

YOUR GUIDE TO ELECTION ENGAGEMENT

FAQS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND BEST PRACTICES

FEBRUARY 2025

ONP*h***A**

ONTARIO NON-PROFIT
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS



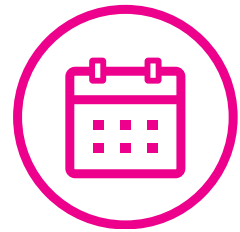
PART 1: UNDERSTANDING ELECTIONS & CAMPAIGNS

<u>Election day overview.....</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>What happens to government during an election?.....</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>How do campaigns work?.....</u>	<u>3</u>

PART 2: ADVOCATING EFFECTIVELY

<u>What is government relations?.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>The challenges of influencing government.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Government relations success factors.....</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Best practices for effective engagement.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Recommendations for non-profit housing providers.....</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Rules that govern advocacy during an election.....</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Additional resources.....</u>	<u>11</u>

ELECTION DAY OVERVIEW



ELECTION TIMELINE:

Premier Doug Ford called an early election.

Election called: January 29

Election Day: February 27



POST-ELECTION BUDGET:

Similar to the 2022 campaign, the government is likely to use its election platform as the basis for the budget after the election.



KEY ROLES:

The current leadership in housing is expected to continue playing an important role following the election.

WHAT HAPPENS TO GOVERNMENT DURING AN ELECTION?

CARETAKER MODE:

Once Parliament or the Legislature is dissolved for an election, the government enters "caretaker mode." In this mode, routine operations continue, but significant decisions, like new spending, are put on hold until after the election.

Government Activity During Caretaker Mode

The government focuses on:

- Routine and non-controversial matters
- Urgent actions in the public interest (e.g., natural disaster response)
- Decisions that can be easily reversed without significant cost or disruption
- Activity that is agreed upon by opposition parties, with consultations where possible

MINISTERS' ROLES:

Ministers and their staff continue their duties, but they cannot use government resources for partisan activities.

DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS:

Routine decisions are handled by deputy ministers, and major decisions like appointments, policy changes, or new spending are deferred to the next government.

HOW DO CAMPAIGNS WORK?

Election campaigns involve teamwork at local, regional, and central levels to achieve two main goals:

VOTER IDENTIFICATION AND GET-OUT-THE-VOTE (GOTV) EFFORTS.

- **Central Campaign Team:**
 - Responsible for the overall strategy, messaging, and platform.
- **Regional & Local Campaign Teams:**
 - Focus on voter engagement, organizing events, and outreach within their communities.
- **Candidates & Campaign Managers:**
 - Lead local campaign teams and execute the plans in their area.

KEY CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES:

- **Voter Identification (Voter ID):**
 - This is the process of identifying and tracking supporters to target campaign efforts more effectively. The data gathered from voter ID helps shape strategies at all levels of the campaign.
- **Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV):**
 - This effort focuses on making sure supporters actually cast their votes on or before election day.

COMMON CAMPAIGN FOCUS:

Central teams usually direct candidates to prioritize Voter ID and GOTV. Local events, debates, and meetings are often scheduled after the election is called.

WHAT IS GOVERNMENT RELATIONS?

Government relations (GR) is about building relationships with decision-makers to influence policies that make an impact. An effective GR formula might look like this:



THE CHALLENGES OF INFLUENCING GOVERNMENT



COMPETING INTERESTS

Government must balance many priorities with limited resources.



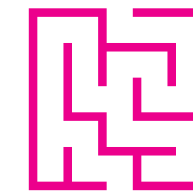
LIMITED TIME AND ATTENTION

Policymakers focus on what fits their agenda and has the biggest impact.



SET PRIORITIES

If an issue is not in key documents (mandate letters, budgets, platforms), it is typically not a focus.



COMPLEX ISSUES GET DELAYED

Tough problems are often pushed aside for easier, more politically beneficial solutions.

SUCCESS FACTORS



STAY FOCUSED

Know the difference between political and bureaucratic priorities.

Example: Advocating for a new funding program? Politicians care about public support and votes, while civil servants focus on budget feasibility and program administration.



MAKE IT CLEAR

Show the problem, the solution, and how it benefits the government.

Example: Highlight how delays in capital repairs increase long-term costs and worsen housing conditions, creating more demand for emergency shelters.



HIGHLIGHT IMPACT

Demonstrate how investments improve efficiency and results.

Example: A rent supplement program can keep people housed for a fraction of the cost of emergency shelter or hospital stays.

SUCCESS FACTORS



ALIGN WITH PRIORITIES

Ensure your work fits within government policies.

Example: If the province prioritizes a reduction in the number of people experiencing homelessness, frame your proposal as a way to keep people housed and reduce shelter use.



STAY CONSISTENT

Share a unified message across the sector.

Example: If multiple providers push for acquisition funding, a collective message strengthens the case for a province-wide program.



BE PERSISTENT

Regular engagement keeps your issue on the agenda.

Example: Meet with MPPs and their staff, submit policy briefs, and follow up regularly to keep housing needs top of mind.

BEST PRACTICES

FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT



STAY NON-PARTISAN

Engage with all political parties equally. Building relationships across party lines ensures long-term advocacy success, regardless of election outcomes. Governments change, but housing challenges remain—being non-partisan keeps your voice credible and relevant.



MAKE IT POLITICALLY RELEVANT

Tailor messages to align with key campaign issues and priorities. Candidates and parties focus on voter concerns. Linking housing issues to affordability, economic growth, and social stability makes your message more compelling.



REFINE YOUR POLICY APPROACH

Frame proposals within the limits of the caretaker convention. During elections, governments enter a "caretaker" phase, limiting major policy decisions. Advocacy should focus on shaping post-election priorities rather than expecting immediate action.



STAY FLEXIBLE

Adapt as campaigns evolve, new issues arise, and priorities shift. Election campaigns move fast, and key issues can change quickly. Monitoring debates and party platforms allows you to adjust messaging in real-time.



Governments change, but housing challenges remain—being non-partisan keeps your voice credible and relevant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR NON-PROFIT HOUSING PROVIDERS

RECOMMENDATION	DESIRED OUTCOME
Share a backgrounder and meeting/tour invitation with local candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish contact with candidates to facilitate post-election engagement (congratulatory letters, introductory meetings)• Position yourself/your organization as a proactive and interested holder
Engage civil servants on policy development and priorities for government transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue advancing policy discussions with government during an election period• Inform transition briefings for new Ministers• Secure civil servant support on policy initiatives before political advocacy restarts post-election
Follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Congratulate newly elected representatives and request follow-up meetings to discuss housing priorities

RULES THAT GOVERN ADVOCACY

DURING AN ELECTION

Rules for engaging with government, candidates, and parties during an election are set by key laws and documents. Anyone involved in engagement and advocacy should review their lobbying responsibilities and seek legal advice if needed.

PROVINCIAL RESOURCES (ONTARIO)

A guide to the Lobbyists
Registration Act*

Lobbyists Registration Act,
1998

Election Act, 1990

FEDERAL RESOURCES (CANADA)

The Lobbyists' Code of
Conduct

Lobbying Act, 1985

Canada Elections Act,
2000

**Ontario's Lobbyists Registration Act allows for a provincial Lobbyists' Code of Conduct but there is not currently a code of conduct in place.*



MORE RESOURCES

TO SUPPORT YOUR ADVOCACY

ONPHA'S ADVOCACY

Find ONPHA's election-specific resources at onpha.on.ca/elections.

You can also explore more advocacy initiatives at onpha.on.ca/advocacy.

CONTACT US

Reach out to the ONPHA policy team at policy@onpha.org.