

LESSON 7

MY CANDIDATES

An individual who seeks public office or competes for the job of elected representative is called a **candidate**. At the provincial level in Ontario, most candidates are affiliated with a political party with its own political agenda. However, some candidates choose to run as an **independent** and they are not associated with any party.

An **electoral system** is the way which voters are able to express their preferences and how the results are determined. There are many different systems used around the world. Ontario uses a system called **Single-Member Plurality** or **First-Past-The-Post (FPTP)**.

The province is divided into smaller geographic areas called **electoral districts**. The number of electoral districts will increase to 124 from 107 for the general election on June 7, 2018. This includes four electoral districts in Northern Ontario, where previously there were two, in order to improve electoral representation in the far North. They include Kiiwetinoong, Mushkegowuk-James Bay, Timmins and Kenora-Rainy River.

Each electoral district is represented by one Member of Provincial Parliament (single-member districts). The size of electoral districts is determined by factors such as population size, demographic make-up and geography. Urban electoral districts are often smaller and more populous, while rural electoral districts are larger with less dense populations.

In FPTP, voters are only allowed to choose a single candidate on the ballot (categorical or exclusive ballot) and the candidate with the most votes wins. The successful candidate does not need have to reach a threshold of majority support; they only require one more vote than any of the other candidates (**plurality**). Under Ontario's parliamentary system, the party that elects the largest number of representatives (wins the most seats in the legislature) usually forms government and their leader becomes the premier.

There are many ways to gather information about your local candidates. Community groups hold town hall meetings or debates where constituents are invited to listen to the candidates and pose questions. You can visit local campaign offices or attend campaign events, or you may have to chance to meet them during neighbourhood canvassing. Information is also easily found on party websites and social media platforms, and through news coverage.