## YOUR GUIDE TO ELECTION ENGAGEMENT

FAQS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND BEST PRACTICES **MARCH 2025** 

ONPha ONTARIO NON-PROFIT HOUSING ASSOCIATION

# TABLE OF **CONTENTS**

#### PART 1: UNDERSTANDING ELECTIONS & CAMPAIGNS

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

#### PART 2: ADVOCATING EFFECTIVELY

What is government realized The challenges of influe Government relations is Best practices for effect Recommendations for Rules that govern advo

Additional resources...



elations?	4
<u>encing.government</u>	
success factors	
<u>ctive engagement</u>	
<u>non-profit housing providers</u>	
<u>pcacy during an election</u>	
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## ELECTION DAY OVERVIEW



#### **ELECTION TIMELINE:**

Election called: March 23, 2025 Election Day: April 28, 2025



#### **KEY BALLOT QUESTIONS**

Is Mark Carney enough change from Justin Trudeau? Who is best to stand up to Trump?



#### **KEY ISSUES**

Affordability/Economy and Canada US relations will be the two focal points of the election. Housing, Healthcare, and the Environment will be other prominent issues.



## 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):

- - 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.

• 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



# 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.





#### **SET PRIORITIES**

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



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



#### LIMITED TIME AND ATTENTION

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



#### **COMPLEX ISSUES GET DELAYED**



## GOVERNMENT RELATIONS **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.



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.



## GOVERNMENT RELATIONS 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 postelection priorities rather than expecting immediate action.



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.



#### **STAY FLEXIBLE**

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



### **RECOMMENDATIONS** FOR NON-PROFIT HOUSING PROVIDERS

RECOMMENDATION	DESIRED OU
Share a backgrounder and meeting/tour invitation with local candidates	<ul> <li>Establish contact with candidates to facilitate post-eleintroductory meetings)</li> <li>Position yourself/your organization as a proactive and</li> </ul>
Engage civil servants on policy development and priorities for government transition	<ul> <li>Continue advancing policy discussions with governme</li> <li>Inform transition briefings for new Ministers</li> <li>Secure civil servant support on policy initiatives before</li> </ul>
Follow-up	<ul> <li>Congratulate newly elected representatives and reque</li> </ul>

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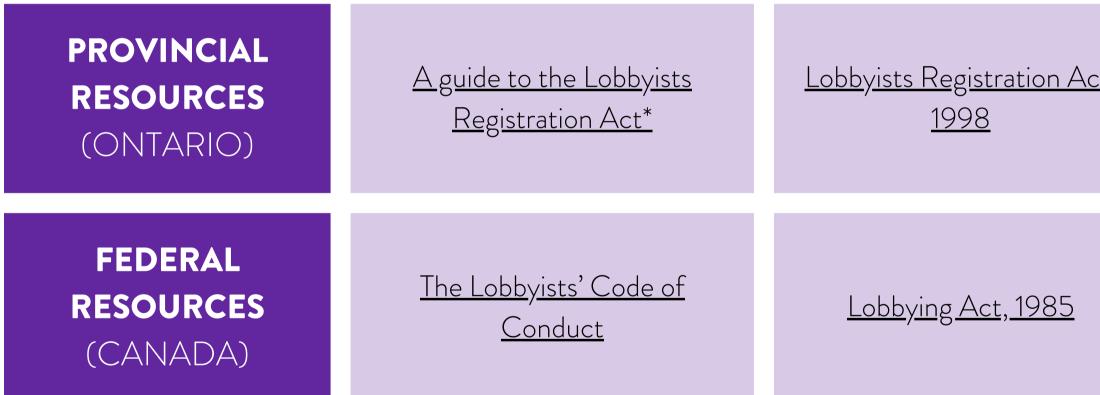
re political advocacy restarts post-election

lest 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.

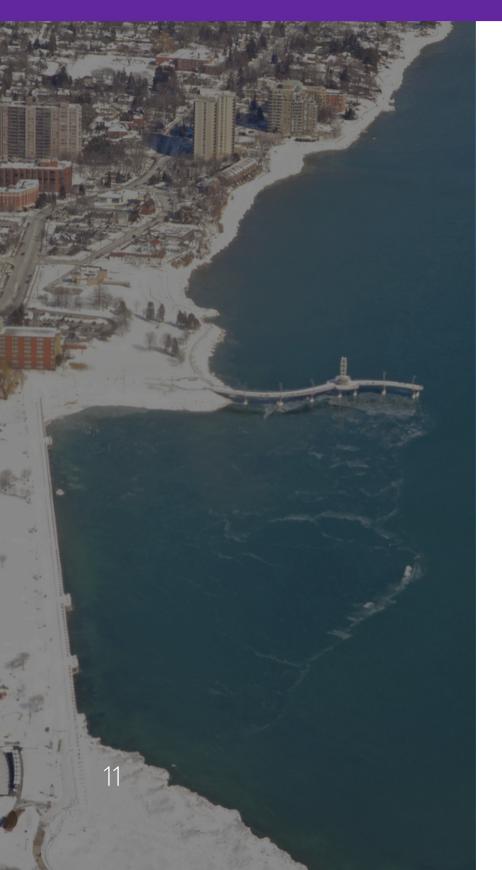


\*Ontario's Lobbyists Registration Act allows for a provincial Lobbyists' Code of Conduct but there is not currently a code of conduct in place.

<u>:t</u> ,	<u>Election Act, 1990</u>
	<u>Canada Elections Act,</u> <u>2000</u>



## **MORE RESOURCES** TO SUPPORT YOUR ADVOCACY



### **ONPHA'S ADVOCACY**

Find ONPHA's election-specific resources at <u>onpha.on.ca/elections</u>. You can also explore more advocacy initiatives at <u>onpha.on.ca/advocacy</u>

### **CONTACT US**

Reach out to the ONPHA policy team at <u>policy@onpha.org</u>.

