officer should have the discretion to dictate the terms and duration of returning officer appointments. This will lead to a more inclusive recruitment process, more qualified candidates, improvements to the management and performance of returning officers, all of which will contribute to a better election experience for Ontario's electorate.

teams were required to pivot quickly. In a matter of weeks, 13 training sessions which were originally formatted for in-person training were redesigned for a digital platform. This marked the first time our staff in the field were trained in an entirely virtual space, and for some, the first time learning via digital collaboration software.

Returning Officers and their key staff are responsible for recruiting poll officials to serve electors. While recruitment is a perennial challenge due to a reluctance to work a one-day job, apprehension to work in a public setting during the pandemic led to staff shortages. To

counteract these challenges, we engaged the services of recruitment firms and ratepayer groups and employed tactics that included increased pay rates and targeted advertising campaigns through digital, radio and print media channels in 67 electoral districts. Our staffing model allows Returning Officers to allocate staff where they are needed, to ensure that electors receive uninterrupted service at the polls in the event of a staffing shortage.



During the election period, poll staff were trained in each of the 124 returning offices across Ontario.



In the spring of 2022, we conducted in-person training with all key staff at returning offices across Ontario.



An orientation and training session.

To bolster our staffing efforts, Elections Canada provided us with additional staff, and the Chief Electoral Officer requested support from external sources. Ontario's Secretary of Cabinet was asked to enlist staff from the Ontario Public Service to fill polling day positions, and the Chief Electoral Officer directly reached out to more than 20 First Nation groups to ensure there were enough staff to serve those casting their ballot in Indigenous communities.

Although our goal was to hire more staff for the 2022 election, there was a 9.5 per cent decrease in polling day staff and a 22 per cent decrease in returning office key staff compared to the 2018 election.

In-person orientation and training sessions commenced in March 2022 for all 124 Returning Officers and their 7,000 key staff in the field, to prepare them to deliver the election. Typically, training is delivered in-person across 13 regions of the province to facilitate hands-on learning and to allow field staff to build relationships with colleagues from neighbouring electoral districts. In addition to meeting with field staff, the Chief Electoral Officer uses this tour of the province to meet with members of the media to share information about the election through a number of platforms. Ahead of the 2022 provincial general election, the Chief Electoral Officer conducted 39 interviews spanning the province's 13 regions.



Electors experiences with poll officials at voting locations

Numbers in () denote percentage point change from 2018

Overall organization of the voting process	(+6)	97%
The process for confirming your identity before going behind the voting screen	(+4)	97%
The ability of the poll workers to communicate clearly, in language you could understand	(+4)	97%
Over customer service provided by the workers at the voting location	(+5)	96%
The competence of the workers at the voting location	(+6)	96%
The process for locating your name on the voters list before going behind the voting screen	(+6)	95%
Voting information available in your language	(+3)	94%
Polling staff maintained eye contact, spoke clearly, and used visual cues where appropriate	(+2)	92%

A majority of electors reported a positive experience with our staff at voting locations.

Securing voting locations

To ensure that all voting locations are accessible, Returning Officers inspected voting locations from May to August 2021. Inspecting and securing voting locations within this timeframe was a necessary step in meeting our legislative requirement as outlined in the *Election Act*. We are mandated to post all voting locations at least six months in advance of an Ontario provincial general election to allow members of the public to provide feedback as to whether the proposed voting locations are sufficiently accessible. As required, all voting locations were posted to our website for public comment on December 2, 2021.

COVID-19 health and safety protocols and an unexpected weather event in mid-May 2022 exacerbated the existing challenges we faced with acquiring the private and public institutions that we have consistently used in past elections.

In densely populated urban areas, we relied on the use of common areas in condominiums and apartment buildings to serve as voting locations due to a lack of larger spaces such as churches, recreational facilities, and other similar venues. However, due to the pandemic, building administrators were hesitant to lease their spaces and open their doors to the public. In some cases, leases were simply refused.

A call for legislative change:

Allow 16- and 17-year-olds to work as poll officials in certain roles

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that 16- and 17-year-olds be permitted to work as poll officials in certain roles.

On election day, we become one of the largest employers in the province, hiring tens of thousands of workers for a single day. The introduction of technology in the polls reduced the number of staff required to administer an election but finding enough people to work as poll officials remains essential to ensuring the smooth delivery of an election.

The task also becomes more challenging when the province is facing health and safety issues such as an infectious disease (i.e. COVID-19), understanding that the majority of the current workforce comes from a population at risk such as seniors.

Under the *Election Act*, only someone qualified to vote in an Ontario election can serve as a poll official. That is, they must be a Canadian citizen, a resident of Ontario and at least 18 years of age. However, other electoral management bodies in Canada allow 16- and 17-year-olds to participate in the electoral process as poll officials.

There are currently several Canadian electoral management bodies that allow individuals 16 years of age to work as poll officials:

- Elections Canada
- Elections Quebec
- Elections Saskatchewan
- Elections New Brunswick
- Vancouver Municipal Elections

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to work as poll officials in roles that do not involve issuing a ballot. This would engage them in the electoral process at an earlier age, while also increasing staffing flexibility.

In rural areas, the apprehension of landlords, administrative staff, and building owners resulted in voting locations being secured late or not at all. Some community buildings that had been used for many elections were no longer an option, as we do not have the legislative authority to direct the use of private facilities.

Observing the federal election in September 2021 helped us realize that we would need to take proactive measures to provide the same level of service Ontarians were accustomed to, but with the use of fewer voting locations. For the first time, staff in the field provided down payments for voting location sites earlier than in previous elections. Just three weeks ahead of election

A call for legislative change:

Allow polls to be established in long-term care facilities and seniors' residences prior to election day

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that the *Election Act* be amended to allow polls to be set up in long term care homes.

Amending the legislation to provide returning officers with the flexibility to hold full day polls in long-term care facilities and seniors' residences in advance of polling day would better enable Elections Ontario to work alongside administrators of these facilities to reach this elector group.



Voting location type	2018	2022	Percentage of increase/decrease
Schools	1,804	1,849	2.5 per cent increase
Churches	755	685	Nine per cent decrease
Community/Recreation centres	1,512	1,637	Eight per cent increase
Apartment buildings/ Condominiums	1,276	1,067	16 per cent decrease
Retirement/Nursing homes	1,428	1,413	One per cent decrease
Others (Private schools, legion halls, etc.)	402	234	42 per cent decrease
Total	7,177	6,885	Four per cent decrease overall

day, we had to adjust and merge electors from 40 voting locations, up 43 per cent from the 28 voting location merges undertaken during the 2018 election.

Our headquarters worked with Returning Officers to merge polls while ensuring that voting locations were accessible, close to electors, and offered complimentary parking. On election day, 6,885 voting locations serviced electors across the province's 124 electoral districts. This was a 4 per cent decrease from the 7,177 polling day locations that were secured for the 2018 election.

The importance of using schools as voting locations

Historically, we have worked collaboratively with Ontario school boards and, by extension, the staff and unions engaged in those school boards, to successfully run general elections and by-elections in our province. The importance of using school premises in the conduct of an election cannot be overstated. In the 2018 election, approximately

45 per cent of Ontario's electorate were assigned to a voting location held in a school. That number increased once again in the 2022 election to 5,201,030 voters, which is approximately 48 per cent of Ontario's total number of eligible electors.

Both the *Election Act* and the *Education Act* require the provision of school premises as polling stations, free of charge. We rely heavily on the use of schools as voting locations in every provincial election, as they are central, accessible, known within their communities, and offer adequate space to physically distance, ensuring that all electors can cast their ballot in a safe environment.

Despite our legislative authority, we encountered difficulties with securing schools due to COVID-19 measures and concerns raised by parents and educators. There were substantial negotiations between our staff and school board administrators and, in some cases, the involvement of the Deputy Minister of Education and senior ministry staff was required. Both teams were instrumental in helping us secure just under 1,000 voting locations within a few weeks of the election.

**A call for legislative change:
Setting election day to a day when schools
are not in session**

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that the *Election Act* be amended to set an election day that is not a school day (e.g. a weekend day or school holiday).

Schools are foundational to running elections. They are among the most familiar and convenient locations for voting because they can be found in almost every residential neighbourhood in Ontario, and because they often meet accessibility standards.

Setting election day to a day when school is not in session would provide for easier access to schools for voters and would help keep children safe. While we pay for security at schools, the safety of children in school would be enhanced by moving election day to a day when schools are not in session.

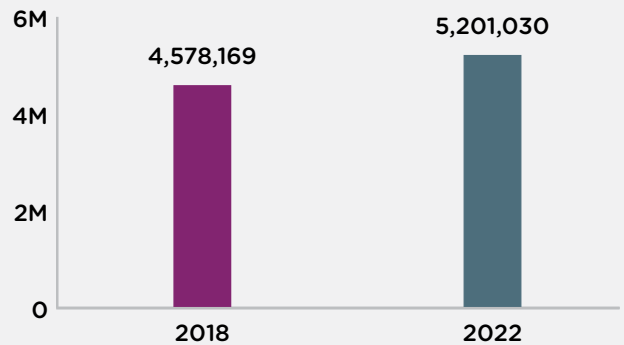
Having election day on the weekend or school holiday would also provide an opportunity to engage youth to work and participate in the election.

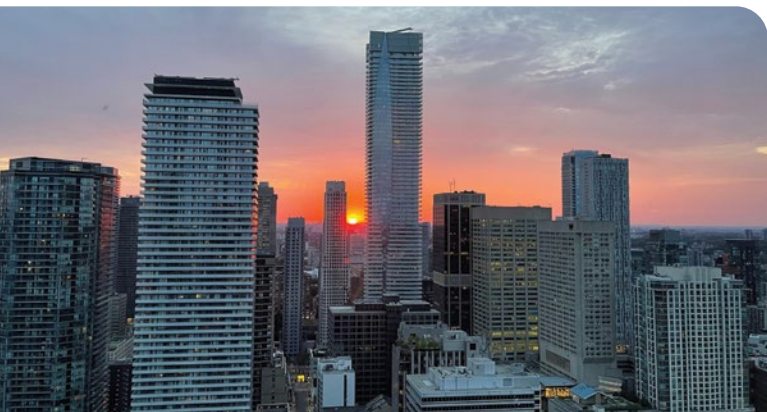
This election, a total of 1,849 of our voting locations consisted of schools and the number of electors serviced in schools was up 14 per cent from the last election in 2018.



During the 2022 election, our staff served electors in 1,849 schools.

Number of electors assigned to a school voting location in 2018 vs. 2022
M = Millions





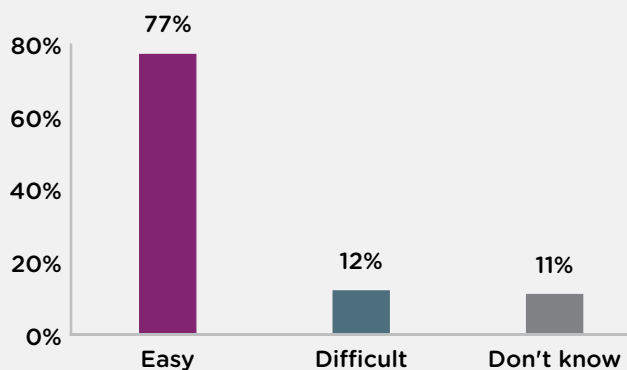
In densely populated urban areas, we have relied heavily on common areas in condominiums and apartment buildings as voting locations.

Candidate nominations

We are always looking for ways to enhance and streamline processes for our stakeholders. Prior to the 2018 election, political candidates had only a few days to submit their nomination papers between the issuance of the writs of election and the close of nominations. Leading up to the 2022 election, we introduced “standing nominations” for political candidates, an initiative which enabled nomination papers to be processed centrally by

our headquarters until the writs were signed on May 4. During the election period, candidates still had eight days to submit their nomination papers to the Returning Officer of their electoral district until the close of nominations on May 12. This timeline is prescribed in the *Election Act* and must always be the second Thursday after the date of the issuance of the writ.

Complying with candidate nomination requirement



Of those surveyed, 77 per cent of political entities found our candidate nomination requirements easy to follow.

Candidate nomination submissions during the 2018 and 2022 general elections

	Standing nominations submitted	Nominations submitted between writ day and the close of nominations	Total nominations submitted
2018 election	484	339	823
2022 election	589	308	897

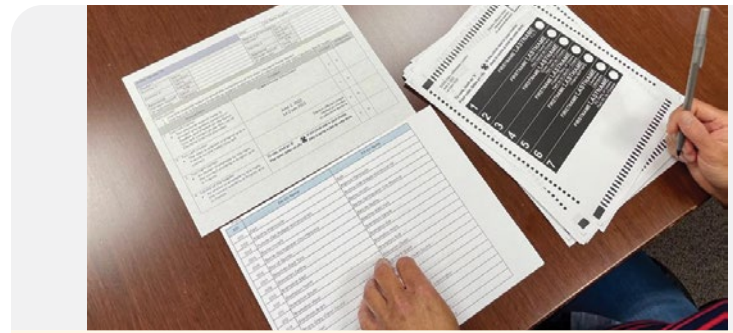
The objective of implementing standing nominations was to give candidates the opportunity to have their paperwork processed by our headquarters well in advance of the campaign period, maximizing their time for electoral campaigns while reducing the administrative burden on Returning Officers. A total of 589 candidate nominations were processed centrally at our headquarters before the start of the election period on May 4. However, as in previous elections, political parties submitted a number of their candidate nomination papers between May 4 and the close of nomination deadline on May 12.

In that eight-day timeframe, 308 candidate nomination papers, or approximately one-third of the total submissions (34 per cent), had to be processed. This influx of last-minute submissions means less time for candidates to address any required corrections to nomination papers. These administrative delays resulted in candidates' inability to begin their financial campaign activities which include raising funds, spending, and advertising.

Shortly after all candidate nomination papers were finalized on May 12, headquarters worked quickly to quality check all 124 ballots within a six-hour window. Ballots were then printed and shipped to returning offices just five days later, on May 17.

Ballot quality checks

To confirm the accuracy of the information on each ballot, a comprehensive quality control process is carried out by staff from all divisions of our headquarters. The entire process to quality check, print, and ship the ballots after the close of nomination date was completed in just 24 hours. While the ballot process was made more efficient through centralized ballot printing, the timelines to proof, print, and ship ballots were tight, which could be alleviated by a legislative change to move the close of nomination deadline to an earlier date.



Our staff completed an extensive quality check of ballots prior to printing.



Immediately after the close of nomination date on May 12, staff from all divisions at our headquarters completed quality checks on all 124 ballots.

Candidate nomination anomalies

Maintaining the integrity of the election process for all stakeholders is one of our priorities. Legislative safeguards have been established to ensure that any contraventions to the *Election Act* and/or the *Election Finances Act*



A call for legislative change: Candidate nominations

1) Modify the deadline date for candidate nomination submissions.	2) Remove requirement for 25 signatures for candidates running under registered political parties.	3) Additional requirements for candidate nomination submissions.	4) Change the close of nominations for by-elections to align with general elections.
<p>The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that candidate nomination papers be filed one week prior to the nomination period.</p> <p>Processing candidate nominations in the tight 29-day election period consistently poses challenges to our agency. An earlier deadline for candidate nomination submissions would provide us with additional time to proof, print and ship all ballots to each of the province's 124 electoral districts.</p> <p>Additional time would also allow us additional time to verify the legitimacy of all candidate nomination papers and consequently enhance the integrity of the election by reducing the risk of fraudulent submissions.</p> <p>Candidates would also benefit from an earlier submission timeline. Processing nomination papers earlier would mean they are able to take advantage of the many benefits of a registered candidate available during the election period.</p>	<p>We currently require all prospective candidates to collect the signatures of 25 eligible electors as part of their candidate nomination submission.</p> <p>As the candidate nomination forms submitted by those associated with registered political parties are reviewed by party leaders, elector signatures should not be required to validate the legitimacy of each candidate.</p> <p>The Chief Electoral Officer recommends the removal of the requirement for 25 signatures for candidates running under registered political parties.</p>	<p>Under the <i>Election Act</i>, every person is qualified to be a candidate who, at the time of signing the consent to nomination is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 years of age or older; • A Canadian citizen, • Has resided in Ontario for the six months preceding polling day, and; • Is not disqualified by the <i>Legislative Assembly Act</i> or by any other Act. <p>There is an increased risk of fraudulent candidate nomination papers being submitted to us as a result of insufficient rigor of the current requirements.</p> <p>To alleviate this risk, the Chief Electoral Officer recommends that any individual submitting a candidate nomination paper be required to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. present identification stating their name and address, and; 2. provide a deposit. <p>Two of Canada's largest jurisdictions require prospective candidates to submit identification with their nomination papers. These jurisdictions include Canada's federal electoral management body as well as Quebec. Identification would allow us to prove the validity of each submission.</p> <p>Out of Canada's ten provinces and three territories, eight require prospective candidates to submit a deposit with their candidate nomination papers. These deposits range from \$100-\$500. Requiring a deposit would deter prospective candidates to submit illegitimate nomination forms.</p> <p>Adding these additional requirements would enhance the integrity of the election by reducing fraudulent activity of the candidate nominations.</p>	<p>The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that the close of nominations for by-elections be aligned with the close of nominations for general elections.</p> <p>Candidates seeking office in an Ontario election or by-election must register with us before the close of nominations. Until nominations close, the list of candidates for an election or by-election cannot be considered final. However, the close of nominations is different for by-elections and general elections.</p> <p>Currently, nominations for by-elections close on the third Thursday after the election is called. During a general election, nominations close on the second Thursday after the writs are issued. However, by-election and general election periods are the same length.</p> <p>This creates confusion for both parties and candidates, who must register with us before this date. It is also challenging for voters, who receive a final list of candidates at different times in the election calendar, depending on the type of electoral event.</p> <p>The <i>Election Statute Law Amendment Act</i>, 2016 introduced standing nominations, allowing candidates to submit their registration to the Chief Electoral Officer at any time before the writ is issued. As standing nominations give candidates considerably more time to submit their registration, the extended deadline for by-elections is no longer necessary.</p> <p>The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that the close of nominations be set to the second Thursday after the day the writ is issued for both by-elections and general elections. This will simplify the election calendar and remove confusion for both candidates and voters.</p>

are addressed. Section 4.0.2 of the *Election Act* and Clause 2(2)(g) of the *Election Finances Act* dictate that the Chief Electoral Officer may report any apparent contraventions to the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General. The Ministry may then refer the contravention to the police for further investigation and prosecution. When our investigations are complete, or if a matter has been referred to the Ministry, the Chief Electoral Officer reports on the investigations in his next report that is tabled with the Legislative Assembly.

In the week leading up to the close of nominations on May 12, anomalies were identified with several candidate nomination submissions. As a result of these irregularities, we investigated 82 previously approved nomination papers. The Chief Electoral Officer vacated 58 nomination papers and indicated to those previous candidates that they still had the ability to make nomination applications to their Returning Officers in the field. Subsequent to this, the Chief Electoral Officer referred 58 candidate nominations to the Ministry of the Attorney General for further investigation. This event signaled to us that the current candidate nomination process should be reassessed. As we are not a prosecuting agency, candidate nominations referred to the Ministry of the Attorney General may then be referred to the police for investigation and prosecution.

Political party registration

Before each election, political parties intending to register with us must first reserve a party name. The registration of political parties has many benefits, including access to the list of electors, tax credits for their contributors, and eligibility for campaign expense subsidies and quarterly allowance payments.

Registration requirements for political parties before the 2011 election were more rigid. Previously, political parties were required to have candidates endorsed in at least 50 per cent of all electoral districts or submit a petition with 10,000 signatures. Since registration requirements have changed, the number of political parties registered during each election has steadily increased. Prior to the loosening of registration requirements in 2011, a total of 12 political parties were registered. That number doubled in 2011 and has remained above 20 since the 2011 election.

General election figures: Political party name reservations and registered political parties					
	2007	2011	2014	2018	2022
Number of political party name reservations	13	20	16	61	70
Number of political parties who registered	12	21	20	26	25



A call for legislative change: Political parties

1) Subject political parties to additional registration requirements

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that a political party intending to register or a political party already registered that would like to maintain registration status be required to endorse candidates in at least 20 per cent of all electoral districts – or 16 of Ontario's 124 electoral districts.

Registration requirements for political parties before the 2011 election were more rigid. Previously, political parties were required to have candidates endorsed in at least 50 per cent of all electoral districts or submit a petition with 10,000 signatures.

Today, registration requirements are much less stringent. Any political party may apply for registration of the political party, either by:

- (a) after the writs are issued for a general election or for two or more concurrent by-elections, endorsing candidates in at least two electoral districts, or;
- (b) at any time other than during a campaign period and within one year after the Chief Electoral Officer approves the name of the political party providing a petition with the names, addresses, and signatures of at least 1,000 persons who:
 - are eligible to vote in an election, and;
 - endorse the registration of the political party concerned.

Upon registration, political parties are eligible for campaign expense subsidies and quarterly allowance payments. Parties are also awarded other benefits such as access to the list of electors and tax credits for their contributors.

Strengthening registration requirements would achieve a better balance between making the election accessible for political parties while further protecting elector information and integrity of the election process.

2) Subject political parties to Ontario's privacy laws

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that political parties be subject to privacy laws.

Political parties are building sophisticated databases of voter information, increasing privacy concerns. Canadian privacy commissioners are increasingly calling for political parties to be subject to privacy laws to provide oversight of such practices.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario has continually called for regulation and oversight of the province's political parties. The Commissioner has highlighted the privacy, ethical, and security concerns of big data practices and the digital tools used by political parties.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that Ontario follow the Information and Privacy Commissioner's recommendation to expand the Commissioner's oversight to political parties.

Voting channels

To serve Ontario's diverse electorate, we offer many voting options that provide voters with the opportunity to cast their ballot when and where it is most convenient for them. Leading up to election day, we offered 29 days of advance voting, during which time electors had the option to vote in person at their returning offices, at advance polls, in their homes, in hospitals, and in long-term care facilities. Individuals who were unable to vote in person could submit their ballot by mail.

Offering multiple voting channels allows us to uphold the key covenants of our democracy, enhancing accessibility while maintaining the secrecy of the ballot and the integrity of the voting process. However, there are opportunities to modify areas of the *Election Act* which pertain to the special ballot program, that would make it easier to understand the many days and ways to vote.

This section provides an overview of our voting channels, modernizations we had implemented for the 2022 election, and opportunities for legislative change to enhance clarity of the many methods of voting available to all election participants.

Special ballot

As part of our special ballot program, we offer several options for electors who are not able to vote on election day or at an advance poll. Voters can opt to vote by mail, have their ballot administered at a hospital or in their own homes. A total of 324,483 electors voted by special ballot during the 2022 election, an increase of 115 per cent from the 150,839 electors who voted by special ballot in the 2018 election.

Number of electors who voted by special ballot during the 2018 and 2022 general elections			
	2018	2022	Percentage increase/decrease
Number of electors who voted by special ballot overall	150,839	324,483	115 per cent increase
Number of electors who voted by mail	10,252	127,048	1,139 per cent increase

Modernizing the vote-by-mail program

During the pandemic, we monitored elections that were taking place across Canada and throughout the world. Traditionally, Canadian elections have seen minimal uptake of voting by mail, but we recognized that this had the potential to change due to the pandemic.

We took note of the substantial increases in vote-by-mail applications fulfilled by our federal colleagues as well as our electoral counterparts in British Columbia, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan. To accommodate this predicted increase for our own election, we modernized our internal processes and introduced an online vote-by-mail application form to process applications faster. Voters in Ontario had the opportunity to apply online for their vote-by-mail kit from the day after the election was called until six days prior to election day. Our new online application streamlined one of the first steps in the process by eliminating the need for a paper form. Voters were able to submit their information through our website, allowing our team to approve their application and send out their vote-by-mail kit more quickly.

Ahead of the election, we carried out extensive education and communication campaigns to provide voters with the information they needed to vote by mail. We encouraged all voters to apply early to ensure they had enough time to receive their ballot, and we worked closely with our vendor and other couriers to ensure that we were able to receive those ballots by the deadline.

The modernization and promotion of our vote-by-mail process proved advantageous, as there were 127,048 electors who voted by mail in the 2022 election, representing a 1,139-per-cent increase from the 10,252 vote-by-mail requests we received during the 2018 election.



Our online vote-by-mail application uses Optical Character Recognition technology to automate the verification process of identification such as driver's licences and photo cards, which were used by 90 per cent of electors. This process, along with simplifying our voter kits, allowed electors to request and return their ballots more efficiently.

To further encourage electors to submit their completed ballots by the deadline set out in the *Election Act*, we provided prepaid envelopes for postage in Canada and voters were permitted to return their ballots in person at their returning office.

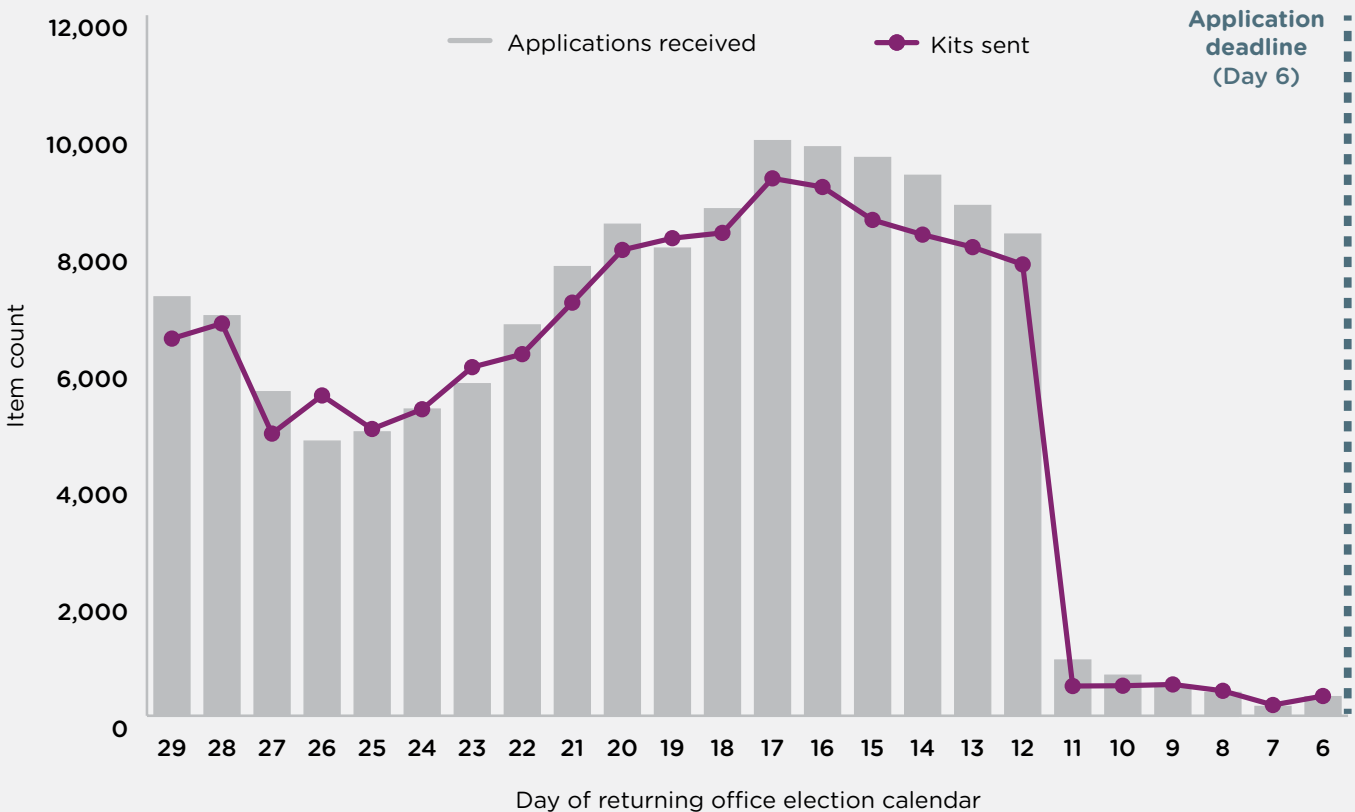
Streamlining the application process was beneficial to voters across the province, as our 29-day

election calendar is one of the shortest in the country. As we are legislatively required to receive vote-by-mail ballots by 6 PM on election day, there was a tight turnaround time with mailing ballots to voters once they had applied. This new online process ensured that we were able to mail our ballots at the earliest possible opportunity.

Vote-by-mail kit fulfilment and ballot-counting

Together with our online vote-by-mail application, we redesigned the vote-by-mail kit to be more machine-friendly. This enabled us to automate a greater proportion of the voting kit preparation process in preparation for the influx of vote-by-

Vote-by-mail kit fulfilment rate at our headquarters
Applications received compared to vote-by-mail kits sent out



mail requests. Increased automation meant that we could send kits out to electors faster than in previous elections. We merged the Special Ballot Officer and Returning Office Revision Assistant positions at returning and satellite offices, taking advantage of the reduced number of in-person registrations due to the availability of our online registration tool.

We also explored how we could handle an increased number of vote-by-mail ballots with the support of staff in the field. With tabulators automating the counting of ballots from in-person voting during advance voting and on election day at many polls, the counting of vote-by-mail ballots could be decentralized to each electoral district. This limited delays in the counting process and allowed electors to return their ballots to their closest returning office. However, our headquarters still counted ballots from the hospital program, incarcerated electors, and absentee register.

Hospital program

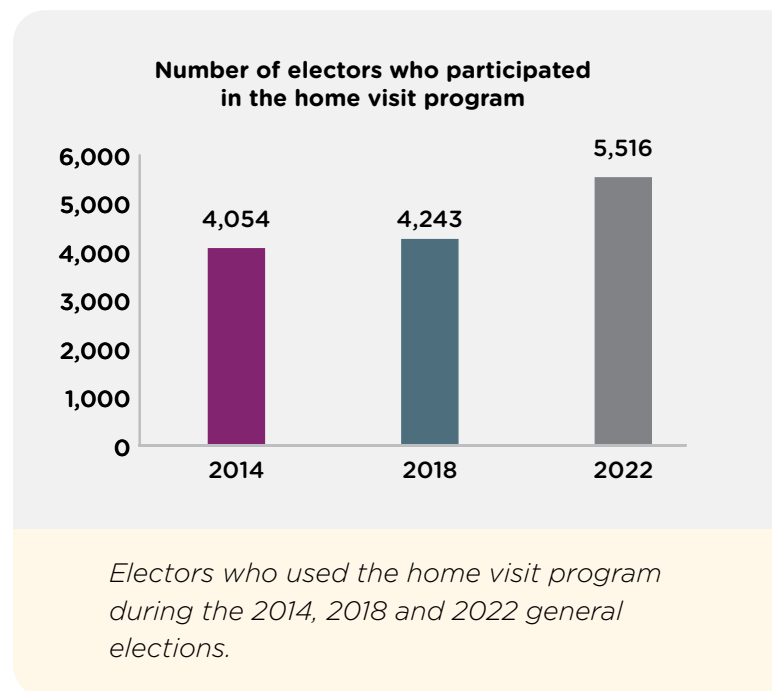
As part of the special ballot program, we provide the opportunity for hospitalized electors to cast their ballot in the establishment where they are receiving care. The hospital program spans three days during the election period, during which time our staff provided write-in ballots at the bedside of hospitalized electors.

In the lead-up to the 2022 election, we were cognizant of the specific health and safety requirements of each hospital. Our field and headquarters staff worked closely with partners in hospitals as well as the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health to ensure that all in-patients, hospital workers, and poll staff took precautions to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. We served a total of 3,827 electors in 213 participating hospitals, a decrease of 23 per cent from the 4,950 electors we had served in 218 participating hospitals in the 2018 election.

Home visit program

The home visit program has steadily increased in popularity since the 2014 general election. Electors who are homebound or unable to vote in person can take advantage of our home visit program, in which two election officials deliver a special ballot kit to an elector and administer the vote in their home. To maintain the secrecy of the vote, the elector's ballot is placed in a sealed envelope and brought back to the returning office, where it is counted on the night of the election.

In 2022, 5,516 electors participated in our home visit program, an increase of 30 per cent from the 2018 election when 4,243 electors used the program.



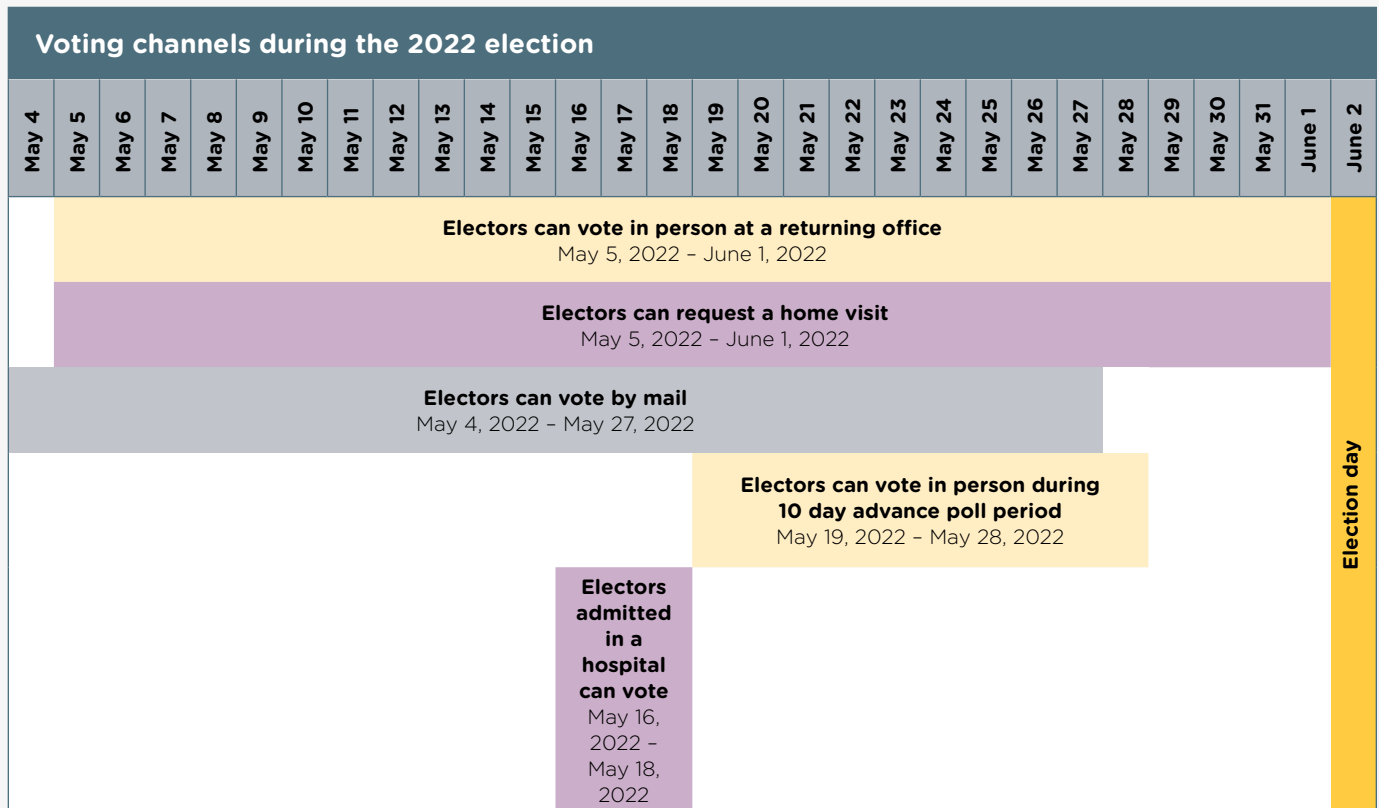
**A call for legislative change:
Streamline special ballot voting channels in
the returning office**

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends eliminating holding an advance poll in the returning office but continue to offer in-person special ballot voting.

The Chief Electoral Officer considers the returning office advance poll to be redundant as the legislation allows for in-person voting by special ballot for all 29 days the office is open. Having both voting channels running

simultaneously creates elector confusion when voting at the returning office.

Returning Officers also faced challenges administering both voting channels simultaneously as they had to hire two separate teams to execute these voting processes and direct electors to each team depending on the method of voting they wanted to use. Eliminating the returning office advance poll will simplify the voting process and reduce confusion among electors, political parties, and the media.



Increasing advance voting to 10 days

In 2016, the *Election Statute Law Amendment Act* amended the *Election Act* to prescribe five days of advance voting at fixed locations. Prior to this change, we were able to rotate advance voting locations within an electoral district over the course of ten days during both the 2011 and 2014 elections.

The first five-day advance poll voting period which was put in place for the 2018 election did not meet electors' expectations. Public polling surveys conducted on our behalf indicated a growing interest in early voting options and showed that electors wanted more advance voting days ahead of election day.

Fuelled in part by the pandemic, the heightened interest in advance voting experienced by other jurisdictions signalled that more advance voting days were needed. There was a record number of voters who took advantage of early voting options in other elections both within and outside of Canada between 2020 and 2022.

During New Brunswick's 2020 general election, a total of **131,603 voters** cast their ballot in advance, compared to the 86,970 voters who chose to vote at an advance

poll during their previous election in 2018¹². Similarly, in Saskatchewan's 2020 election, **41 per cent** of voters chose to vote during advance polls¹³ and in British Columbia, **35.4 per cent** of electors chose to vote in advance during their 2020 election¹⁴. Elections Canada also saw a record increase during the federal election in September 2021, when **21 per cent** more electors chose to vote in advance¹⁵. This trend was also evident in the United States, where over **100 million electors** chose to vote early in the 2020 presidential election¹⁶.

Submitted to the Legislative Assembly in November 2020, a *Special Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on Election Administration and the COVID-19 Pandemic*¹⁷ advocated for three legislative changes, one of which was to increase

¹² "Fortieth General Provincial Election," Elections New Brunswick, February 15, 2021, <https://www.electionsnb.ca/content/dam/enb/pdf/2020-prov-rpt.pdf>.

¹³ "A Report on the Twenty-Ninth General Election: Volume I: Statement of Votes," Elections Saskatchewan, June 30, 2021, https://cdn.elections.sk.ca/upload/2020_Statement_of_Votes_Volume_1_Lg.pdf.

¹⁴ "October 24, 2020 Provincial General Election: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer," Elections BC, July 27, 2021, <https://www.elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/2020-provincial-general-election-report.pdf>.

¹⁵ "Report on the 44th General Election of September 20, 2021," Elections Canada, January 27, 2022, https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/off/sta_ge44&document=index&lang=e.

¹⁶ Brittany Renee Mayes and Kate Rabinowitz, "The U.S. Hit 73% of 2016 Voting before Election Day," Washington Post, October 20, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/elections/early-voting-numbers-so-far/>.

¹⁷ "Special report of the Chief Electoral Officer on election administration and the COVID-19 pandemic," Elections Ontario, November 30, 2020, [https://www.elections.on.ca/content/dam/NGW/sitecontent/2020/reports/Special report of the Chief Electoral Officer on election administration and the COVID-19 pandemic.pdf](https://www.elections.on.ca/content/dam/NGW/sitecontent/2020/reports/Special%20report%20of%20the%20Chief%20Electoral%20Officer%20on%20election%20administration%20and%20the%20COVID-19%20pandemic.pdf).



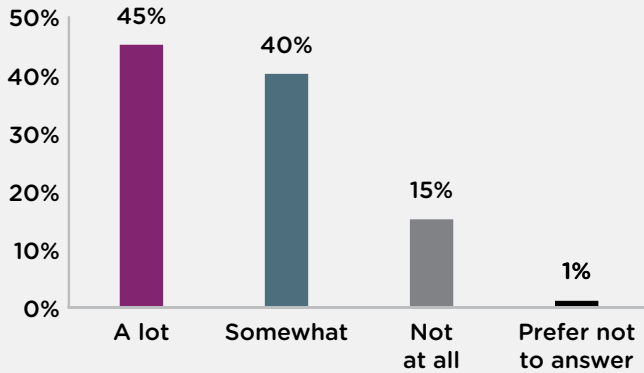
the duration of advance voting from five to 10 days. On April 19, 2021, legislators amended the *Election Act* to adopt this recommendation.

Advance voting in the 2022 election

In this election, advance voting took place in **671 polling locations** from May 19 to 28. A total of **50,310 hours** of advance voting (equivalent to 2,096 days) were offered to Ontarians. That was a **49.8 per cent** increase from 2018, when **33,580 cumulative advance voting hours** (equivalent to 1,399 days) were offered over a five-day period.

The increase in the number of advance voting days yielded a greater advance voter turnout than in 2018. In 2022, a total of 1,074,489 electors cast their ballot during advance voting – a 54-per-cent increase from 2018 when 698,609 electors voted at an advance poll. More voting options also improved the voting experience for 85 per cent of electors, according to the public opinion surveys.

More advance voting options improved voting experience



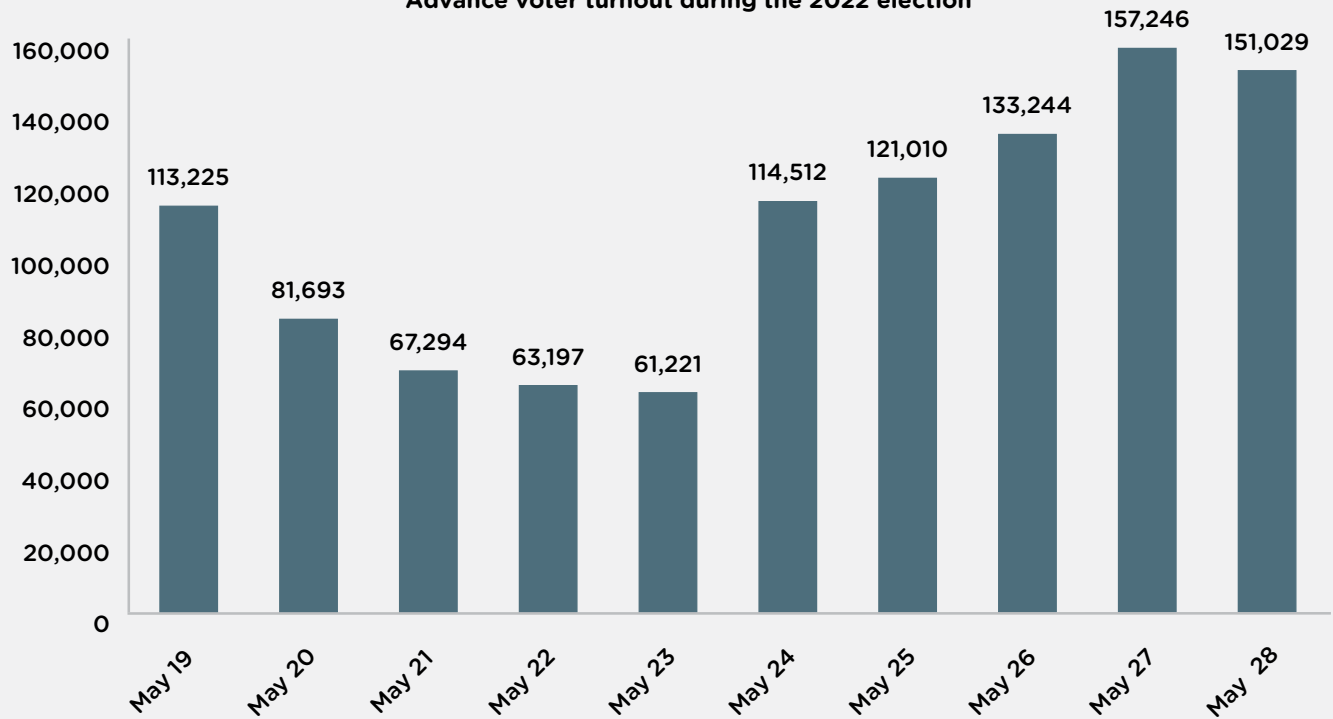
Public opinion polling conducted on our behalf following the 2022 election indicated that the voting experience of 85 per cent of electors was improved by the increase in advance voting options¹⁸.



Pictured here is one of the advance polls serving electors during the 2022 election.

¹⁸ The numbers presented have been rounded to the nearest whole number. However, raw values were used to calculate the sums presented and therefore may not correspond to the manual addition of these numbers.

Advance voter turnout during the 2022 election



Weather events

Ontario spans more than one million square kilometres, with regional climates that fluctuate according to location and season¹⁹. By accounting for these unexpected events, our contingency planning ensures that every elector can vote, regardless of the weather conditions that may affect their community. To prepare for these unforeseen events, we proactively source generators and other necessary equipment to deploy to field offices, ensuring there are no impacts to servicing electors.

On May 21, during the advance voting period, a storm struck several communities across southern and eastern Ontario. Fallen trees and power lines caused power outages across many voting locations.

The day after the storm, the Chief Electoral Officer travelled to impacted electoral districts in eastern Ontario to assess the damage, discuss contingency plans, and ensure that Returning Officers were supplied with equipment, including power generators, to continue to serve electors. During several critical days of the election period, these Returning Officers and their staff were without water and electricity in their homes, yet they continued to report to returning offices and voting locations to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

Where locations were no longer safe due to storm damage, new leases were quickly secured to provide an alternative location to voters.

In addition, the Chief Electoral Officer issued a special directive allowing hydro workers to vote by special ballot while working outside of their home district so they could continue efforts to restore power.

¹⁹ "Geography of Ontario," The Canadian Encyclopedia, May 1, 2020, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/geography-of-ontario>.



Flooding and forest fires can occur in areas across the province at any time of the year, but northern regions are at a significantly higher risk. Our processes are inherently flexible to ensure that we are well-equipped to continue all operations and serve electors who are required to relocate due to environmental events.

worked closely with the Returning Officers from both electoral districts to ensure the required materials were delivered, allowing electors to cast their ballots where they were temporarily located.

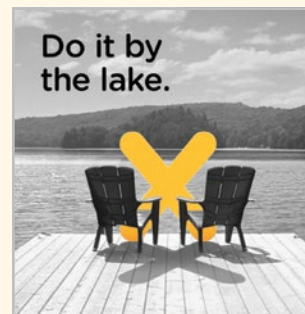
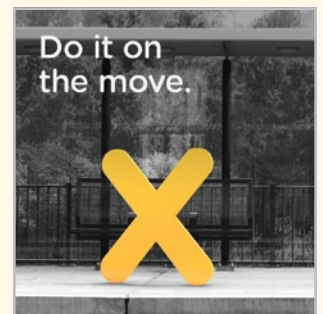
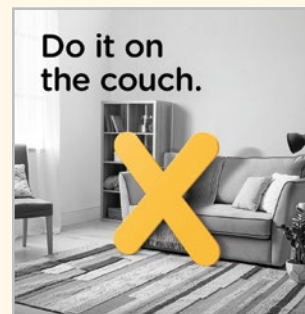
Engaging and informing electors

Our mandate is to engage with electors early and often to increase their awareness and knowledge of when, where, and how to vote. Following the 2018 election, we identified the three most common barriers for electors that informed our communications strategy: identification, addressing, and tools and services.

We began engaging with electors three months prior to the election during Provincial Voter Registration Month (PVRM). Launched on March 1, our nine-week campaign encouraged eligible and future voters to confirm, update, or add their information to the



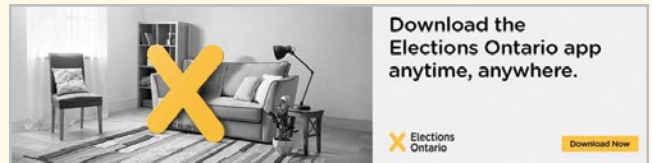
During this election period, we actively monitored 18 flood emergencies and four forest fires. Areas between Timmins and Sudbury faced a sizeable forest fire, which impacted the deployment and set-up of election materials. Eighty-seven electors from Grassy Narrows First Nation and 100 electors from Poplar Hill First Nation were relocated to another electoral district on May 26, where they were able to cast their ballots. Our headquarters



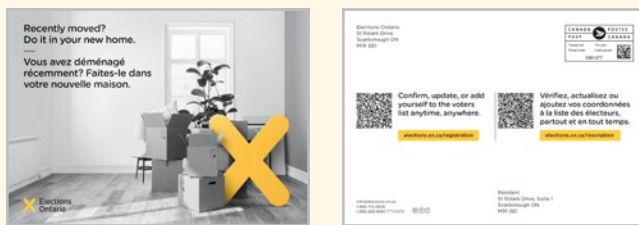
PVRM advertising campaign

Register, “anytime, anywhere”. The province-wide advertising campaign appeared on radio, television, print, digital, and social media platforms, translated and targeted through multicultural digital networks in 23 languages. Our digital platforms, including online videos and Google Search ads, generated more than 29.5 million impressions and 174,000 clicks, whereas social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat resulted in more than 82 million impressions and 508,000 clicks.

To promote the accuracy of the Register during PVRM, we mailed a postcard targeting electors living in high-growth and new development areas, yielding more than 4,100 confirmations, updates, and additions through our online registration tool.



Our mobile app advertising campaign



PVRM postcard

On April 1, we launched a multi-channel campaign spanning digital, social media, outreach, and media relations to introduce our mobile app. This campaign also targeted Indigenous groups and multicultural communities with ads in 18 other languages. As of June 15, there were over 70,000 downloads of our mobile app, with more than 8,400 downloads on election day.

Towards the end of March, the Chief Electoral Officer began a month-long media tour that saw him travel to more than 12 locations throughout the province. This was an opportunity to highlight the increase in the number of advance voting days,

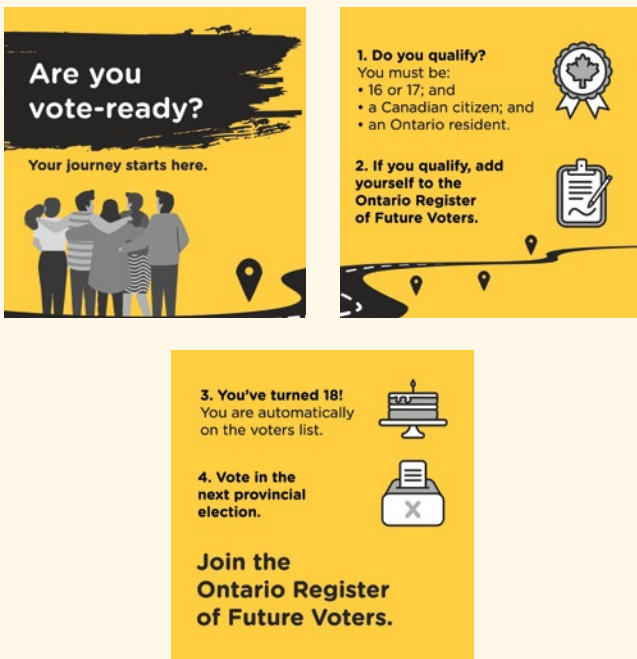
polling staff recruitment initiatives, the vote-by-mail program, and the new mobile app.

Throughout March and April, we hosted more than 50 virtual and in-person events at college and university campuses to encourage students to register, resulting in over 2,300 new registrations. We also engaged with high school students in over 600 schools through the Ontario Register of Future Voters (ORFV) program so that, once they turn 18, their name is automatically transferred to the Register. This program also helped with the recruitment of over 3,400 students for the



ORFV outreach events



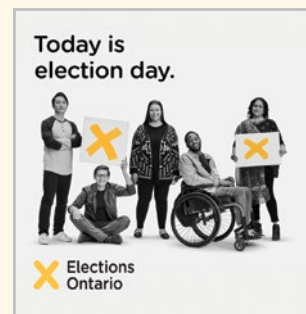
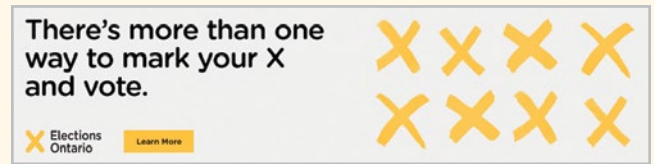


ORFV advertising campaign

election. Alongside our outreach programs, we launched a social media campaign throughout the month of April, across several social media platforms, that received over nine million impressions and 113,000 clicks, swipe-ups and completed video views.

Our “Mark your X” election campaign was launched on May 4. This was a year-long redesign project to develop creative concepts that focused on the many days and ways to vote through various traditional and digital media channels. This included television, radio, billboards, social media, digital and print targeting general electors, Indigenous and multicultural communities. This campaign received over 20 million impressions and more than nine million clicks and completed video views.

To support returning officers with recruitment efforts, we launched a campaign from April 26 to May 23 through digital, social media, radio, and



“Mark your X” advertising campaign



Recruitment advertising campaign

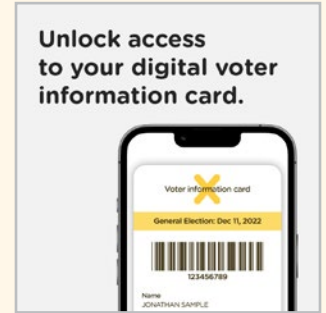
print media channels throughout 67 electoral districts that were facing challenges. In addition, we targeted 16 electoral districts in the North through local radio and print media channels, where significant challenges were experienced. Overall, our campaign received over 23 million impressions and more than 69,000 clicks.

In addition to our advertising campaigns, we mailed the Voting in Ontario brochure to over 5.7 million households to supplement the voter information card, providing electors with information on when and how to vote. The brochure was also made available on our website in 36 other languages, in addition to English and French.



The Voting in Ontario brochure

During the election period, our media relations team worked with various media outlets to provide accurate and timely information to electors, which included 39 interviews with the Chief Electoral Officer or an Elections Ontario spokesperson. Key topics included voter registration, ID, vote by mail, COVID-19 protocols, advance voting, accessibility, and the mobile app.



Organic social media posts

“Communication and communication strategy is not just part of the game – it is the game.”

– Oscar Munoz, former CEO of United Airlines

The website being one of the most common tools of communication during an election, we implemented several accessibility and mobile updates to our web applications, such as Voter Information Service and the employment portal, and developed web pages dedicated to critical election information.

Throughout the 29-day voting period, we fielded questions from electors through our Public Contact Centre (PCC) and general email



account. We saw a 26-per-cent decrease in the number of calls and a 37-per-cent decrease in the number of emails received compared to the 2018 election. This decline in engagement, in addition to decreased activity on our eRegistration tool, suggested that voter turnout would be lower in this election.

**A call for legislative change:
Disallow the publication of political polling
two weeks in advance of election day**

During the 2022 Ontario provincial general election, an average of 2.5 polls per day, or 36 in total, were released in the two-week period leading up to election day on June 2.

Political polls have the potential to influence election results by either motivating or demotivating electors.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that no public opinion polling results stating political party favourability ratings be published in the final two weeks before election day.

Another digital tool that has become more relevant in two-way communication is social media. Our social media team manages our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts to provide accurate and timely election information to electors across the province. Monitoring tools and working closely with our vendors have allowed us to manage and respond to misinformation and disinformation within the social media space. During the period from March to June, we saw a 25-per-cent increase in the total number of followers and over 27,000 engagements across all platforms.

Our elector engagement activities beginning in March through to election day included working with various partner organizations to develop and implement targeted programs to elector groups facing barriers to voting.

Indigenous outreach

One year ahead of the election, we collaborated with our Indigenous relations consultant to help remove barriers to voting in all 113 First Nation communities. This collaboration was critical in addressing staffing issues that already exist in remote and Indigenous communities and were compounded by the pandemic.

Our integrated advertising plan included various Indigenous media channels, inviting electors to confirm, update or add their information through our voter registration tool. We introduced a drop-down menu for unconventional addresses, particularly common in the Far North, and provided a Confirmation of Residency form that, when printed on band letterhead and signed by certain band administrators, can serve as identification.

We also worked closely with Friendship Centres and community partners on reserves across Ontario to distribute materials about voting processes and procedures, accepted identification for Indigenous electors and the vote-by-mail program. These materials were translated into Swampy Cree, Oji-Cree, and Ojibwe.

During the election period, severe flooding rendered roads inaccessible and prevented the opening of an advance poll in Pikangikum First Nation as well as the satellite office in Red Lake. Additionally, we experienced significant challenges in recruiting staff to work at both the advance and polling day voting locations in Kiiwetinoong. However, we made efforts to connect with leaders of Indigenous communities to help those impacted



by flooding and to provide residents who remained in their electoral district with the opportunity to vote by home visit. Electors who were displaced had the option to vote in locations where they were temporarily residing.

In select communities, we worked with the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry to deliver special-ballot kits to remote fly-in communities in Kiiwetinoong. Electors in these communities were able to vote by special ballot via home visit while the polls remained open on election day. This was outlined in a special directive by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Enhancing the accessibility of the election

We are committed to removing barriers to voting, which include administering elections that are

A call for legislative change: Enhance civics education within Ontario's secondary school curriculum

A key pillar of the Chief Electoral Officer's mandate includes implementing public education initiatives to enhance Ontarians' knowledge of the electoral process.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends enhancing the province's secondary school curriculum to include civics education in each year from grades 9 to 12. Incorporating additional civics requirements would enable students to develop the skills to participate in civic conversations, listen to and consider multiple perspectives, and develop their own political identities.

Currently, Ontario's secondary school curriculum puts an emphasis on civics education solely in the tenth grade when students are around 15- and 16-years-old. Additional exposure to civics curricula, particularly in the senior years of secondary school, would help students understand how to seek out ways to participate in decision-making and provide valuable information about how to get involved in the democratic process including and beyond casting a ballot. More civics education in the senior years of a student's secondary education is particularly important as the majority of secondary students become eligible voters in their graduating year of secondary education when they reach 18 years of age.

accessible to all Ontarians. We continuously work with community agencies and persons with disabilities (PWDs) to evaluate and improve our services. Our 2022-26 multi-year accessibility plan



(MYAP) outlines our commitment to making voting accessible through the following four principles:

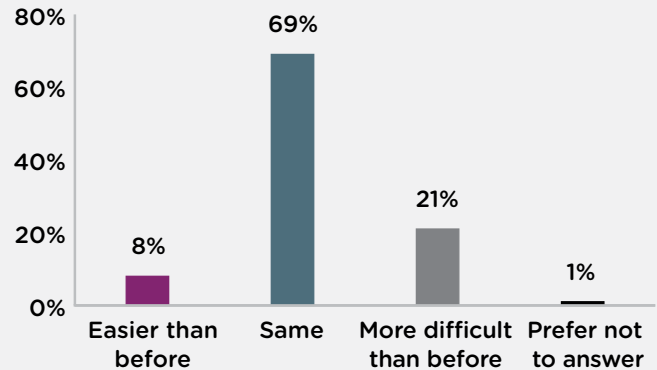
1. Respect for the dignity of PWDs;
2. Respect for the independence of PWDs;
3. Goods and services that are integrated for PWDs; and
4. Equity in the ability to obtain, use and benefit from goods and services given to others.

In the 2022 election, we put further emphasis on educating our staff on accessible services available through training and education. We worked with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and the Canadian Council of the Blind representatives to improve the ballot braille template. Our assistive voting technology (AVT) was also made available throughout the election period, including on election day. In addition, we made mobile phones permissible as an assistive device while casting their ballot and provided curbside voting to electors who were unable to enter the voting location.

Overall, the voting experience of electors with disabilities improved in several areas since the 2018 election. A total of 77 per cent of electors with disabilities stated that their election experience was either the same or easier than in 2018.

As a member of the Secretariat for Electoral Coordination (SEC), we work alongside other electoral management bodies to improve the accessibility of our services. In September 2022, the SEC approved its Subcommittee's development of a Compendium to share information, best practices, tools, and services in an effort to enhance elector services across Canada.

Voting experience for electors with disabilities: 2018 vs. 2022²⁰



“Democracy is not just a question of having a vote. It consists of strengthening each citizen’s possibility and capacity to participate in the deliberations involved in life in society.”

— Fernando Cardoso, 34th President of Brazil

We look forward to building on these successes and leveraging our relationships with community agencies and individuals representing PWDs to continue to make voting easy for all Ontarians. A comprehensive overview of the accessibility measure implemented in the 2022 election can be found in Appendix C.

²⁰ The numbers presented have been rounded to the nearest whole number. However, raw values were used to calculate the sums presented and therefore may not correspond to the manual addition of these numbers.



Welcome to eRegistration

Use this tool to confirm, update or add your information to the voters list or the Ontario Register of Future Voters. To register or add your information, you will need one piece of identification that has your name and current residential address. If you are 16 or 17, you can pre-register now and vote when you turn 18.

The Register of electors

If you are temporarily living outside of Ontario, you may be eligible to [register as an absentee voter](#).

Check the status of your request

Start here

Remove yourself

Start here

Remove a deceased person

Start here

ONE OF THE MOST important tools in the administration of any election is the Permanent List of Electors for Ontario. The *Election Act* requires that we maintain this list, which includes the names and addresses of registered electors across the province. Ensuring the accuracy of this information is critical, as addresses are used to assign an elector to their voting location. This information is included on the voter information card (VIC). In this past election, one in every 81 VICs was revised, in contrast to one in every 74 VICs in 2018, reflecting an improvement in the accuracy of our list.

eRegistration

To further support the accuracy of the voters list, we created the eRegistration tool for the 2018 election, which is an online tool that allows electors to confirm, update, add or remove their information on the voters list. Our communications campaigns promoted the online tool during PVRM in March, however only 676,588 electors checked, confirmed, updated, or added their information. This was a 42-per-cent decrease from 1,188,003 in the 2018 election. This was one of the first early indicators of low elector engagement leading up to election day.



Pictured here is the front of the voter information card.



eReg Search Comparison: 2018 vs. 2022



Total searches during writ period.



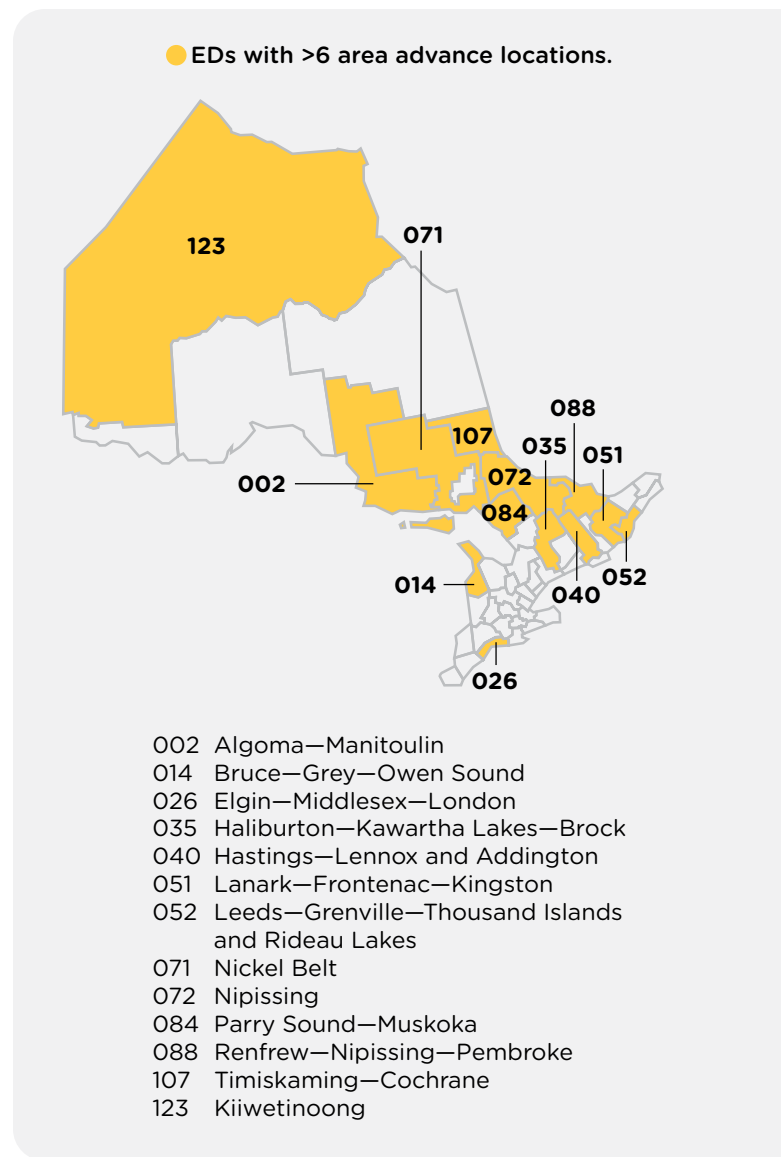


Voter information cards



RESULTS FROM THE PUBLIC OPINION survey reveal that the VIC is the fourth most popular source of information following television, our Voting in Ontario guide, and word of mouth. This shows that the VIC is a critical source of election information over most mainstream media channels such as radio, newspapers, and social media.

Following the 2018 election, legislative change extended the number of advance voting days from five to 10. While this offered more days to vote, there were challenges in listing more than six advance voting locations on the back of the VIC. However, we utilized targeted radio ads, our social media and mobile app platforms as well as targeted outreach to provide advance poll location information to electors in the 13 impacted electoral districts.



Improving voter information cards

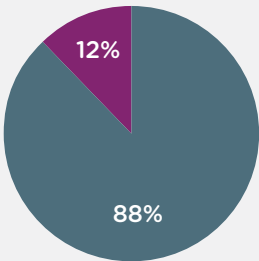
Executing the delivery of the VICs requires ongoing collaboration between our internal teams and vendor. The public opinion survey indicated that 89 per cent of electors received their VIC, which was a slight increase from the 2018 election.

After the 2018 election, we conducted an observational study on arrival rates, wait times and elector processing times at the polls using data from ePoll book strike-offs. We use this information, along with elector feedback regarding the VIC to further improve our processing times.

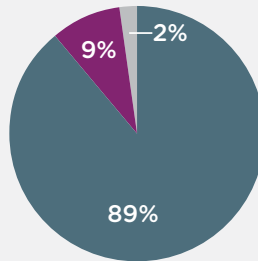
We continuously evaluate how we can improve the delivery of the VICs by completing an analysis after each election. The most common reason why a VIC is not delivered is attributed to an incomplete address, which can include a missing unit number. There are increased challenges in the northern and rural regions, as changes to PO box numbers and Rural Route deliveries can be problematic. These challenges can be addressed by creating a single address authority for the province of Ontario.

Successfully received a voter information card

2018 elector survey

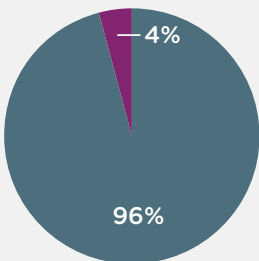


2022 elector survey

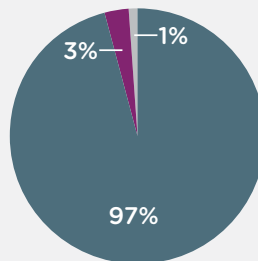


Received a correct voter information card

2018 elector survey

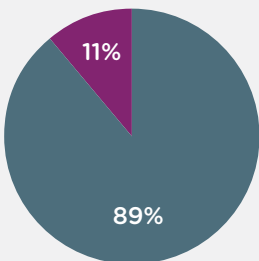


2022 elector survey

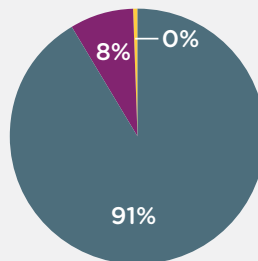


Brought voter information card to voting location

2018 elector survey



2022 elector survey



● Yes ● No ● Don't know ● Prefer not to answer

Comparison of elector experience with voter information cards in the 2018 and 2022 elections.

Public opinion polling conducted on our behalf found that electors experiences with their voter information cards improved during the 2022 election in comparison to the last election in 2018²¹.

²¹ The numbers presented have been rounded to the nearest whole number. However, raw values were used to calculate the sums presented and therefore may not correspond to the manual addition of these numbers.

**A call for legislative change:
Establish a single address authority**

We continue to seek ways to improve the accuracy of the Register. What appears to be the simple task of locating an address on a map, in reality poses a challenge for as many as 800,000 electors in Ontario. With no standardized addressing system in this province, compounded by inconsistent practices applied by individuals across 444 municipalities, the overall effect is a complex and confusing system that produces unreliable results.

From utility companies and emergency responders to Crown corporations and government agencies like Canada Post and Elections Ontario, organizations that work with the addresses across the province struggle with this issue.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that Elections Ontario or another government body establish a single Ontario address authority.

An address authority means a better list and a better election. If an address authority is established and standards are adopted across the province, the number of addresses that cannot be accurately located will decrease.

Consistent addressing in Ontario. We are not the only organization struggling with the variability in addressing. Ministries and government services, primary service providers, and private-sector businesses are all affected. As our economy digitizes, discrepancies in local addressing impede business.

Reduced government spending on address-data management. Currently, several bodies within the government have their own processes for collecting, maintaining, and updating addressing data. A single address authority would help reduce the duplication of costs across ministries, agencies, and businesses.

Implementing a single addressing authority would bring Ontario in line with the majority of provinces and territories. A total of seven provinces and one territory in Canada currently have an established addressing body.





Administering our second technology-enabled election

SIMILAR TO 2018, our processes in place enabled us to reduce our staffing model to 50,682 staff, while still being able to service electors efficiently. Electors who brought their voter information card and identification to an advance poll or election day poll were able to vote in under one minute.

On election day, 6,000 vote tabulators and 22,000 ePoll books serviced over 90 per cent of electors in 3,615 voting locations, approximately 52 per cent of voting locations.

We continue to use a combination of technology and paper polls, mainly due to the connectivity challenges experienced in remote areas or cost-related efficiencies for condominium and long-term care facilities.

Leveraging the transaction data collected in 2018 from ePoll books, we built software that allowed us to optimize individual voting location staffing levels and voting service times.

Results from the public opinion survey indicated that over 90 per cent of electors found their experience during the 2022 election to be on par or better than the 2018 election. Line-ups either moved quickly or were not an issue for 97 per cent of respondents.

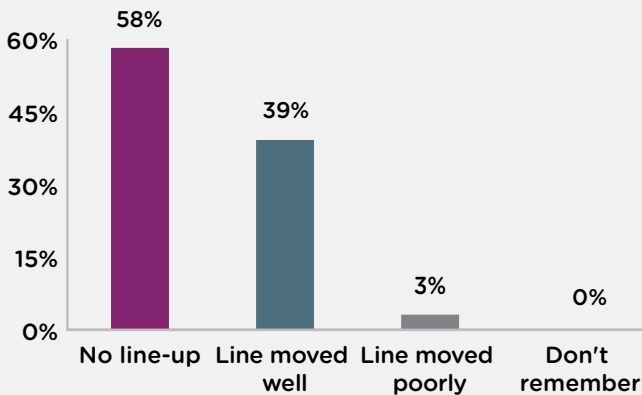
In the 2018 election, 85 percent of electors voted in person on election day, while 15 per cent chose to vote in advance either at an advance poll or through our special ballot program. In this election, there was an increase in electors (30 per cent) who chose to vote early and 70 per cent voted in person on election day. This increase in electors



When an elector arrives at a voting location, a barcode scanner reads their voter information card and immediately pulls up their name on the electronic list of electors on the ePoll book.

choosing to vote early was consistent with trends observed in other Canadian jurisdictions that held elections ahead of our election. Elections Canada, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick all noted an increase in the use of advance voting options. This shift in elector behaviour demonstrates we must continue to offer services that are scalable and flexible to meet the needs of electors. Using technology and the data we collect will help us continue to evaluate voting trends and build evidence-based solutions. In advance of the next election, we will work with our research team and key partners to adjust processes and support legislative reform while putting the needs of electors first.

Line-ups or wait times at polling locations in the 2022 election



A total of 97 per cent of electors surveyed stated there was either no line or that a line they were in moved well.



Once an elector marks their ballot at a poll, their ballot is placed into a secrecy folder which the Tabulator Deputy Returning Officer feeds into the vote tabulator.

“The beauty of Ontario’s electoral process is the confidence that electors have that their ballot will be counted in a fair and transparent fashion.”

— Greg Essensa, Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario



The 2022 provincial general election was the second technology-enabled general election administered by Elections Ontario.

What technology do we use in the polls? How does technology protect election integrity and streamline the voting process?

Electronic poll books: Also known as ePoll books, these laptop computers used by poll workers have replaced paper voters lists. Electors have their own unique identifier printed on their voter information card, which is scanned by poll staff. Once scanned, the name of an elector is pulled up immediately on the electronic voters list to be struck-off by poll staff. The time that it once took to look up an elector on a paper list has been reduced with the help of the digital list. The digital list reduces errors while improving customer service for the elector by getting them their ballot more quickly.

ePoll books are connected to a secure, private network. All personal information on an ePoll book is encrypted twice to protect them in the event of attempted interference. If an ePoll book is lost or stolen, it can be shut down remotely.

Vote tabulators: Vote tabulators are single-function, purpose-built devices used to scan paper ballots, automatically count marked ballots, and record results. Automated ballot counting reduces human error while increasing process integrity. A secondary benefit of automated counting is the reduction of end-of-day reporting from hours to minutes. Electors, political parties, and the media are provided with results mere minutes after the polls close.

In the event of a recount, paper ballots, which are fed into the tabulator, can be recounted by hand to maintain the integrity of the process. Vote tabulators are not connected to any network, meaning interference is not possible. They are widely used across jurisdictions both within and outside of Canada. We have used vote tabulators in our returning offices and satellite offices for general elections in 2011. We procured and tested 6,000 vote tabulators ahead of the last election in 2018 and used them once again during the 2022 election.



Election day



VOTE

1.888.668.8683

elections.on.ca
info@elections.on.ca

ON JUNE 2, 10.7 million Ontarians were given the opportunity to cast their ballots at one of 6,885 voting locations. In the four years of planning and preparation, we streamlined our technology-enabled processes that maintained the fairness of the election, the secrecy of the ballot, and the integrity of the results. The use of vote tabulators made the counting process more efficient and delivered election results 10 minutes after polls closed.

Set-up on June 1

The evening before election day, field staff set up the 22,000 ePoll books and 6,000 vote tabulators at the polling locations. This process ensures that polls are connected, and issues are addressed, avoiding delays the next morning when polls open at 9 AM.

The importance of connectivity is to enable the transfer of elector strike-off data through a central system to political parties who have provided a privacy policy to retrieve this data. This data allows them to contact electors who have not yet voted and encourage them to vote on election day.

Our setup process prior to election day also helps with retaining election day staff, as they are more inclined to return the next day to their assigned

position. This was particularly beneficial due to the staffing shortages experienced throughout all electoral districts.

By the end of the evening, we confirmed that 92 per cent of ePoll books were successfully connected and 50,682 polling day staff were ready to serve electors.

Polling day strike-off data

On election day, although ePoll books were successfully synching, the telecom provider experienced an issue that prevented strike-off data from reaching the central servers. We worked with our vendor to quickly identify and resolve the issue. This incident did not impact the voting process for electors.

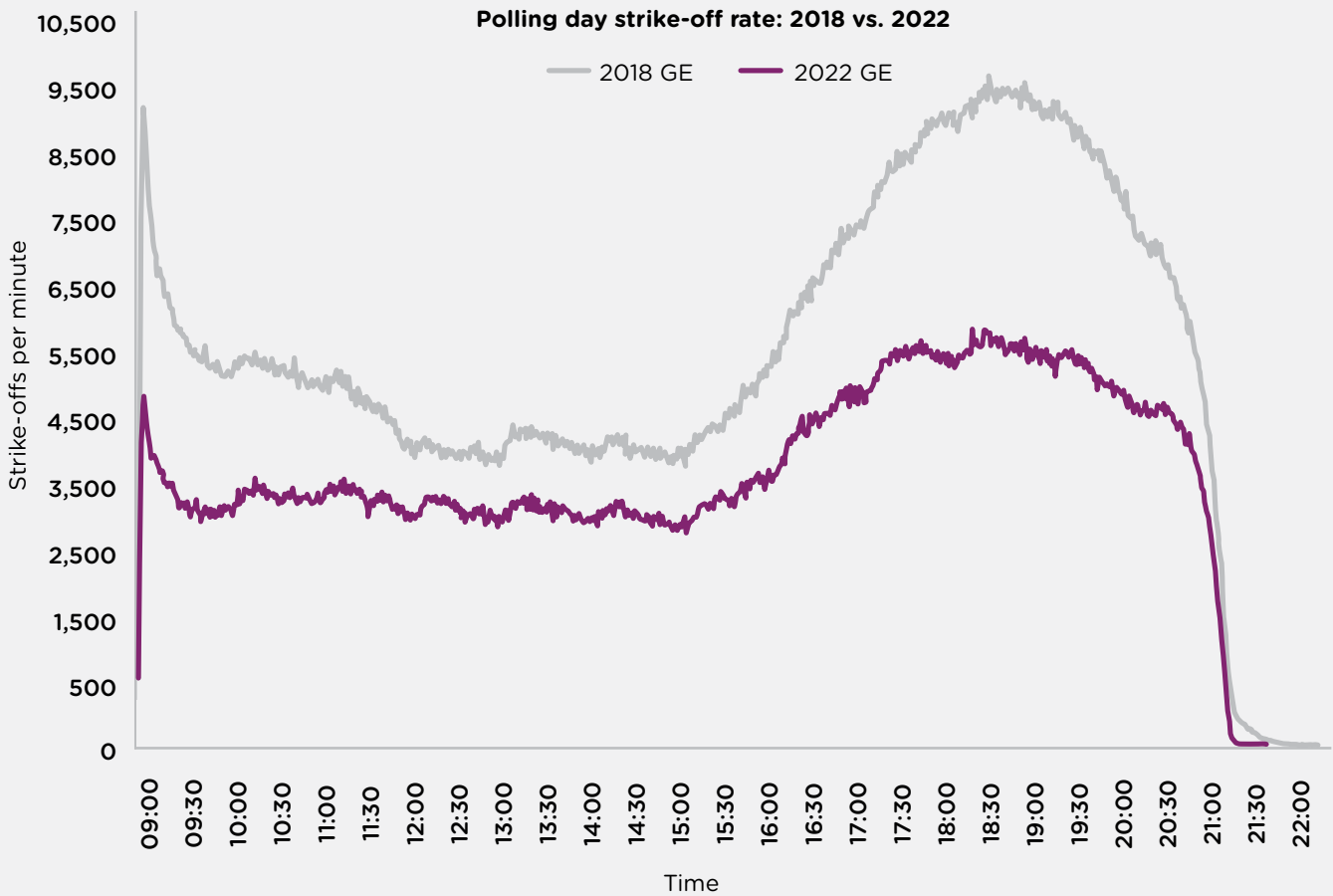
As part of our legislative mandate, our field staff provided printed copies of strike-off data to political party representatives who were at voting locations during the outage. By approximately 1 PM, connectivity was restored. In preparation for future elections, we will continue to work closely with our telecommunications partners to ensure seamless connectivity to provide services to our political stakeholders.



Voting process

The use of technology in the polls provides us with valuable insights on voting trends throughout election day. We saw a consistent trend of low voter turnout compared to the 2018 election, with only 3,351,771 electors casting their ballot by 9 PM.

There were a total of 6,885 voting locations and less than one per cent experienced temporary interruptions such as staffing shortages and power outages causing polls to open late. These locations were required to extend voting hours in accordance with the *Election Act*.



Election results

In this election, we saw a total of 4,732,458 of Ontario's 10,740,426 eligible electors (44 per cent) cast their ballot. A total of 4,701,941 valid ballots were cast and 15,587 ballots were rejected. Compared to the 2018 election, there was a significant decrease in unmarked ballots (10,685) and declined ballots (4,245).

	Election results comparison: 2018 and 2022	
	2018 general election	2022 general election
Total voter participation	5,806,286	4,732,458
Total valid ballots cast	5,744,860	4,701,941
Rejected ballots	15,832	15,587
Unmarked ballots	22,910	10,685
Declined ballots	22,684	4,245





Post-election activities



FOLLOWING THE ELECTION, Returning Officers were responsible for reporting results, conducting logic and accuracy tests on vote tabulators, and shipping all election materials from the field back to our head office. Staff at our headquarters worked to unpack, sort, review all materials, review financial statements from candidates, and ensure all 50,682 election workers were paid.

Feedback from our stakeholders

We conducted public opinion surveys to various elector groups and debriefs with our vendor partners, community advocates and persons with disabilities to gain valuable insights and recommendations to further improve future elections.

We also gathered feedback from political entities through meetings with the Political Advisory Committee in November 2022 as well as election debrief discussions between the Chief Electoral Officer and Members of Provincial Parliament.

The Chief Electoral Officer travelled to various locations across the province, where Returning Officers and field staff shared their experiences in the election.



After every election, we meet with field staff from across the province, who share recommendations for future improvements to enhance the election.

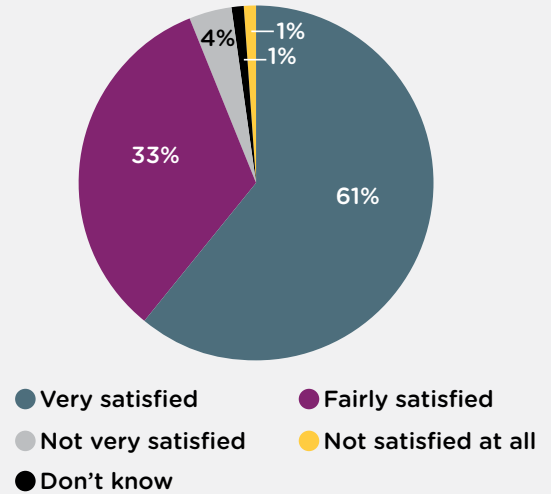
Overall satisfaction

Based on the feedback we gathered, over 90 per cent of political stakeholders were pleased with the administration of this election. The level of elector confidence in our ability to deliver a fair election while maintaining privacy increased slightly, from 83 per cent in 2018 to 84 per cent in 2022.

Accessibility

There was an 82 per cent satisfaction rate with the assistance received by electors with a disability, representing an increase from the 2018 election.

Political stakeholders' satisfaction with Elections Ontario



Experience of electors with a disability at a voting location

Numbers in () denote percentage point change from 2018

The assistance you were provided as a voter with a hearing disability	(+28)	82%
The assistance you were provided as a voter with a physical disability	(+17)	82%
The assistance you were provided as a voter with a visual disability	(+25)	82%



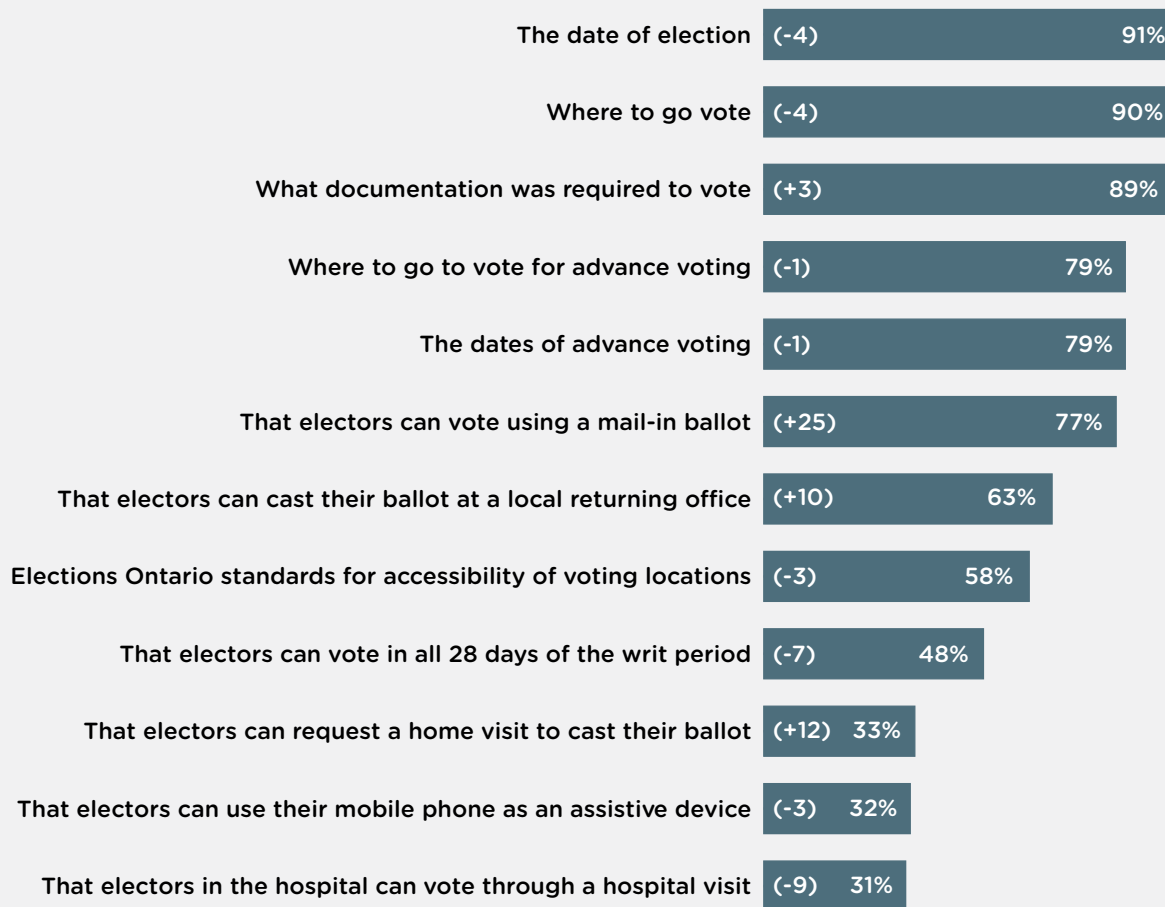
Knowledge of alternative voting methods

After the 2018 election, we increased efforts to inform electors about alternative voting options other than voting in person on election day. These included voting by mail, home visits, and at local

returning offices. The impact of the pandemic may have also contributed to an increase in the number of electors who chose alternative voting options.

Methods of voting

Knowledgeable % - Numbers in () denote percentage point change from 2018

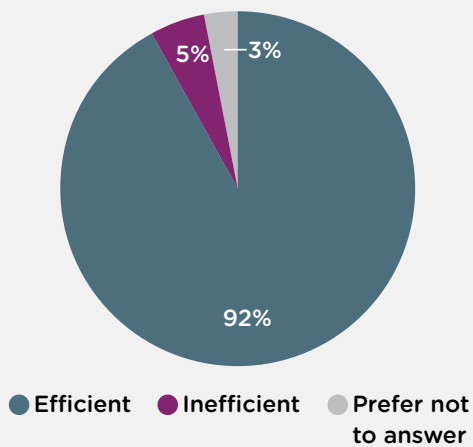


Electors with disability found our staff to be considerate to their needs when voting.

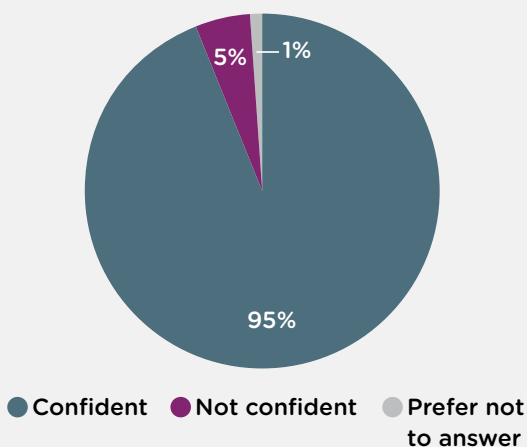
Voting technology

Sentiments on voting technology have improved since the last election in 2018. Ninety-two per cent of electors felt that vote tabulators made the election process more efficient, and 95 per cent were confident their vote was accurately recorded.

Vote tabulators made the election process more efficient



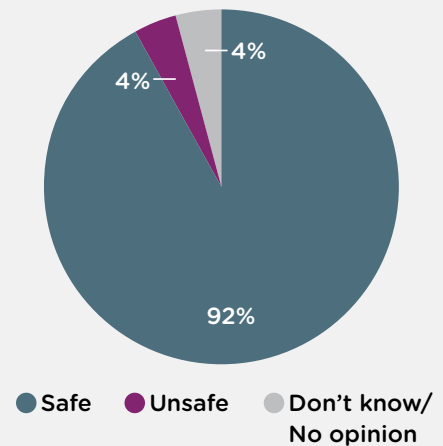
Confident that their vote was recorded correctly



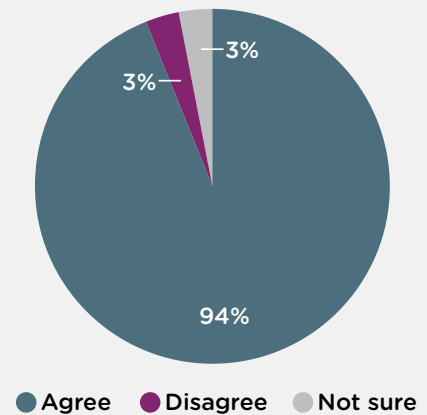
The pandemic and elector safety

The pandemic may have been a contributing factor in the increase of electors who chose to vote early at an advance poll. Of the electors who chose to vote in person, 92 per cent felt safe at their voting location and 94 per cent felt that we took appropriate precautions to ensure a safe voting environment.

Felt safe at polling location



Elections Ontario took appropriate precautions to ensure safe voting environment



Election delivery costs

As a steward of public funds, we consider our responsibilities very seriously. We are committed to spending wisely while delivering on our electoral mandates and ensuring we maintain the trust of Ontario's electorate by offering services that make voting easy and accessible.

Following our implementation of technology in the polls for the 2018 election, we were able to modify our staffing model and reduce staff by 32 per cent. As we experienced staffing challenges in this election, employing only 50,682 staff, our technology-enabled model allowed us to effectively assign staff to ensure electors were not impacted. Modernizing this process has also provided valuable insights on traffic patterns at voting locations to improve how we deliver elections in the future.

Leasing voting equipment

We procured ePoll books and vote tabulators for the 2018 election and have since maintained this voting equipment as part of our ongoing readiness. We established the Voting Technology Sharing Program (VTSP) under the *Election Act*, an initiative that allows us to lease this voting equipment to electoral management bodies across Canada. Another benefit of the VTSP is that we assist other electoral management bodies in modernizing the elector experience from coast to coast.

Since 2018, we have leased equipment to nine Canadian provinces and territories and 54 municipalities in Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba, and the Yukon. The \$2,993,640 that we have generated in revenue through this leasing program has been returned to Ontario taxpayers through the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Additional costs

We assumed additional costs in the final two years preceding the 2022 election. Returning Officers were required to source larger offices due to physical distancing requirements, and personal protective equipment was purchased to adhere to health and safety protocols. Last minute changes to leases and utilizing different venues meant that more funds needed to be allocated for the acquisition of voting locations. These new challenges resulted in increased costs to deliver the 2022 election.

We established a key performance indicator to help us remain fiscally responsible and ensure we stay within five per cent of the initial election budget projection. This enables us to maintain accurate projections and ensure that every taxpayer dollar is used wisely. Once complete, we estimate the 2022 election will cost \$145,332,012, which is well within our projected budget of \$158,706,922. A full report detailing the final costs of the 2022 election will be published in our 2022-23 annual report.

	2022 election budget	2022 election forecast	2018 election cost
	\$	\$	\$
Headquarters			
Salaries & benefits	16,066,486	14,419,756	11,554,848
Transportation & communication	16,417,159	16,727,945	10,890,403
Employee travel	877,855	736,531	1,343,842
Mail, courier, telecom	15,539,304	15,991,414	9,546,561
Services	25,182,871	21,856,953	18,293,309
Consulting	25,023,079	21,482,247	17,598,665
Facilities	159,792	374,706	694,644
Supplies & equipment	22,316,114	20,236,650	19,204,478
Advertising & communication	7,220,441	6,347,848	4,237,251
Furniture & equipment	212,000	25,197	2,938,095
Rentals	5,455,038	5,149,428	4,887,468
Supplies & sundry	9,428,635	8,714,177	7,141,664
Other services	199,299	80,508	84,410
Headquarters total	80,181,929	73,321,812	60,027,448
Electoral districts			
Electoral districts	70,448,612	62,994,880	56,560,586
Administration of Returning Offices	28,295,117	26,641,826	24,774,475
Advance polls	12,482,281	11,199,336	7,367,389
Polling day	25,556,219	20,973,849	19,473,928
Printing	729,719	597,609	674,775
Revision personnel	179,974	150,749	1,624,279
Special ballot	2,443,639	2,735,224	2,095,462
Preliminary duties	761,663	696,287	550,278
Electoral districts total	70,448,612	62,994,880	56,560,586
Election finance			
Campaign expense subsidies	8,076,381	9,015,320	7,360,378
Election finance total	8,076,381	9,015,320	7,360,378
Grand total	158,706,922	145,332,012	123,948,412





Personalizing voter communication



Piloting our mobile application

Today's electors expect that information be delivered directly to the digital spaces they frequent, and they expect access to this information using the technology they have customized to their personal preferences. Mobile phones have revolutionized the way people access information in their daily lives and have changed the dynamics of how people communicate and interact. A Statistics Canada survey shows a steady increase in internet usage, and found that:

- **92 per cent** of Canadians have access to the internet;
- **More than one-quarter** of Canadians spent at least **20 hours per week** using the internet;
- **84 per cent** of Canadians relied on their smartphone for personal use;
- **43 per cent** of Canadians check their smartphone at least every **30 minutes**;
- **71 per cent** of Canadians aged **15-24 years** check their smartphone at least every **30 minutes**, and
- **17 per cent** check every **five minutes**.

In response to this shift to fast-paced, direct, and reliable communication, and to align with our strategic priorities of advancing modern elections and engaging more effectively with electors, we piloted a mobile application in this election. Through our mobile app, electors could access personalized election information regarding voting locations and times, returning office contact information, ways to vote, accessibility services and how to work in the election. The app provided electors with the option of receiving email, text or push notifications about key election dates and changes to services or urgent notifications about service disruptions due to events such as flooding or storm impacts on voting locations. During the election period, 86 messages were sent via 188,614 notifications. Emails were the preferred channel of communication, with a 74 per cent utilization rate.

For users who opted to link their account to their elector record on the voters list, the app provided a digital voter information card (dVIC). The dVIC offered the same advantage as the paper VIC by serving as proof of registration and address but could easily be updated should there be a change to a voting location. Results from our mobile app survey, revealed that 41.7 per cent of those who linked their account used their dVIC at a voting location, with a 92 per cent satisfaction rate.

Pilot participants

The app was introduced by the Chief Electoral Officer during his media tour in April 2022, alongside an advertising campaign that encouraged electors to download the mobile app.

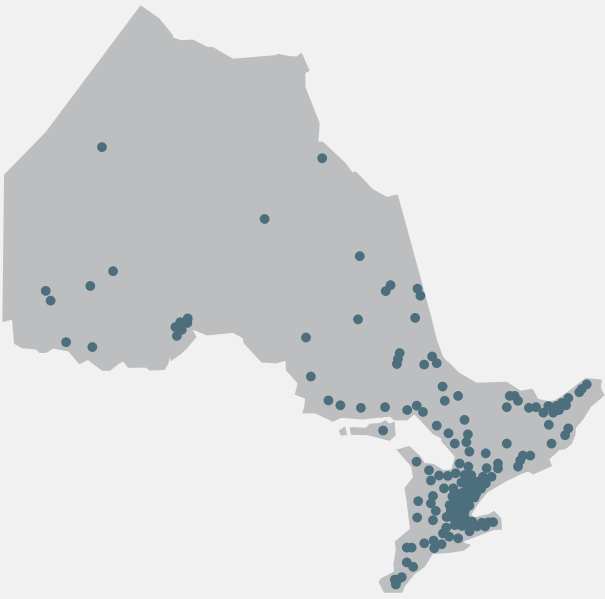
As of writ day, **9,523 electors** had engaged with the app and, by the end of polling day, **116,056 unique users** had visited the app landing page on our website, resulting in **70,243 downloads**.

Most users were located in urban centres, primarily in the Toronto and Ottawa areas. Ninety-eight per cent of users engaged with the app in English. Half of all users were 45 years of age or older, and those in the oldest cohort (65+) linked their accounts to their elector records twice as often as those in the youngest cohort, aged 18 to 24.

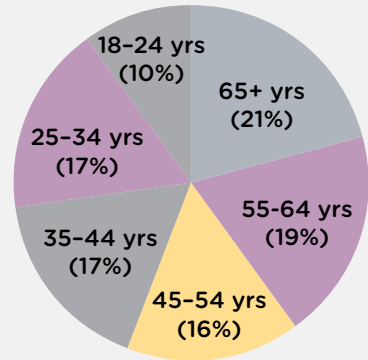
The mobile app was designed in accordance with the customer service standards outlined in the AODA and was tested by internal AODA experts through focus groups.



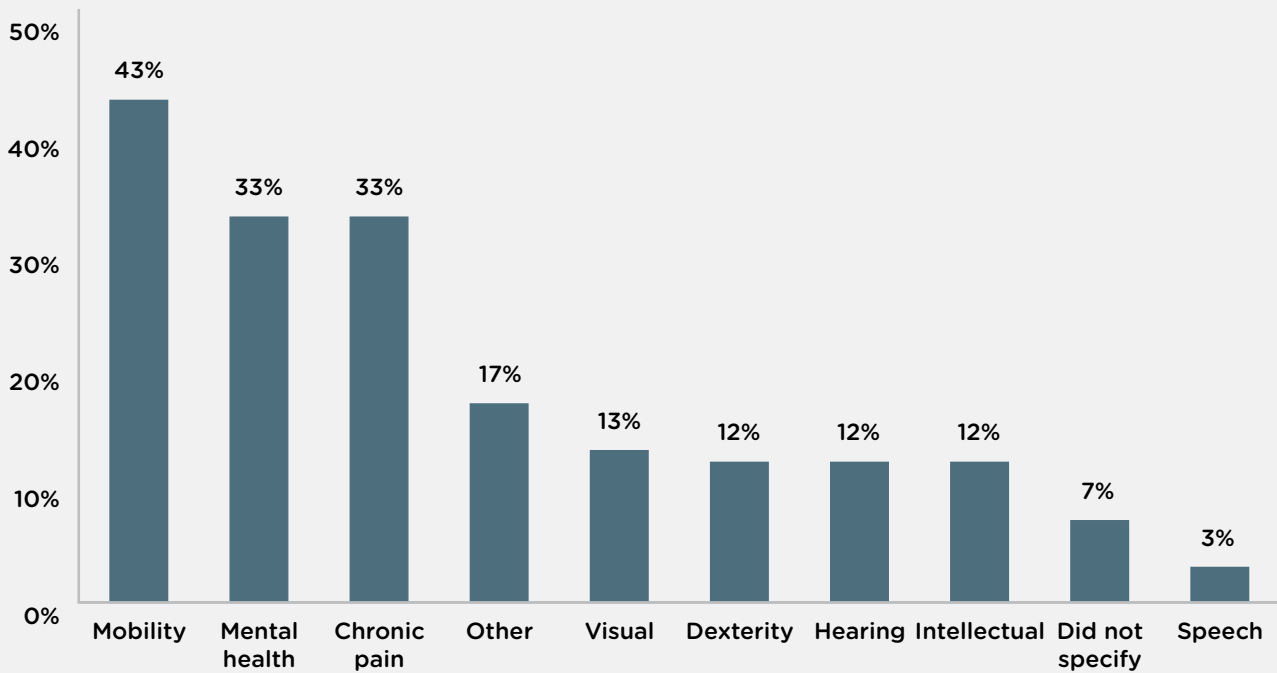
Mobile app user distribution across Ontario



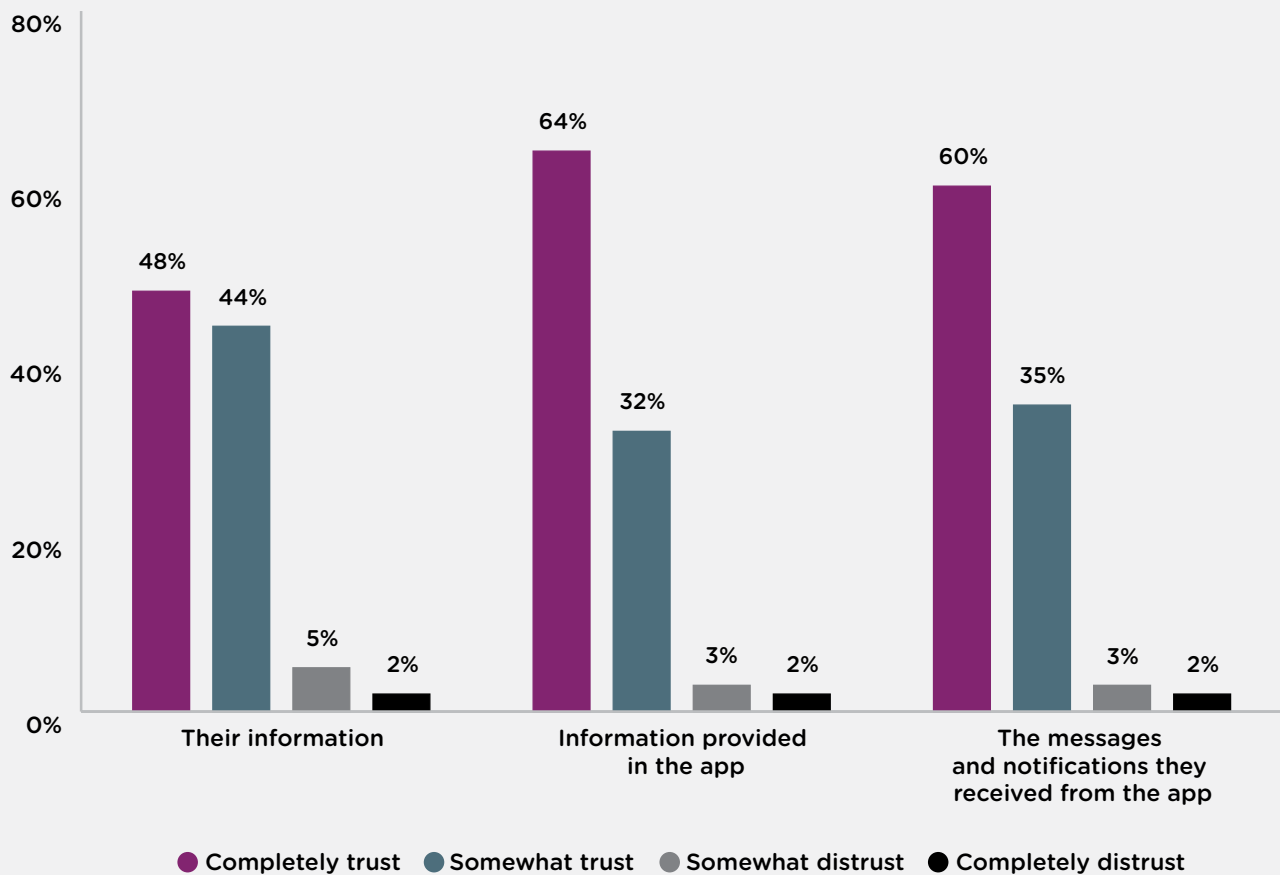
Mobile app users



Self-identified disabilities among mobile app survey respondents



How much users trust our mobile app²²



Of the linked users who responded to the app survey, nine per cent self-identified as having a disability, with the largest age groups being 55+ (45 per cent of those self-identifying) and 35-44 years of age (12 per cent). Seventy-nine per cent of these respondents used mobile phones and described themselves as very comfortable using mobile apps.

Ninety per cent of accessibility respondents trusted the app itself, and 94 per cent trusted the content within the app.

Eighty-eight per cent were satisfied with the app overall, and 81 per cent would recommend it to someone else. Twenty-nine per cent of accessibility respondents opted in to receive notifications, some by multiple channels.

Eighty-four per cent of respondents reported that they were likely or very likely to recommend the app to a friend, family member or colleague. Three quarters of respondents would use the app again, as it was, while 24 per cent would use it again with some enhancements. All 607 survey respondents who self-identified as having a disability said they would use the app again in a future election.

²² The numbers presented have been rounded to the nearest whole number. However, raw values were used to calculate the sums presented and therefore may not correspond to the manual addition of these numbers.



Survey respondents' satisfaction with features of our mobile app

Features used	Respondents who used this feature	Very satisfied or satisfied	Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	Usage
Ways to vote information	4,272	96%	4%	72%
List of candidates	4,045	95%	5%	69%
Returning office information	2,070	95%	5%	35%
Accessibility information	227	92%	7%	4%
“Days to vote” countdown	1,545	98%	1%	26%
Digital voter information card	2,644	92%	7%	45%
Election jobs information	979	95%	4%	17%

The introduction of the mobile app proved that we could leverage a well-designed and effective digital communication tool to ensure electors across the province knew when, where, and how to vote. As we plan for the next general election scheduled for 2026, we will be reviewing the learnings from this pilot and combine these findings with those from other aspects of the election to determine how best to leverage these capabilities and advance our agenda to continue to modernize our services and make voting easy.





Compliance activities

IN ADVANCE of every election, and during the years between electoral events, we provide support to several political entities, including political parties, candidates, nomination contestants, leadership contestants, constituency associations, and third-party advertisers. We provide training through educational sessions and informational handbooks to ensure that all political participants are compliant with legislation outlined in the *Election Finances Act*.

Expenditures and costs

The mandate of the Chief Electoral Officer includes oversight of the registration of Ontario's political parties, constituency associations, candidates, nomination contestants, leadership contestants, and third-party advertisers. After each election, we review all financial statements to ensure they are compliant with the *Election Finances Act*. We also distribute audit and campaign expense reimbursements in addition to quarterly allowance payments to qualifying political parties and constituency associations.

As the deadline for financial reporting of campaign expenses was December 2, 2022, we are not able to include a comprehensive summary of financial data for all political entities in this report. Our full report on the financial summaries will be included in the 2022-23 annual report.

Campaign finance

In April of 2021, the Ontario government passed Bill 254, *Protecting Ontario Elections Act*. This bill introduced amendments to the *Election Finances Act* which allowed for increased contribution limits, the continuation of the quarterly allowance program to December 31, 2024 at increased rates, the ability for independent MPPs to register constituency associations, the introduction of the threshold for audit for required financial filings, and changed rules governing third-party political advertising, including the extension of the non-election period from six months to one year and expended coordination and collusion rules. Moreover, the bill granted the Chief Electoral Officer the power to issue administrative monetary penalties applicable to specified infractions.



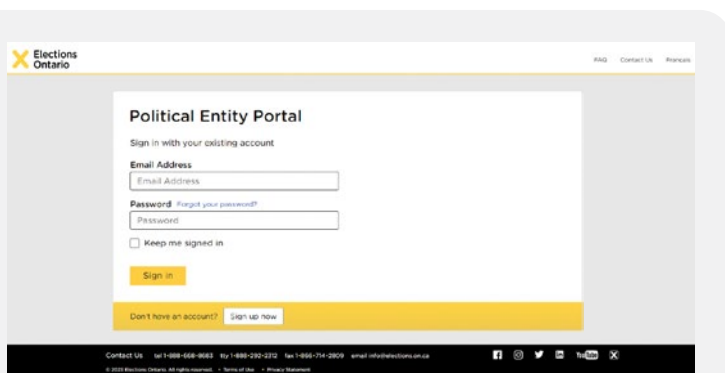
After the passage of Bill 254, additional bills were introduced and passed that continued to alter the *Election Finances Act* legislation:

1. Bill 254, *Protecting Ontario Elections Act, 2021* – Received Royal Assent on April 19, 2021
2. Bill 307, *Protecting Elections and Defending Democracy Act, 2021* – Received Royal Assent on June 14, 2021
3. Bill 43, *Build Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2021* – Received Royal Assent on December 9, 2021

In response, we updated handbooks and other educational materials for political entities to align with requirements for the 2022 election.

Political Entity Portal

Throughout 2019 and 2020, we reached several milestones in support of our strategic objectives. In 2021, we received 67 per cent of the 2020 annual returns through the Political Entity Portal (PEP), and in 2022, we received 72 per cent of the 2021 annual returns.



The Political Entity Portal login page.

Despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic, we completed the development of our PEP in early 2020. The creation of the PEP allowed political stakeholders, such as Chief Financial Officers and auditors for candidates, parties and associations to file, review, audit, certify and submit returns electronically for annual periods, by-elections, and general elections. Implementing the PEP allowed for:

- Answering questions pertaining to each schedule for a given return, relevant schedules are included in the return;
- An import/export feature that makes it easy to work with large data sets in Microsoft Excel sheets or other software;
- Field validation and built-in calculations;
- Pre-populating statements from schedules;
- A consolidated space to collect and submit return-specific documents; and
- Helpful hints and tool tips that provide simple explanations in context.

The portal allows political stakeholders to:

- View and edit their own contact information in a profile;
- See a list of their affiliations;
- Use the Address Book to view contact information of stakeholders, candidates, and associations directly associated with a party (only for stakeholders directly associated with the same party);
- View returns submitted by related entities;
- Download exports of returns with key information like return ID, event, Electoral District, status, etc;
- Identify who has visibility of the return while it is being filed and upon submission; and

- Comments linked to every return and private chat conversations about the return among stakeholders involved.

Furthermore, we have invested in ensuring the application is bilingual, secure, thoroughly tested, and compliant with the AODA. Most of the application features are also available on mobile devices. These additional features provide great value and an enhanced experience for our political entity stakeholders.

Registration and deregistration activities

During the four-year cycle between the 2018 and 2022 elections, we managed the registration and deregistration activities of political parties, constituency associations, nomination and leadership contestants, and third-party advertisers.

In total, 25 political parties and 837 constituency associations were registered as of election day. In addition, for the 2022 election:

- 179 nomination contests registered with 216 registered nomination contestants;
- 63 third party advertisers registered;
- Seven new political parties registered:
 - Consensus Ontario
 - Electoral Reform Party
 - Freedom of Choice, Peace & Justice Party
 - Ontario Centrist Party
 - People's Progressive Common Front of Ontario
 - Populist Party Ontario
 - Public Benefit Party of Ontario
- 5 political parties deregistered:
 - Go Vegan
 - Multicultural Party of Ontario
 - Pauper Party of Ontario
 - Stop Climate Change
 - Trillium Party of Ontario

Third-party political advertising spending

We have regulatory oversight of third-party advertisers 12 months prior to a fixed-date general election. For this election, this oversight began on June 14, 2021. Following the passage of Bill 307, *Protecting Elections and Defending Democracy Act, 2021*, third parties were required to register with Elections Ontario once they had spent \$500 on political advertising, and restrictions are placed on the amounts that third parties may spend.

During this election, 63 third parties were registered with Elections Ontario—an increase from the 59 registered in the 2018 election.



Summary of advertising expenses in 2022 vs 2018

Advertising expenses	2018	2022
Non-election period	\$4,012,825.00	\$6,736,404.40
Election period	\$1,213,470.00	\$1,562,387.73
Total advertising expenses	\$5,226,295.00	\$8,298,792.13

Administrative penalties

Administrative penalties were introduced by the legislative change included in Bill 254, *Protecting Ontario Elections Act, 2021*. Where the Chief Electoral Officer believes on reasonable grounds that a person or entity has contravened certain provisions of the *Election Finances Act*, the Chief Electoral Officer may make an order requiring the person or entity to pay an administrative penalty.

The purpose of an administrative penalty is to promote compliance with the *Election Finances Act*. Administrative penalties are paid to the Consolidated Revenue Fund and shall be in an amount determined by the Chief Electoral Officer in accordance with the maximum amounts set out in the *Election Finances Act*. At the time of publication of this report, the Chief Electoral Officer is investigating one matter to which an administrative penalty may be appropriate. To date, no administrative penalties have been leveraged by the Chief Electoral Officer.

A call for legislative change: Amend the thresholds for audit

Political entities are required to submit financial statements for annual, campaign, and leadership contest periods. Currently, CFOs must file audited financial statements for reporting periods where at least \$10,000 in contributions was accepted or expenses of at least \$10,000 were incurred.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that the threshold for requiring an audit be reduced to where at least \$2,500 in contributions was accepted or expenses of at least \$2,500 were incurred.

Adjusting the threshold for the requirement for an audit would better equip political entities and their Chief Financial Officers to ensure they are fully compliant with the *Election Finances Act*.

A call for legislative change:

Grant the Chief Electoral Officer the ability to penalize for failing to meet filing deadlines

Political entities in Ontario can be a person or organization. The following are political entities regulated by the *Election Finances Act*:

- Political parties;
- Constituency associations;
- Candidates;
- Leadership contestants; and
- Third party advertisers.

Each political entity is subject to registration, responsibilities, and required to abide by key dates required for financial reports.

Following the 2022 provincial general election, a significant number of political entities failed to submit financial filings by the December 2, 2023 deadline. In early January 2023, only 87 per cent of political entities had submitted the necessary documentation.

A legislative amendment which grants the Chief Electoral Officer the ability to reprimand non-compliant political entities would improve compliance.

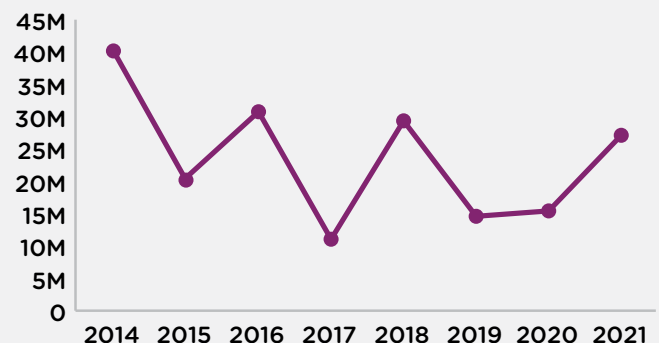
Quarterly allowances

On April 19, 2021, the *Protecting Ontario Elections Act* was passed in the Legislative Assembly. Included in this legislation was an extension of quarterly allowances for political parties and constituency associations until December 31, 2024, and amending the rate to 2017 levels. We therefore provide quarterly allowance payments to those political parties and constituency associations who meet all necessary criteria.

Total average contributions to political parties

Political parties, constituency associations, candidates, and leadership contestants are eligible to receive monetary and goods and services contributions. With the introduction of Bill 254, *Protecting Ontario Elections Act, 2021*, contribution limits for political parties were increased from \$1,222 in 2018 to \$3,325 in 2022. Since 2020, contributions have been trending upwards.

Total contributions over time (2014-2021)
M = Millions



Criteria for political parties

Quarterly allowance payments are provided to political parties that meet at least one of the following conditions:

1. In the last general election, it received: two per cent of valid votes cast province wide; or
2. In the last general election, it received: five per cent of valid votes cast in an electoral district where the party ran a candidate.

A call for legislative change: Extend the timeline for quarterly allowance payments

As is outlined in legislation, quarterly allowance payments will cease as of January 1, 2025.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends renewing legislation to continue quarterly allowance payments beyond December 31, 2024 to ensure an adequate balance between public and private fundraising for political parties and constituency associations.

2023 Political party quarterly allowance calculations: Political parties that qualified for quarterly allowances based on the results from the 2022 general election

Political party	2022 valid ballots cast (official CEO-certified final numbers)	2023 quarterly allowance effective April 1, 2023 (\$)
Green Party of Ontario	279,983	178,069
New Blue Party of Ontario	127,461	81,065
New Democratic Party of Ontario	1,116,377	710,016
Ontario Liberal Party	1,124,053	714,898
Ontario Party	83,618	53,181
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario	1,919,874	1,221,040
Total	4,651,366	2,958,269

Criteria for constituency associations

Quarterly allowance payments are provided to constituency associations that meet both the following criteria:

1. Associations' candidates must receive at least two per cent of the popular vote; and
2. The constituency association is in full compliance.

Constituency associations that qualified for quarterly allowances based on the results from the 2022 general election

Political party	# of qualifying associations	Total quarterly allowance by party (\$)
Green Party of Ontario	119	46,981
Independent	1	2,409
New Blue Party of Ontario	74	18,129
New Democratic Party of Ontario	124	211,597
Ontario Liberal Party	121	205,332
Ontario Party	29	8,284
Populist Party of Ontario	1	166
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario	124	352,628
Total	593	845,526

A call for legislative change: Repeal the blackout period

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends repealing the blackout period provisions on political advertising.

The blackout period on paid political advertising occurs on polling day and the day before polling day. However, the *Election Finances Act* provides many exemptions. For example, the blackout period does not apply to brochures, pamphlets, campaigning, lawn signs, robo calls, advertising on the Internet if posted before the blackout period, etc.

These exemptions cause confusion among electors and most complaints we receive relate to activities that are permissible.

A call for legislative change: Implement subsidies for Chief Financial Officers of registered political parties, constituency associations, candidates, and leadership contestants

Individuals who perform the duties of the Chief Financial Officer do so on a volunteer basis.

Performing the responsibilities of a Chief Financial Officer requires an expertise and skillset beyond the capabilities of an average volunteer.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that subsidies be provided to onboard Chief Financial Officers who have the knowledge and experience required to perform the role of the CFO and adhere to the requirements outlined in the *Election Finances Act*.





Beyond 2022

FROM RECRUITING tens of thousands of workers for election day to securing appropriate voting locations for all 124 electoral districts, challenges that typically face an electoral management body were compounded in this pandemic election. In spite of these challenges, the resiliency and resourcefulness of our teams across the organization allowed us to navigate an ever-evolving environment to continue to deliver a safe and successful election.

“A great democracy must be progressive or it will soon cease to be a great democracy.”

— Theodore Roosevelt, 26th U.S. President

We introduced protocols to ensure the health and safety of all voters and streamlined our services to make voting easier in this election. We made technological advancements with the launch of

our mobile app, the automation of our vote-by-mail program and making the option of voting early more accessible. Finally, we provided electors with more days and ways to vote by increasing the number of advance voting days from five to 10 and extending the availability of assistive voting technology to election day.

With only 44 per cent of all eligible electors having cast their ballot, we saw the lowest voter turnout in Ontario’s history in this last election. Public-opinion polling conducted on our behalf after the election identified five reasons electors chose not to vote, three of which were cited as “political reasons”. This downward trend in voter turnout is not unique to Ontario; it is also impacting Canadian federal elections²³, as well as elections beyond our borders. Average global voter turnout has decreased since the 1900s, even while the number of nations who hold national elections has increased²⁴. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy across the globe, points to declining voter turnout as an indicator of worldwide “democratic erosion”²⁵.

²³ “Voter Turnout at Federal Elections and Referendums,” Elections Canada, accessed October 8, 2022, <https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&dir=turn&document=index&lang=e>.

²⁴ Abdurashid Solijonov, “Voter Turnout Trends around the World,” International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2016, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/voter-turnout-trends-around-the-world.pdf>.

²⁵ “The Global State of Democracy 2021: Building Resilience in a Pandemic Era,” International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2021, <https://idea.int/democracy-tracker/sites/default/files/2022-11/GSOD21.pdf>.

As we continue to enhance our services to electors, we acknowledge that more can be done to address voter engagement. This is the collective responsibility of each player within the democratic ecosystem, which includes political parties, their leaders, and their candidates, as well as the media, advocacy groups, and electors themselves. Continuing to build on our relationships and collaborating with these key partners will allow us to improve voter engagement. Only by working together will we be able to strengthen public trust in the democratic process and the institutions that oversee them.

As we look to the next election, we must recognize that we all play a role in preserving the integrity of the electoral process and upholding the tenets of our democracy. Based on observations and data compiled in this last election, the recommendations presented throughout this report are a starting point that will allow us to continue to deliver on our commitment to build modern services that prioritize the needs of electors, now and in the years ahead.

“In a democracy, the individual enjoys not only the ultimate power but carries the ultimate responsibility.”

— Norman Cousins, author, journalist & World Peace Advocate





Appendices

Appendix A: Recommendations for administrative and technical adjustments to the *Election Act* and *Election Finances Act*

We have been searching for ways to improve our processes, requirements, and tools to align with the expectations and the needs of Ontarians. The execution of the 2022 election has made it clear that our legislation must also remain aligned with the advancements in technology, to better prepare for emergencies, and to meet the growing expectations of Ontarians regarding the quality of government services.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends the following technical and administrative amendments to the *Election Act* and the *Election Finances Act* to continue our evolution towards modern election management.

Amend Subsection 4.4(1) to waive the requirement for consultation during the 29-day voting period

Subsection 4.4(1) of the *Election Act* outlines that the Chief Electoral Officer is required to consult with registered parties, to direct a voting process to be modified. With a short election calendar in Ontario, the Chief Electoral Officer must make immediate decisions in the best interest of the election administration process. To achieve efficiency while ensuring integrity in the process, the Chief Electoral Officer recommends the statutory requirement for consultation during the 29-day voting period be suspended.

Amend Subsection 44(7) to prioritize Elections Ontario’s website as the primary source of information

The Subsection 44(7) prioritizes information on the voter information card over the information on our website. In the 2022 election, some advance polling locations were relocated due to facilities issues or natural disasters. The Chief Electoral Officer recommends a minor amendment to ensure the website’s information takes precedence: “at least three days before the first advance poll day, the returning officer shall publish the days, times and locations of the advance polls on a website.”

Allow for the use of regular ballots at returning offices and satellite offices between advance vote period and polling day

The *Election Act* currently implies that between the end of the advance vote period (i.e. five days before polling day) to the eve of the polling day, a write-in special ballot must be used instead of a “regular ballot” that is used during the advance vote period and during actual polling day. As regular ballots are already available, the Chief Electoral Officer recommends permitting the use of regular ballots from the beginning of the advance vote period to the eve of the polling day in returning offices and satellite offices.

Amend Clause 13(4)(a) to require landlords of buildings with 100 or more units to grant non-residents access to a polling station for the purpose of voting

One of the biggest difficulties encountered during the 2022 election was obtaining cooperation of the multi-unit residential building owners. In particular, we received complaints from voters who were denied access to some voting locations if they were non-residents of the buildings. The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending Clause 13(4)(a) to compel landlords of buildings containing 100 or more dwelling units to allow access to non-tenants.

Clarify the wording “free of charge” in Subsection 13(4.1) of the *Election Act*

During the 2022 election, many municipalities, school boards and provincially funded institutions that provided spaces for polling locations expressed confusion and concern with the verbiage “free of charge” in the Subsection 13(4.1) of the *Election Act*. While many venue providers were of the view that the lease only covered the rental of the premises, they requested additional compensation for other costs like the electricity, janitorial services, and the use of furniture. The Chief Electoral Officer is recommending that further clarification to be added to this section so that it includes all services associated with the property to be provided “free of charge”.



Make annual review of the polling division boundaries with municipal clerks optional

As per Subsection 12(1) of the *Election Act*, returning officers are required to consult local municipal clerks for adjusting provincial polling divisions and review the boundaries on an annual basis. The Chief Electoral Officer recommends the removal of this requirement because these consultations rarely affect decisions but significantly slows down the process. Typically, clerks are working with and are concerned about ward boundaries or other local sub-divisions, which often do not align with provincial boundaries.

Remove prescriptive elements on provincial ballot papers

As we continue to modernize the administration of elections in Ontario, some requirements from our past in our legislation are now obsolete. The Chief Electoral Officer recommends the amendment of overly prescriptive elements surrounding the formatting of the ballot paper (e.g. ballot numbering, printer's name etc.) outlined in Section 34 of the *Election Act* to be amended to a more performance-based language.

Amend Section 17.5 of the *Election Act* to align with modern practices

Today, most Ontarians consume their information digitally. We are committed to making information available in the format most accessible for Ontarians. The Chief Electoral Officer recommends the revision of the wording in Section 17.5 to state that the Chief Electoral Officer may provide guidelines (on the limits to the use of electors' personal information) in The *Ontario Gazette* or

post guidelines on our website, instead of the current requirement that compels the publication of the guidelines in both formats.

Elections Finances Act

At times, political party leadership contestants, and nomination contestants, are required to withdraw from their campaign. Currently, there is no formal process to facilitate this withdrawal process. The Chief Electoral Officer recommends a provision in the *Elections Finances Act* to allow for the withdraw of leadership contestants and nomination contestants.

1. Allow leadership contestants and nomination contestants abilities to withdraw.
 - a. Under the EFA there is currently no provision for leadership contestants and nomination contestants to withdraw from a contest.

Appendix B: Summary of public opinion polling

We procured Leger Research to conduct a public opinion survey project to determine how electors and stakeholders felt about their experiences with the election process, initiatives, and services provided during the general election. This appendix summarizes key highlights from the surveys.

Five research objectives were identified for this project:

1. Understand the level of trust in Elections Ontario and the election process;
2. Assess the impact of changes to the election process;

3. Identify barriers to participation in the election process;
4. Measure the effectiveness of our communications; and
5. Capture public expectations for the election process in the future.

We surveyed three elector groups:

1. General electors;
2. Elector groups facing barriers; and
3. Political entities.

Leger conducted surveys across the general population which included targeted surveying of elector groups facing barriers, with a total of 3,166 respondents. These electors were surveyed after election day in-person interviews were conducted with electors living in shelters from Ottawa, Toronto and London between June 16 and July 10, 2022.

Surveys were conducted with candidates, campaign finance officers, and party officials with a total of 343 respondents between June 16 and July 10, 2022.

Results from general elector surveys

Ease of voting

Survey results indicated that we made improvements in making voting easy. Ninety-six per cent of electors indicated that voting locations were accessible and easy to find. Additionally, 97 per cent of voters were also satisfied with their interaction with our staff, particularly when confirming their identity, navigating the voting process and customer service.

Ninety-five per cent of electors found that the voting process was easy and 73 per cent indicated that the ease of voting experienced in the 2022 election was similar to 2018, while 22 per cent indicated that voting was easier.

Trust and privacy concerns

Since the 2018 election, we have seen a trend of declining confidence in democratic and provincial institutions. The lack of confidence is especially strong among Ontarians between the ages of 18 and 34.

However, a strong majority of electors are still confident of our ability to conduct fair elections (84 per cent). Overall, 81 per cent of electors expressed confidence in Elections Ontario.

We continue to see high levels of confidence in the technology used in the polls, as 95 per cent of electors were confident that the technology (i.e. ePoll books and vote tabulators) maintained the secrecy and privacy of their votes.

Knowledge of the voting process

Knowledge of the voting process showed a small decrease compared to the 2018 election but remains relatively high – 91 per cent of electors knew when to vote, 91 per cent knew where to vote, and 89 per cent knew what they needed to bring to vote.

There has been significant improvement in the knowledge of voting options such as vote-by-mail, home visits, and voting at local returning offices. The pandemic likely contributed to an increase in electors looking for non-conventional voting options.



Barriers to participation in the voting process

While there are many political or personal reasons that pose as barriers to voting, only 10 per cent of respondents identified an election process-related barrier to voting. Many lost interest in the election due to early reports of one-sided results.

Communication with electors

The vast majority of general electors surveyed (89 per cent) received their VICs and almost all cards (97 per cent) contained accurate information. Additionally, 91 per cent of electors who received a VIC and voted, brought the card with them to their voting location.

The most common methods used to contact us included calling a local returning office number (33 per cent), visiting our website (31 per cent), and calling a toll-free number (26 per cent).

The main reasons for contacting us were to find information about when, or where to vote (45 per cent), how to register to vote by mail (24 per cent) and how to work during the election (22 per cent). Overall, 90 per cent of electors were satisfied with their interaction with us.

Impacts of the pandemic

The pandemic may have contributed to an increase in electors looking for safer voting options. For example, vote-by-mail and advance voting among electors increased up to five per cent from the 2018 election.

Additionally, almost all electors (92 per cent) who voted in person felt that we had provided a safe environment at voting locations.

Technology in the polls

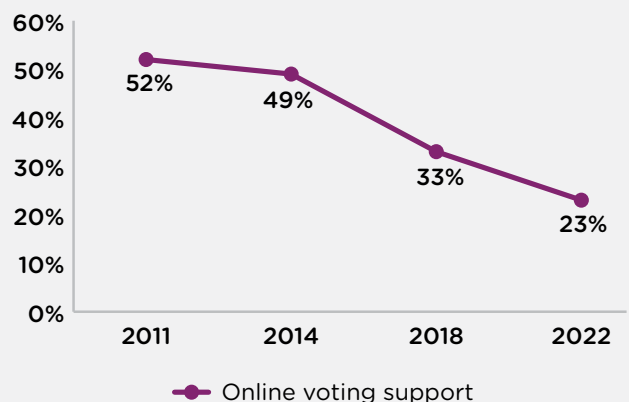
Elector confidence on the use of vote tabulators has improved since the 2018 election. A total of 95 per cent of electors were confident that the tabulator recorded their vote correctly, a five per cent increase since 2018. The majority of electors (92 per cent) found that tabulators made their voting process efficient.

Elector expectations for the future

There was a significant decrease in support for online voting following this election. When asked about alternative voting methods, only 23 per cent of electors indicated support for online voting compared to 2018 (33 per cent) and 2014 (49 per cent).

When asked about Ontario's electoral system, 57 per cent supported shifting from a first-past-the-post to a proportional representation approach. When asked about lowering the voting age to 16 years old, 69 per cent of voters were not in favour.

Support for online voting: 2011-2022



Electors facing barriers

Few electors in shelters participated in the 2022 election. Only 12 out of 53 interviewed electors voted in this past election (23 per cent). About one-third of electors in shelters did not vote due to a lack of information about the voting process, or an inability to provide identification.

Results from survey with political entities

Most political entities had a very good or excellent impression of how the 2022 election was administered, with 80 per cent reporting they were satisfied with the administration of the election. According to the survey results for political entities, 73 per cent of participants believe the 2022 election was administered better or the same as the 2018 election.

Technology

Results suggested that we should further promote new tools as stakeholders have low awareness of the eRegistration process and the mobile app.

Communication with stakeholders

Most political stakeholders who contacted us were satisfied with the quality of support provided to them (85 per cent). The three most common channels used during the election were the website (56 per cent), local returning office (49 per cent) and our Compliance division (24 per cent). Key topics included finding information about voting locations and candidate related processes.

Additionally, while stakeholders prefer the website for information (41 per cent), 71 per cent prefer in-person interaction to resolve an issue.

Candidate nominations

Overall, 78 per cent of respondents felt informed and were satisfied with the timeliness of the nomination process. However, there were some concerns related to the administrative process, understanding procedures and gathering signatures for candidate nominations. Stakeholders suggested that a sample of a completed form along with a FAQ document would be helpful. Overall, the majority (77 per cent) found the candidate nomination process easy.

Impacts of the pandemic

Overall, 55 per cent of respondents noted that canvassing and campaign activities were impacted by the pandemic.

Appendix C: Accessibility measures for the 2022 election and summary reports

This appendix is a compendium of Elections Ontario's initiatives that enhanced the accessibility of the 2022 general election and include the feedback we have received.

Legislative and policy framework

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* together with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* protects and guarantees the rights of all Ontarians to access goods, services, facilities, and employment.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* ensures that organizations follow specific standards and rules to identify and prevent



barriers, so that persons with disabilities (PWDs) can access the same goods, services, and facilities as everyone else.

We are committed to delivering elections that are accessible, transparent, and fairly and efficiently administered. Our Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy and the 2022-26 multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP) communicate our commitment to deliver high-quality service to all Ontarians engaged in the electoral process as electors, administrators, candidates, and other stakeholders.

We are committed to remaining compliant with the AODA and reinforcing its core principles with the *Election Act*. For example, it sets out the parameters of the special ballot program, which increases accessibility for all electors. We also campaigned to make voting easier by extending the availability of assistive voting technology from the start of advance polls to include election day. We carry out our obligations to deliver elections and day-to-day operations that are free from discrimination, and we remove and prevent barriers by promoting processes that are inclusive.

Overview of accessibility feedback

The *Election Act* requires that the Chief Electoral Officer submit a report that includes a summary of all actions, services, feedback, and responses related to accessibility. The *Election Act* also stipulates that, “after every election, the [CEO] shall prepare a report on accessibility issues. The report is to be included in the election report or the next annual report” (Subsections 67.2(1) and 67.2(2)).

The remainder of Appendix C fulfills our legislative requirement to report on accessibility following each general election. It summarizes the:

- Measures and initiatives that have been integrated to provide greater access and services to electors with disabilities (Clause 67.2(1)(d));
- Customer service feedback collected during the electoral event, and our response to that feedback (Clause 67.2(1)(a)(i));
- Summary of Returning Officers’ reports on accessibility measures (Clause 67.2(1)(a)(ii));
- Results of public opinion research as it relates to accessibility or service to PWDs (Clause 67.2(1)(c)); and
- Recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer respecting barriers to accessibility and other accessibility issues (Clause 67.2(1)(e)).

Measures and initiatives integrated to provide greater access and services to electors with disabilities

To reduce barriers to voting and make voting accessible for all Ontarians, we have focused on voting for PWDs. The AODA’s *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* sets out accessibility requirements under its customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation, and design of public spaces standards. We do not provide transportation services and have no requirements under the Transportation Standard.

To meet our mandate and legislative requirements, we released a MYAP in the leadup to the 2022 election, that serves as our strategy to remove and prevent accessibility barriers.

In keeping with best practice and legislative requirements, we met with agencies and individuals representing PWDs to better understand and respond to the needs of PWDs. For these consultations, we invited representatives from a broad range of services providers and individuals representing PWDs. The outcomes of these meetings helped us refine policies and practices for our field operations to ensure we met the needs of electors with disabilities.

Building on our work from past elections, we posted a fully accessible video with accessible voting information on the Accessibility page of our website that was embedded with closed captions, audio description and sign language interpretation. We also worked directly with stakeholder organizations to provide information about all the accessible voting options for this general election. In addition, we delivered webinars to key organizations and e-mailed our packages of materials.

At voting locations, we ensured that the location met the accessibility requirements of the *Ontario Building Code* and the AODA. Service animals were allowed, and electors could bring family members, friends, or support people, or ask election officials to help them vote. Election officials at the polls were trained to provide accessible customer service and could even bring the ballot and ballot box outside the poll to an elector. Electors were also able to apply at the returning office to transfer to another voting location that better met their accessibility needs.

Tools and services available during election day at polling locations included magnifiers, our new Braille template for the ballot, and assistive voting technology at returning offices. We continued to allow electors to use their mobile phones as assistive devices to better align with their expectations and daily use of technology. Electors could also arrange for registered American Sign Language (ASL) and langue des signes québécoise

(LSQ) sign language interpreters or intervenors at our expense.

Below is a list that summarizes the devices, tools, services, training, and employment measures we implemented for the 2022 election.

Communications and public education leading to election day

Alternative formats — We provided general information on the election and voting process in a range of formats to ensure that all Ontarians could understand when, where and how to vote.

Teletypewriter (TTY) — This audio service enables people with hearing loss to access information by telephone. Leading up to and during the election, TTY was available at our headquarters.

Additional languages — We made election materials such as the Ontario Voting Guide and identification requirements available on our website for download, and voting instructions at voting locations, available in 36 other languages.

Plain language communications — All communication materials, such as advertising and public education materials, were drafted in plain language to be accessible to all Ontarians.

Voter information card (VIC) — A VIC was sent to each elector on the voters list and provided information about when and where to vote.

Radio advertising — Election information was advertised on radio.



Accessible Voting in Ontario handout —

As a response to the feedback we received, we created a fully accessible handout about accessible voting that was sent to stakeholders and posted on our website.

Website — We made enhancements to our website in 2021. These website enhancements included improving user experience on mobile devices and accessibility enhancements to make our website more user friendly and compliant with AODA requirements. The website is compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0) and achieved an AA rating.

Elections Ontario app — We introduced a mobile application that could be downloaded on Apple or Android devices. The new app provided information to voters about when, where, and how they can vote and gave them electronic access to their voter information card.

eRegistration — The eRegistration tool continues to simplify voter registration allowing electors to confirm, update, add or remove their information on the voters list.

Electronic filing — After the 2018 election, we merged the management and development of three applications under one budget for the compliance team; these are: the Political Entity Portal, Political Financing and Party Information, and Election Finance Management System. Since these web applications are used by political parties, they had upgrades to meet accessibility standards for WCAG 2.0.

Training and staffing in support of accessibility

Customer service training — A key challenge for us in the 2022 election was the delivery of effective training to the 50,682 field employees who joined us to deliver the election. Building on the success of the previous general elections, we trained front-line personnel, including poll officials, to ensure responsiveness to electors with disabilities. In addition to in-person training, we used our award-winning training video to inform poll officials and returning office staff of ways to better serve electors with disabilities.

Manuals for poll officials and in poll kits — These materials included instructions on how to assist electors with disabilities and emphasized how to assist an elector with a disability at the voting location. There was also a section in each poll official manual called “Electors Who Require Assistance” which was revised to be more concise and user-friendly for poll officials for the 2022 election. This section addressed how to assist individuals with voting, the use of interpreter or intervenor services, how to support electors with a variety of disabilities and how to use assistive devices.

Employment — Accommodations were provided to employees with disabilities in the recruitment and selection process and throughout the employment life cycle, in compliance with the Employment Standard under AODA requirements.

Specialized voting services

Vote-by-mail — For the 2022 election, we introduced an online application to apply to vote by mail. The new application allowed electors to apply online to vote by mail and track the status of their voting kit.

Home visits — An elector could request a home visit if:

- They would find it impossible or unreasonably difficult to personally go to the returning office or a poll to vote; or
- They need assistance because of a disability or an inability to read or write.

A team of two Special Ballot Officers visit the elector at the location of the elector's choice, where they will assist the elector in completing an application and a voting kit.

Hospital visits — An eligible elector who is temporarily in an Ontario hospital during a general election may vote through the three-day hospital program. The special ballot team goes room to room and can assist the elector in completing an application and a voting kit.

Transfers — Electors with restricted mobility or other disabilities who can vote more conveniently at another voting location can apply for a transfer to another voting location in their electoral district up to and including on election day. The elector is provided with documentation to present to the poll official at the alternative voting location, together with their proof of identity.

Homeless elector process — To enable those electors without permanent addresses to vote, we provide a Certificate of Identity and Residence form. The form serves as proof of identity and residence for Ontarians who are homeless and wish to vote in an election.

Services, tools, and technology at the polls

Voting location accessibility standards —

Prior to the 2011 general election, we created the Site Accessibility Standards to help Returning Officers assess the accessibility of voting locations. The standards ensure that the requirements under the *Election Act* for an accessible voting location are consistently understood and uniformly defined across all electoral districts. These standards define core requirements for the selection of voting locations across the province and they have been fully reviewed to ensure they comply with the existing AODA and other accessibility legislation.

Voting location online consultation —

To ensure voting locations serve electors properly, proposed voting locations were posted online for public consultation and feedback six months prior to the general election. We received feedback on 139 locations throughout the province.

Assistive voting tools at voting locations —

Assistive voting tools were provided at voting locations to help electors with disabilities vote independently and in secrecy. Tools include magnifiers, Braille ballot templates that have raised numbers and cut-outs to assist electors with reduced visibility or vision loss and writing pads for communicating with electors with hearing loss. Electors could also use their mobile phones at the polls for assistance purposes.

Assistive voting technology — This equipment was available in every returning office and satellite office up to and including on election day so electors with disabilities were able to vote independently. The equipment marks the ballot for the elector via integrated ballot-marking controls.



Ballot font size — The candidate’s given name appeared on the ballot in 20-point font, the candidate’s surname appeared in 24-point font, and the political party name or candidate’s status as independent appeared in 18-point font.

Feedback process — If an elector wanted to provide either general feedback to us or specific feedback on a particular situation, electors were directed to email us at info@elections.on.ca or visit our website and use any of the options listed under the Contact Us section.

Interpreters and intervenors — We partnered with community agencies to book the services of ASL and LSQ sign language interpreters or intervenors when required. We covered the cost of the service when used at a returning office, satellite office or voting location.

Curbside voting and moving the ballot box — In cases where an elector is unable to enter a voting location, poll officials can bring a ballot to the elector to facilitate the casting of an elector’s ballot.

Notices of disruption — Temporary disruptions to services at voting locations may interfere with the ability of electors to cast their ballots. Disruptions could include unscheduled or scheduled maintenance, repairs, construction, etc. When a temporary disruption occurs, we provide notice to the public. Notices were posted on our website and signage was posted at the affected location.

Service animals — We welcome service animals that provide assistance to electors with disabilities. Electors with disabilities were permitted to keep their service animals

with them while on our premises, including voting locations, and while accessing election services.

Voting assistance from a friend or support person — An elector who requires the assistance of another individual to vote may be accompanied by a friend or support person to the voting screen. This person could mark the ballot for the elector who requires assistance after fulfilling various requirements under the *Election Act*, such as making a declaration to maintain the secrecy of the vote.

Customer service feedback

We provide electors the opportunity to communicate their views or sentiments on customer service and voting experiences any time by contacting us via phone, TTY, fax, email, or regular mail. During the 2022 election period, we received 50 accessibility-related customer service communications. The most common categories of feedback were polling locations not accommodating for mobility issues and stairs (42 per cent), polling locations inaccessible for parking or from parking lot (18 per cent), and no signage directing voters to accessible entrances and elevators (10 per cent). This feedback will inform discussions about improving policies and processes.

Below are some examples of the customer service feedback we received:

- “I think the main issue, however though, is like when we arrive in person [polling station] and we’re met with a staff person or volunteer they’re unfamiliar with how to approach a Deaf voter.”

- “For my polling station in particular I find that they’ve been really efficient. I don’t know if there are many people in my area with sight loss, but I find that whenever I go in, they are very nervous at first, but they know what they need to do and they eventually do it.”
- “I just wanted to throw in that if that technology [AVT] had been available [at polling stations] I would have made use of it and I would have been very happy to make use of it but it wasn’t available so I would encourage it to be maybe, hopefully more available when we get to the next election cause I don’t think I’m the only one.”
- “In one day, it is a lot of information to fit into a training session. However, it seems to be the same people applying for poll worker positions so there is some consistency across elections. They should be able to retain that information and with exposure, they should get better at working with people with disabilities.”
- “I suggest developing a digital accessibility toolkit for staff, voters and recruitment purposes for advance polls and the day of the election, available online to access when wanted. Staff at polling stations would have access to how to work with Deaf and blind people, mobility devices, and approaching people with intellectual disabilities.”

- Subsection 55.1(1)—Within three months after election day in the election, every Returning Officer for an electoral district shall prepare a report on the measures that the officer has taken to provide accessibility for electors with disabilities in the district and shall submit the report to the CEO. 2001, c. 32, s. 24 (2); 2007, c. 15, s. 40 (1).
- Subsection 55.1(2)—The Chief Electoral Officer shall make the report available to the public.

Returning Officers were asked to report on eight aspects of election accessibility:

1. Accessibility training;
2. Accessible materials;
3. Voting by special ballot;
4. Other accessible voting options;
5. Employment of persons with disabilities;
6. Accessible voting locations;
7. Notices of disruption; and
8. Feedback regarding accessible services.

Election officials accessibility training

Election officials include approximately 7,000 returning office staff, including Special Ballot Officers, who work for the entire election calendar, and 50,682 election officials who worked at advance polls and on election day. All staff were trained and certified to deliver services in an accessible manner, and to support electors with disabilities, depending on their needs and specific requests for assistance.

Summary of Returning Officer reports on accessibility measures

The *Election Act* requires that the CEO submit a report after each election that includes a summary of every report made by Returning Officers in respect to the accessibility measures that were deployed for PWDs in their electoral districts.



Accessible materials

All returning offices were provided with materials to facilitate voting by persons with disabilities, including:

- Braille versions of general information brochures that were mailed to homes across Ontario;
- Documents in various formats, available from us on request;
- Assistive voting tools such as magnifier sheets and Braille ballot templates;
- High-contrast directional arrows to direct electors to accessible pathways and entrances at the voting locations; and
- Notice of Disruption forms.

Voting by special ballot

During this election, 324,483 ballots were cast through the special ballot program. Of those, 9,343 were cast using the special ballot home and hospital visit programs.

Special Ballot Officers provided a range of services, as directed by the elector, including helping to fill out forms and ballots in full, finding and retrieving identification documents, reading instructions or candidate names aloud, providing assistive voting devices such as magnifiers or ballot templates, or setting up stable writing areas. Returning Officers also built on grassroots promotion of the special ballot options.

Feedback provided by Returning Officers on these services includes:

- “At a long-term care facility, we serviced 22 electors when they went into lockdown prior to polling day. We were able to accommodate all by using the home visit program.”

- “With the remediation and curbside voting, we serviced all electors who arrived to cast their ballots. At one long-term facility electors were extremely happy that we were there. We had a large number of electors requesting the home visit program and we were able to do them all. We did not receive any complaints about voting locations in terms of accessibility.”
- “Electors who received service through the hospital and or home visit program were very appreciative that this service was offered by Elections Ontario.”

Other accessible voting options

Assistive voting technology

Assistive voting technology (AVT) uses audio cues and three controller options to enable electors with disabilities who had difficulties marking ballots by hand to vote independently and privately. A total of 34 votes were cast using AVT, compared to 80 votes during the 2018 election. This is a decrease in use of 57.5 per cent from 2018.

Transfer to a more accessible voting location

Ten electors requested and were transferred to alternate voting locations within their electoral district to accommodate restricted mobility and familiarity with a particular facility.

Reimbursement of sign language interpreters or intervenors for electors

We worked with Canadian Hearing Services and the Deaf Blind Community Services to make interpreters and intervenors available to electors. If an elector required a sign language interpreter or an intervenor during the election, we reimbursed the costs associated with these services. Three electors used this service.

Employment of persons with disabilities

87 of the 100 Returning Officers who responded to personnel questions in their reports on accessibility confirmed that they employed PWDs to work as poll officials within their key office staff. Employees with disabilities were accommodated in a variety of ways to ensure they could contribute and have a meaningful work experience:

- “No feedback on accessibility accommodations at any voting locations. One expression of gratitude for hiring a staff member who is neurodivergent.”
- “We were able to offer multiple options for accommodations, all of which were viewed positively such as: hiring a person with limited mobility as an Information Assistant, and hiring their support persons at the same polling location so they could help them get to the voting location as well as attend to their personal needs throughout the day; assigning an alternative position to an individual who could not lift the technology cases or anything of any weight; providing an equivalent role without the physical demands; providing additional time for the return of poll materials to persons with disabilities.”

Accessible voting locations

The *Election Act* requires that all voting locations be accessible to PWDs. We accomplished this goal by applying its Site Accessibility Standards. These standards are used to assess the accessibility of a given location based on quantitative and qualitative criteria. Locations that did not already meet the standards were remediated using various tools. Remediation included the employment of additional Information Assistants to direct electors to accessible pathways, or to help electors on ramps or in elevators. In 2022 there were 15,827 Information Assistants and 1,939 Advance Poll Information Assistants. Directional signage was used to show an alternate or accessible pathway (2,061 directional signs were posted), and parking cones were used to define accessible parking spaces (5,434 cones were used throughout Ontario). Threshold ramps were used to overcome door thresholds or places where there was a small change in height along the route of travel. Suitcase ramps were used to overcome larger vertical or horizontal gaps (436 threshold ramps and 183 suitcase ramps were used).

Of the 7,556 voting locations used, all were measured against our Site Accessibility Standards. 30 per cent of those sites required remediation to ensure they were accessible, compared to 40 per cent in the 2018 election. This improvement is due in part to our staff’s greater familiarity with accessibility standards. It also reflects the efforts of all Ontario communities to renovate and build infrastructure to meet advancing accessibility standards. Returning Officers provided feedback regarding voting locations in schools:

- “The original route of travel at one of the voting locations provided the use of a ramp at the side for electors with limited mobility. This route of travel was changed by the school. Rather than allowing access to the ramp which lead directly into the gymnasium floor, we were directed to use an outside



door to gain entrance. The door had two short steps to enter. Poll officials were there to help electors enter the gymnasium and guided them to the ramp for use of the inside gymnasium door. A few electors required the use of curbside voting.”

- “Some of the schools used as voting locations tried to enforce entrances or exits that they selected and were not inspected by us during our site visit. We reviewed the route of travel for all locations and in instances where the route of travel was altered, another site check was completed to verify that the doors and route met the site accessibility standards.”

Notices of disruption

Returning Officers posted 100 notices of disruption throughout the election calendar, of which 27 required voting hour extensions on polling day as they impacted the ability of electors to vote. A majority of disruptions in service were related to power outages due to the storm on May 21.

Other accessibility measures

Poll officials and returning office staff ensured the accessibility of voting services through other measures. These included providing documents or information in accessible formats, reading aloud the candidates’ names on ballots, promoting special ballot home or hospital visits to eligible community members, offering curbside voting to electors with mobility disabilities in addition to electors experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, hiring and training additional staff to accommodate electors’ needs, and working with stakeholder groups.

Examples of feedback provided:

- “Some poll officials mentioned that electors were very happy with how Elections Ontario made voting accessible and that the poll officials were prepared to assist them if they had mobility needs. Overall, the feedback was very positive.”
- “Most of the remediation that was applied was to add additional accessible parking spaces and Information Assistants to provide assistance if the voting locations did not have an automatic door opener. Electors expressed appreciation for the additional parking and the assistance in opening doors.”
- “It was reported that several electors with mobility needs were very happy to have been offered curbside voting at two sites. Although the sites were fully accessible, the individuals in question had difficulty walking any distance and were served in their cars.”
- “Feedback from caregivers of electors who attended advance polls were very happy to have the assistive voting technology services available.”

Results of public opinion research as it relates to accessibility or service to persons with disabilities

Following each general election, we commission research to measure the opinions and experiences of electors. We procured Leger Research to conduct a public opinion polling project to determine how electors and other stakeholders felt about their experiences with electoral processes, initiatives and services during the 2022 election.

Overall impressions of the voting experience

The majority of electors indicated good experiences with the overall voting process. Ninety per cent of electors with disabilities felt that voting was just as easy or easier than 2018.

Voters with disabilities expressed improved satisfaction with the assistance our staff provided for their specific disability (82 per cent, up from roughly 60 per cent). In some respects, electors with disabilities were satisfied with the communication we offered (e.g. information was provided in an accessible format – 81 per cent), while others demonstrated some room for improvement (e.g. the way our staff took their disability into account when communicating – 67 per cent).

While most electors with disabilities did not have any suggestions for improvements we could make (68 per cent), the top suggestions for improvements included more accessible polling stations, more promotion of accessible options, and online voting.

Barriers to voting

There was no significant change in the number of electors who indicated they experienced a problem or barrier between the 2018 and 2022 elections, with only 6 per cent of electors indicating they experienced a barrier. The top issue or barrier identified by electors in the 2022 election was an inability to find information on where to vote (21 per cent).

Awareness of services

In our ongoing commitment to remove voting barriers, we provide several alternative voting methods to make the electoral process more accessible. Alternative voting methods can be leveraged by all Ontarians, and they play a critical role in enfranchising electors who have difficulty going to the polls on election day.

We offer multiple options for a ballot throughout the election calendar. This includes the special ballot program which enables electors to vote in person at their returning office, by mail, or through home or hospital visit programs.

- A majority of electors indicated they were not familiar with hospital visits and home visits. This includes electors with disabilities, older electors, Indigenous electors, and electors in shelters.
- Electors in shelters were nearly twice as likely to have little or no knowledge that electors can vote throughout the Writ period (26% compared to general electors (48 per cent)).
- A majority of electors with disabilities had little or no knowledge of home (63 per cent) or hospital visits (63 per cent) as alternative voting methods.

In our efforts to reduce barriers to voting, we will continue to work with our stakeholders to improve awareness, augment elector experience and publicize the different methods Ontarians can use to cast their ballots.



Appendix D: Candidates and parties in the 2022 general election



Number of candidates in the 2018 and 2022 general elections

Political party	2018	2022
Canadian Economic Party - Deregistered	2	0
Canadians' Choice Party	5	2
Communist Party of Canada (Ontario)	12	12
Consensus Ontario	10	11
Cultural Action Party - Deregistered	3	0
Electoral Reform Party	N/A	2
Freedom of Choice, Peace & Justice Party	N/A	2
Freedom Party of Ontario	14	11
Go Vegan - Deregistered	2	0
Green Party of Ontario	124	124
Independent/No affiliation	32	40
Multicultural Party of Ontario - Deregistered	2	0
New Blue Party of Ontario	N/A	123
New Democratic Party of Ontario	124	124
None of the Above Direct Democracy Party	42	28
Northern Ontario Party	10	2
Ontario Alliance	3	2
Ontario Centrist Party	N/A	2
Ontario Liberal Party	124	121
Ontario Libertarian Party	117	16
Ontario Moderate Party	16	17
Ontario Party	5	105
Ontario Provincial Confederation of Regions Party	2	3
Ontario Social Reform Party - Deregistered	2	0
Party for People with Special Needs	5	2
Party of Objective Truth - Deregistered	2	0
Pauper Party of Ontario - Deregistered	2	0
Populist Party Ontario	N/A	13
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario	124	124
Public Benefit Party of Ontario	N/A	2
Stop Climate Change - Deregistered	2	0
Stop the New Sex-Ed Agenda	3	3
The New People's Choice Party of Ontario - Deregistered	3	0
The Peoples Political Party	6	3
The People's Progressive Common Front of Ontario	N/A	3
Trillium Party of Ontario - Deregistered	25	0
Total	823	897





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