

LESSON 10

ELECTION ISSUES

Elections are contests of leadership, ideas, politics and power, where interested groups and individuals campaign for our support and, ultimately, our vote.

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.

There are many different systems used around the world to determine which parties and candidates are elected and who will lead the government.

An **electoral system** is the way citizens' choices, expressed as votes, are translated into legislative seats. 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 more than 50 per cent of the vote; they only require one more vote than any of the other candidates (plurality).

A **political party** is a group of like-minded individuals with a shared vision and political ideology whose intention is to achieve power and create meaningful political change. Political parties are made up of interested members of the general public. Anyone above the required age (usually 14-years-old) can be a member of a political party. Party members choose their party's leader and local candidates, and help them get elected.

During an election campaign, an organized course of action is taken by a political party, its candidates and campaign teams with the intention to share its message and ideas. A political platform is a series of declared principles and policies on jurisdictional issues concerning government and the public. Candidates and parties use a communications strategy that incorporates all three types of media (paid, earned, owned) to share their platforms through announcements, advertising and events and to gain support from constituents.

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.