

April 4, 2016

Legislative Changes to the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (MEA)

Today the Government of Ontario introduced legislative changes to the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (MEA) in the Legislative Assembly. The MEA sets out rules for electors and candidates, and roles for municipal clerks and councils in municipal and school board elections in Ontario. Bills generally are not publicly available until posted on Hansard, which is often the day after introduction. We will provide the link on our website as soon as it is available.

If passed, the legislation would change the campaign period, and rules for election financing including third party advertising and union and corporate donations. Municipal governments would also be given the option of using ranked ballot elections for future elections. Ranked balloting allows voters to rank more than one candidate. Municipal governments would hold public consultations before ranked ballot elections are conducted but not necessarily need to have a referendum.

Based on Minister McMeekin's statement, the changes introduced today build on consultations by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) in 2015. At that time, AMO provided information to members on the use of [ranked ballot voting](#), and made a [formal submission](#) to MMAH in July 2015.

Some of the key highlights we know include:

- **Shortening the municipal election campaign.** Candidates would be able to register between May 1 and the fourth Friday in July;
- **Third party advertising,** while permitted will include registration rules, contribution, and spending limits;
- **Campaign finance rules.** The legislation aims to make rules easier to follow for voters, candidates and contributors, and gives municipalities the option to ban corporate and union donations;
- **Increasing accessibility** for electors and candidates with disabilities by requiring clerks to prepare accessibility plans and distribute to the public prior to voting day; and,
- **Improving the voter's list** by making it easier for the clerk to add or change information.

AMO is encouraged that this legislative update appears to have taken our advice on many items. Once the Bill is available, we will do a detailed review. Some of the changes will require regulatory and technical guidance and we expect to be part of that further work. Watch for future analysis and we will keep you updated on the Bills progress through the legislature.

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