

# Strategic Plan 2013 > 2017

We are committed to optimizing our operations, developing our employees, and improving how we deliver elections now and in the future.



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# Message from CEO

01

## › We want to transform how elections are conducted in Ontario.

Our 2013 – 2017 Strategic Plan describes how we intend to build on our past successes and strengths to improve Ontario’s provincial electoral process.

We have a past to be proud of – we have successfully provided professional, non-partisan services to all of our stakeholders. As you read through the pages ahead, you will see that our values and our mission remain consistent with those that we’ve expressed in the past. We understand our responsibilities and the trust that Ontarians have placed in us to conduct elections in an efficient, fair and impartial manner.

In the next four years, we will focus on building the foundation for long-term growth and innovation, without compromising our values, duties or mandate. We are evolving so that continuous improvement and modernization become a core part of our culture. In the future, we will transform and be more:

### › Robust in capabilities

We will grow our capabilities in key areas such as technology, security and privacy in order to meet the rising expectations of electors who are used to the amenities of modern society (e.g. online transactions, multi-channel interactions, 24 hour access to information).

### › Proactive in legislative change

We will continue to proactively recommend areas where the legislation can be amended to clarify, simplify and modernize the electoral process.

### › Future-focused

We will extend our planning horizon to prepare for an uncertain future with the goal of providing best in class service to all of our stakeholders.

### › Customer-focused

We will put the elector first by ensuring that the shifting needs of the Ontario population are met. We recognize that all citizens are entitled to the same level of election service and therefore we will strive to deliver a consistent experience across the province while balancing the specific needs of certain groups.

### › Efficient in operations

We will identify opportunities for efficiencies and implement process innovation across the organization in order to decrease the cost of delivering an election, which includes simplifying the electoral process, increasing the use of technology, and improving the efficiency of the workforce so that we reduce the number of one day workers required.

The next four years will be a time of transition. We are excited about the transformational journey that we are embarking on and are eager to address the opportunities that lie ahead.

We are adapting and improving because what has previously served us well is no longer sustainable. The Canadian and global economy have been transformed by rapid changes in technology and the introduction of electronic service channels. There is a growing expectation that electoral agencies will be employing some of these solutions to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and increase the integrity, accessibility and participation in the electoral process.

We need to respond to the changing needs of our stakeholders and to the opportunities afforded by advances in technology. As our population ages, mobility and accessibility challenges grow significantly. We need to ensure that our processes foster inclusiveness and that barriers are removed.

All of our stakeholders will have a role to play in this transformation. We also recognize that there may be competing priorities when deciding how best to deliver our services. One of the challenges we will face in decision making will be in balancing the principles of accessibility, integrity and cost.

What does it mean when we say that we will put electors first? It means that in the next four years, you can expect to see us engaging more with our stakeholders to test new ways to conduct our business.

We recognize the challenging fiscal environment that we are currently operating in and are committed to working with the broader Ontario Public Service and other partners to continue to learn from best business practices, leverage partnership opportunities and seek efficiencies in how we deliver our services.

We want to continue to lead in defining key benchmarks for electoral administration and be a model for other electoral agencies across Canada and around the world. In order to achieve our vision, we will focus on optimizing our operations, developing our staff, and improving the delivery of elections now and in the future.

We have already begun the transformation and have developed a clear 4-year roadmap that outlines the organization’s vision of building modern services for Ontarians that put the needs of electors first. We are excited about the changes that are coming and hope that you will join us as we work to implement our plan and build a new future for elections in Ontario.



Greg Essensa  
Chief Electoral Officer

# Our Stakeholders

- › We are committed to involving our stakeholders in our transformational journey.

Moving forward, we will define our role and responsibility to each of our stakeholders and will continue to seek stakeholder input so that we are able to meet current and future needs in an effective and transparent manner. We are also committed to consulting with our stakeholders in assessing how well we are meeting their needs and to identify opportunities to continually improve. Some of our stakeholders include:

## › Ontarians

Our primary responsibility is to serve the citizens of Ontario by administering the provincial electoral process and by informing them about, and assisting them with, the exercise of their democratic voting rights. We want to make the voting process easy to understand and easy to follow. We want to introduce choice for electors so that they can choose when, where, and how they vote.

## › Political Entities

Political entities include candidates, political parties and their supporting constituency associations, leadership contestants, and third parties who are actively involved in the political process. We regulate their activities in accordance with statutory requirements. In addition, candidates and political parties rely on us to provide them with voters lists and electoral maps to support their activities. As the needs of political entities change, we need to be able to respond and adapt so that we can continue to provide accurate information in a timely manner and in a consistent format.

## › The Legislative Assembly of Ontario

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

## › Media

The media plays an important role in the electoral process. The media is one of the primary means by which electors learn about the electoral process whether that be through traditional channels such as television, radio and print media (newspaper and magazines) or through new channels such as online media, social media, and blogs. The media relies on us to provide timely and accurate information in a customized format. We will maintain productive working relationships with media outlets and continue to work collaboratively to provide information in a timely manner and in a consistent format.

## › Advocacy Groups

Advocacy groups are increasing in number and are playing a bigger role in the electoral process. An advocacy group is a group of persons who strongly support or work on behalf of a particular cause or segment of society. For example, we regularly work with advocacy groups representing the interests of persons with disabilities, students, new Canadians, First Nations people and incarcerated electors. We will continue to seek the appropriate involvement and engagement of advocacy groups as we look to transform how we deliver our services.

## Our Team

03

- › A successful election relies on the knowledge and ability of the individuals running the returning offices, working in the voting places and those behind the scenes supporting the front line workers.

Delivering an election in Ontario is a tremendous, multi-faceted undertaking. With our current processes, we are required to connect more than 8.5 million electors with approximately 8,000 voting locations that are staffed by more than 70,000 election workers.

We administer the voting process through a decentralized system with 107 returning officers and 107 election clerks – one for each of the Province’s electoral districts. We support the work completed in the Province’s electoral districts with a professional full-time staff of 97 operating out of our head office. We also rely on casual, temporary and contract personnel and core staff overtime to prepare for and conduct electoral events, especially so when workload peaks. Our expert team is dedicated and committed to providing high level, quality services to all of our stakeholders and ensuring that we are ready to deliver an election at any time.

## Our Mandate

04

- › The Chief Electoral Officer for Ontario is appointed under the province’s *Election Act*, and is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly.

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, operating as “Elections Ontario,” is responsible for the following:

### › Under the *Election Act*

- Administering the election process in general elections and by-elections;
- Maintaining the Permanent Register of Electors for Ontario (PREO);
- Testing new voting equipment, vote-counting equipment and alternative voting methods;
- Conducting public education on the electoral process;
- Investigating and reporting apparent contraventions; and,
- Recommending reforms.

### › Under the *Election Finances Act*

- Overseeing the registration of political parties, constituency associations, candidates, leadership contestants and third party advertisers;
- Publishing on the Internet financial statements of the people and entities governed by the Act, including the real time disclosure of political contributions;
- Reviewing financial statements to ensure compliance;
- Distributing publicly-funded subsidies;
- Investigating and reporting apparent contraventions; and,
- Recommending reforms.

### › Duties mandated by other legislation

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



# Our Vision

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

## Our Vision

05

› What does our new vision mean?

› **Build modern services**

In order to properly support our desired future state and serve the needs of the elector, we need to update our capabilities.

› **Put the elector first** .....

Across the organization, the needs of electors will be considered in all aspects of our decision making.

We will continue to improve our internal and external capabilities through the use of best practices and will focus on putting the elector first while maintaining the integrity and accessibility of the electoral process and our values. This concept is the cornerstone of the vision.

Our goal is to work with our stakeholders to build an electoral process that provides Ontarians their choice of services that are delivered in a modern, accessible, safe, secure, and transparent manner that protects the secrecy of the vote.

**What does “electors first” mean?  
It is our commitment that we will:**

› **Engage**

We will ask and listen to what electors want so that we can understand what they need from us.

We will make it easy for electors to contact us when they wish.

› **Offer choice**

We will work to provide electors choice in how they communicate with us and in how they access voting processes.

## Our Mission

06

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

## Our Values

07

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

### › Integrity

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

### › Accessibility

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

### › Responsiveness and innovation

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

### › Accountability

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

### › Respect

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

### › Efficiency

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

## The Environment

08

- › In carrying out our mandate, we must balance how to best serve our stakeholders while protecting the integrity of the electoral process and using public resources effectively and efficiently.

There are external factors that impact our ability to fulfill our mandate and meet the needs of our stakeholders. Some of these factors are:

### › Election Readiness

We need to be ready to deliver an election, or by-election, at any time – especially when there is a minority government. It requires an enormous organizational effort to align our planning and budgeting frameworks with the realities of a non-fixed date general election. Careful planning is required to ensure the rapid deployment of resources and the flawless execution of the myriad of activities required to deliver an election. The rapid deployment across the Province is especially challenging since we do not have a permanent infrastructure in the field and there is no room for error and a very short period of time to fulfill our legislated mandate.

### › Shifting Ontario demographics

Population projections show that Ontario's population is aging and becoming increasingly diverse. Over the next 25 years, Ontario's population is expected to rise by 32.7 per cent, or almost 4.4 million people, from an estimated 13.4 million people on July 1, 2011 to 17.7 million people by July 1, 2036. During the 2011 – 2036 timeframe, net migration is projected to account for 68 per cent of all population growth in the Province. The number of seniors aged 65 and over is projected to more than double from 1.9 million, or 14.2 per cent of population, in 2011 to 4.2 million, or 23.6 per cent, by 2036. The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is projected to be the fastest growing region of the Province, with its population increasing by 2.8 million, or 44.6 per cent, to reach almost 9.2 million by 2036. The other regions of the province will grow more slowly than the GTA and are projected to see their shares of provincial population decline gradually. We need to begin to lay the foundation now so that we can continue to respond and accommodate electors' needs.



# The Environment (continued)

## › Greater expectations from stakeholders

Our world has become more globalized and technology has rapidly developed and transformed how people work, communicate and engage with one another. Our stakeholders expect us to be able to leverage technological advances and provide them with more customized services that are easy to use. There is also a growing expectation for electoral agencies to be able to do more for less while increasing the integrity, accessibility and participation in the electoral process.

## › Legislation

Historically, the rules that govern elections are slow to evolve. Many rules are carried over from one generation to the next. In part, the transfer happens because of the importance of protecting the integrity of the electoral process. With the *Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010*, the Legislative Assembly signalled its willingness to create more flexibility for voters. We hope that this willingness will continue when discussing future potential amendments.

## › Unsustainable elections logistics

It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and train the tens of thousands of people who are needed to serve as election and polling day officials. In comparison to the past, fewer people are either able or willing to be election workers. The average age of our workforce is also well above the provincial average. These realities mean that recruiting is a growing problem. It is also becoming challenging to find physically accessible and convenient voting locations. Traditionally, schools have served as voting locations. Due to security concerns, however, school boards are increasingly resistant to having polling places in their schools. While our customary locations are becoming more difficult to rent, we also have stronger requirements to ensure that all voting locations are physically accessible and to remediate any potential physical barriers. These competing demands pose significant challenges, especially in a non-fixed date environment.

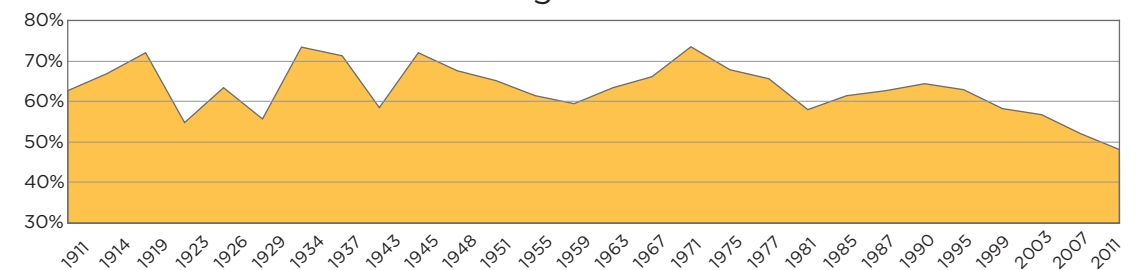
## › Decreased appetite for voting

In the 2011 General Election, for the first time, voter participation dropped below 50%, setting a record low for voter turnout in Ontario. We need to continue to work with our stakeholders to understand why participation in elections is decreasing and consider ways in which we can re-engage the electorate. In order to do this, we will need to work with all of the participants in the electoral process. We have a responsibility to inform electors about “who”, “where”, “when” and “how” to vote. Political parties and candidates are responsible for discussing issues, creating policy and establishing directional platforms. The media is responsible for providing a platform for debate and opinion. Finally, the elector is responsible for becoming informed, and by casting their ballot, acting as the final decision-maker. As part of the re-engagement exercise, we need to identify and remove barriers in our processes and procedures that may discourage people from voting.

## › Increased fiscal constraint

Especially given the current fiscal situation in Ontario, we have a responsibility to find better and more efficient methods of delivering our services, including delivering electoral events. We need to rethink how we operate and provide our services. Modernizing our business has the potential to make our services more affordable, more efficient and more stakeholder-orientated.

Declining Voter Turnout



# Our Strategic Priorities

09

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

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

- › **Foster public trust by continuously improving efficiency and integrity**

Modern management practices continue to guide us in everything we do. Through our continuous improvement efforts, we will assess and optimize our core agency functions, processes, and organizational structure without increasing our full-time staff complement. As part of the improvement effort, an external enforcement and internal compliance program will be developed. We will also assess our voters list management and generation process to seek efficiencies and improve the accuracy of the information in the Permanent Register of Electors for Ontario. Completing the implementation of the Elections Management System (EMS), our system of record for the management of an electoral event, will be instrumental to the improvement of our internal administration and will contribute to the success of other strategic priority areas.

- › **Create a culture of excellence through professionalism, innovation, and teamwork**

By investing in our people, we will work collaboratively to transform Elections Ontario into a place where all staff are engaged and proud to work. As an employer that values its staff, we will be introducing more formalized human resources and talent management programs and processes. A greater importance will be placed on building and instilling a culture of excellence within Elections Ontario through professionalism, innovation and teamwork in everything that we do. We will clarify roles, responsibilities, and decision making hierarchy through formal frameworks and governance reform. The ability to effectively communicate and efficiently manage change will be instrumental to our proposed transformation.

- › **Always be “READY NOW” to deliver electoral events when called upon**

This strategic priority focuses on improving our ability to always be ready to efficiently deliver an electoral event. This task must be completed while putting the elector first. We are committed to developing an “on the shelf” plan with clearly defined footprint milestones, risks and interdependencies that can be tracked and managed in “real-time”. The plan will employ formal frameworks to ensure event quality, repeatability, and consistency while mitigating risk and managing costs.

- › **Build and pilot the next generation election (“READY NEXT”)**

We are committed to being innovative in defining and building the next generation election. This design process will leverage technology (including EMS) and take into consideration input from all of our stakeholders. Actively planning for future elections will allow us to use resources more efficiently by building in more effective milestones, running more pilots, testing new technologies, developing new processes, and ultimately implementing improvements across the organization. These improvements will be tangible for electors and will lead to choice in how, when, and where they vote.



# Moving Forward Together 10

## › Transforming the organization and elections in Ontario

Our commitment to improving the electoral process is more than simply adopting new technologies and refining processes, it is a complete cultural shift towards innovation and modernization that will result in a more prepared, more relevant, and more forward-thinking organization. In order to accomplish this change, we are implementing a structured approach that includes:

- respecting and valuing the professionalism, commitment and expertise of our staff to build a culture of excellence and innovation,
- adopting industry best practices to ensure that our services are fully fit-for-purpose, and
- conducting a complete assessment of our business to identify efficiencies,
- working closely with our stakeholders to ensure that our products and services effectively meet their needs .

We will transform our business within the shifting electoral environment, will engage our staff and stakeholders and will plan effectively for the future. We are looking forward to working with all of our stakeholders to make our vision a reality.

## Vision

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



## Mission

To uphold the integrity and accessibility of the electoral process and to manage elections in an efficient, fair, and impartial manner



### Strategic Priorities

- › Foster public trust by continuously improving efficiency and integrity
- › Create a culture of excellence through professionalism, innovation, and teamwork
- › Always be “READY NOW” to deliver electoral events when called upon
- › Build and pilot the next generation election (“READY NEXT”)



### Our Values

- › Integrity
- › Accessibility
- › Responsiveness and innovation
- › Accountability
- › Respect
- › Efficiency