2026 Municipal Election - Context

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Context for the 2026 Ontario Municipal Election

There are 444 municipal governments in Ontario, yet only **414** municipal governments hold elections. Why? Because some upper tier municipal governments are populated by a lower tier election process (e.g., counties and some regions and one district) as well as those municipalities that have the entire council acclaimed.

Those **414** municipal governments include:

- All lower-tier municipalities, and
- All single-tier municipalities
- 2026 Ontario Municipal Election website

Information is based on the 2021 Canada Census data.

Approximately **6,663** candidates compete for the **2,800** elected positions up for grabs. Approximately **435** of the **2,800** elected officials also sit on the upper tier, for a total of **3,235** seats. In 2026, 624 incumbents did not run compared to **692** incumbents in 2022 and 607 in 2018. In 2022, the total number of seats was **3,267**. The total number of positions was **2,842** with **452** that also sit on the upper tier. The difference between the number of seats from 2022 to 2026 reflects the changes in Simcoe County, Niagara Region, and several other lower tier municipal council sizes.

ACCLAMATIONS

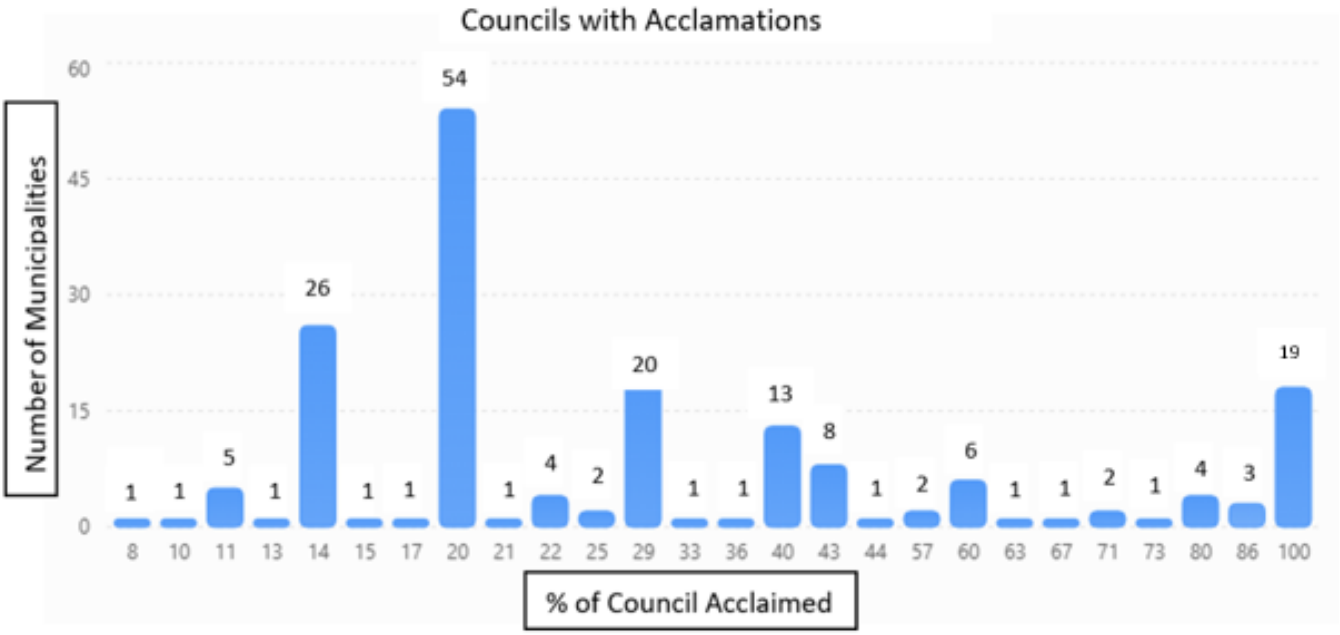
	2026	2022	2018
Total candidates acclaimed (includes HOC)	400 (123 female)	548 (163 female)	477 (147 female)
Total heads of council (HOC) acclaimed	104 (30 female)	139 (37 female)	120 (27 female)
Total number of councils fully acclaimed	19	32	26

Acclaimed Candidates

- There has been a decrease in 2026 in the total number of candidates acclaimed. In 2026 there were **400** acclamations; in 2022: **548**; and in 2018 there were **477** acclamations.
- In 2026, **104** have been acclaimed as Head of Council (Mayor/Reeve), **29**% of which are female. In comparison to the 2022 acclaimed, **139** were acclaimed as Head of Council (Mayor/Reeve), **27**% were female, there were **120** acclaimed as Head of Council in 2018, **23**% were female.
- In 2026, the number of female candidates acclaimed increased by **7**% as compared to 2022. In 2022, the number of female candidates acclaimed increased by approximately **11**% as compared to 2018.
- The data indicates that there is a decrease in female and male acclaimed candidates for both councilors and Head of Council in 2026.

Entire Councils Acclaimed:

- In 2026, **19** municipalities or **5**% of municipalities holding elections (414) in Ontario were fully acclaimed, i.e. entire council was acclaimed. This has decreased from 2022 at **8**% and 2018 at **5**%.
- In 2026, the population of the acclaimed municipalities ranges from **105** to **8,057**.
- In terms of population, the smallest in this year's election is the Township of Brethour with a population of **105** and the largest is Town of Kapuskasing at **8,057**.



CANDIDATES

	2026	2022	2018
Total number of candidates	6,663	6,306	6,658
Total candidates female	2,103	1,931	1,808
% Total female candidates	32%	31%	27%

Low Candidature:

This situation is where one or more candidates are acclaimed or the number of candidates running for positions does not exceed two candidates.

Low candidature occurs in **213** municipal governments (**54**%) of the **395** municipal governments where voting will occur. (Acclaimed council positions are not included in this figure).

In other words, in the remaining **183** municipal governments, there are more than 2 candidates per seat to be elected, if the seat is up for election.

Gender:

- Across Ontario, there are more female candidates in 2026 than in 2022. This year, **32**% or **2,103** of all candidates are female. This has increased compared to 2022,

where **1,931** or **31**% of all candidates were female.
- In 2026, the **28** municipal governments with population greater than 100,000, had a ratio of female to male candidates of **30**% to **70**%; which is marginally lower than province-wide of **32**% to **68**%.

Incumbents:

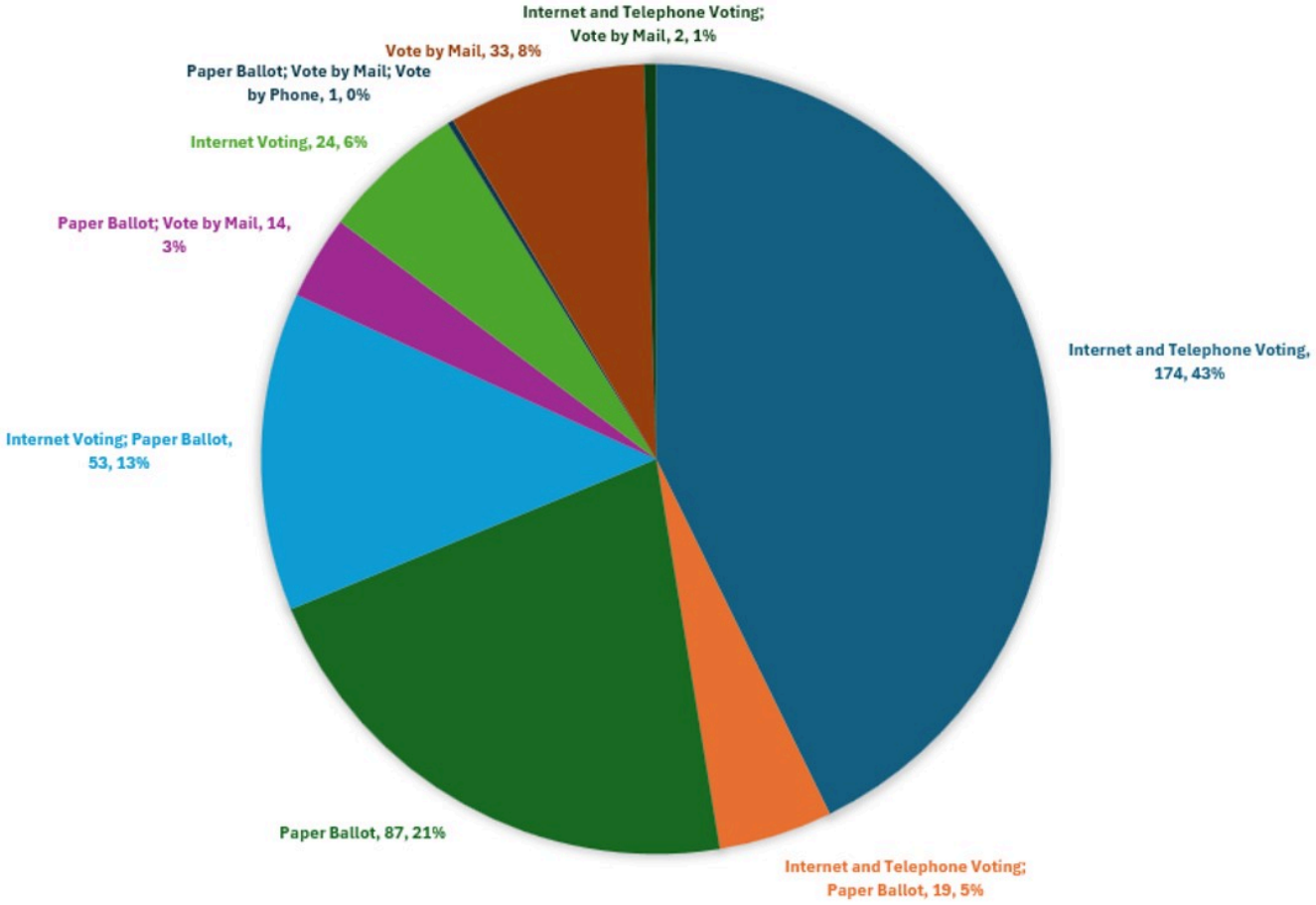
- In 2026, **2,161** incumbents are running for a same or new position which is **32**% of the total candidates running (**6,663**). **2,161** incumbent candidates are **77**% of all possible candidates running out of the 2,800 seats available.
- In 2026, **4,502** candidates who are new for this election which is **68**% of the total candidates running (**6,663**).
- In 2022, **2,141** incumbents ran for a same or new position which is **34**% of the total candidates who ran (**6,325**). **2,141** incumbent candidates are **75**% of all possible candidates running out of the 2,842 seats available.
- In 2022, **4,184** candidates who are new for this election which is **66**% of the total candidates who ran (**6,325**).

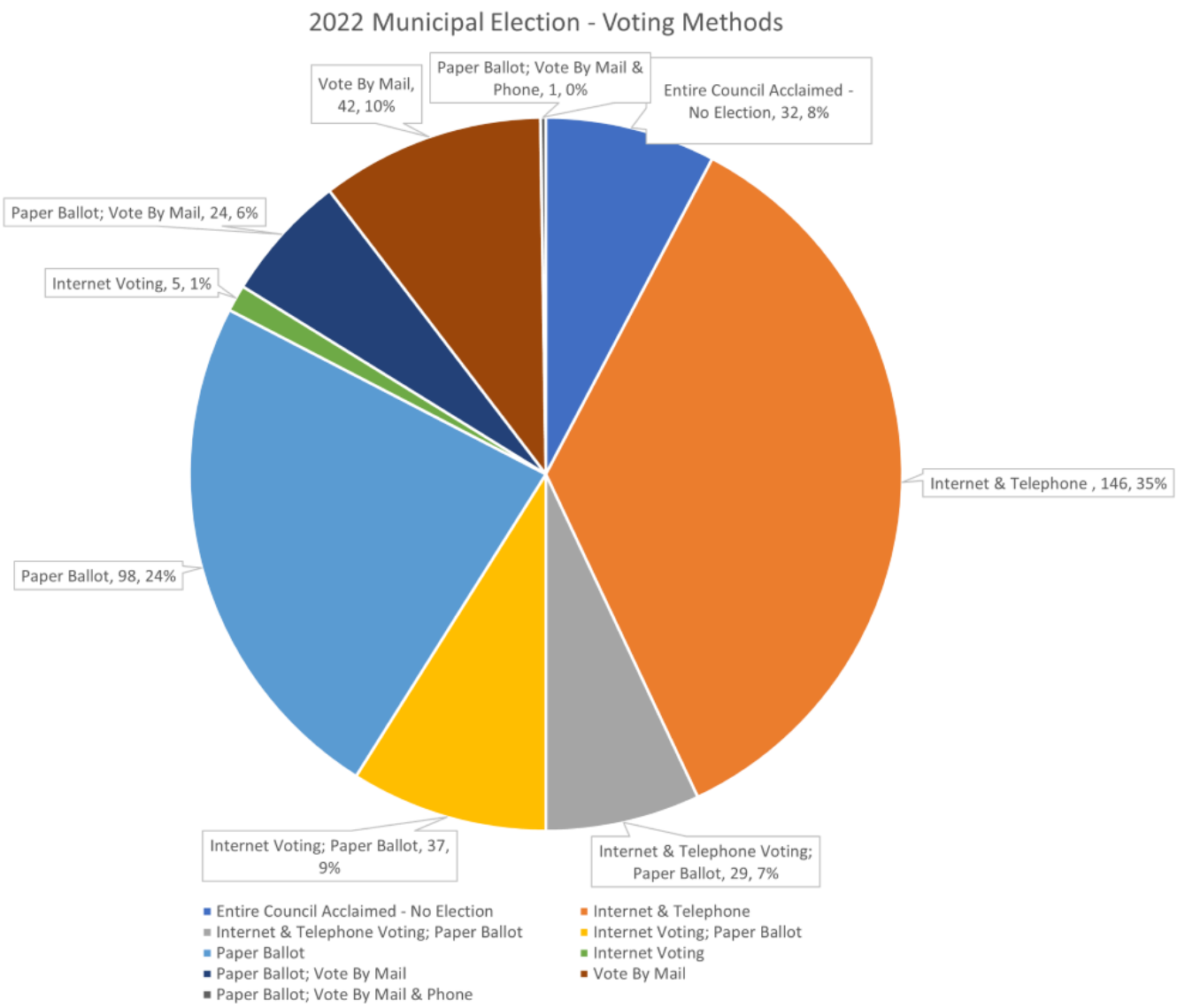
VOTE METHOD

Municipal government voting methods in 2026 has continued to move to technology-based methods.

- In 2026, **272** municipalities or **66**% used internet voting in a combination with other vote methods. In comparison to 2022, **217** municipalities or **52**% used internet voting in a combination with other vote methods.
- In 2026, **174** municipalities or **43**% of municipal governments will use internet and phone voting in combined methods, which is **28** more municipalities than the 2022 election.
- The traditional paper only ballot is still used in about **87** municipalities or **21**%. In 2022, **98** municipalities or **24**% were using paper only ballots.
- In 2026, we have **50** mail-in ballots as compared to the 2022 election at **71** municipalities. This shows a **30**% decrease from the previous election.
- 2026 and 2022 charts illustrate the methods used.

2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTION VOTING METHODS





SIZE OF COUNCIL

Size of all 444 Councils varies across the province. The vast majority of councils are composed of five (5) members including the head of council. Larger councils on this chart reflects upper tier councils, such as counties and regions, which are composed of the mayors/reeves of the lower tiers.

For the 2026-30 election, there will be some changes to size:

Reduce size of Council

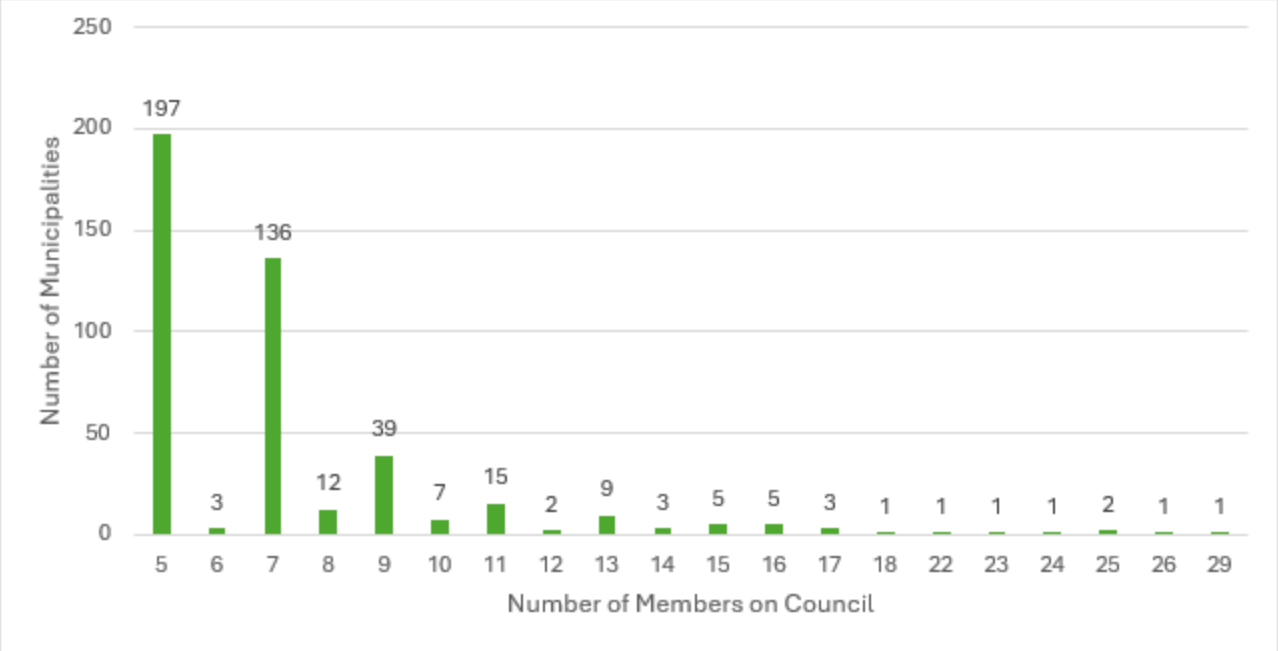
1. **County of Simcoe** - County council will reduce from 32 members to 17, consisting of a County Chair and County's 16 mayors
2. **City of Port Colborne -** Council will reduce size from 9 members to 7, consisting of a Mayor and 6 councillors.

3. **City of Thorold** - Council will reduce size from 9 members to 7, consisting of a Mayor and 6 councillors.
4. **Municipality of Chatham-Kent** - Council will reduce size from 18 members to 15, consisting of a Mayor and 14 councillors.
5. **Regional Municipality of Niagara** - Regional council will reduce from 32 members to 13, consisting of a Chair and Niagara's 12 Mayors.
6. **Town of Lincoln** - Council will reduce size from 9 members to 7, consisting of a Mayor and 6 councillors.
7. **Town of New Tecumseth** - Council will reduce size from 10 members to 9, consisting of a Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and 7 Ward Councillors.
8. **Town of Niagara on the Lake -** Council will reduce size from 9 member to 7, consisting of a Mayor and 6 councillors.

Increase Size of Council

1. **Haldimand County -** Council will increase size - from 7 members of council to 8, including Head of Council, with one (1) Councillor being elected within each of seven (7) wards.

2026-2030 - Size of Councils in Ontario - Chart



BALLOT QUESTIONS

There are 4 municipalities with ballot questions in 2026. There were 2 municipal governments with ballot questions in 2022, compared to 4 in 2018:

County of Prince Edward
Are you in favour of a third-party review of Council size and related ward boundaries?

City of Timmins
Do you support changing the Ward System for electing members of Council?

Town of Wasaga Beach
Are you in favour of moving to a ward system?

Township of Killaloe Hagarty & Richards

Are you in favour of abolishing the current ward system in the Township of Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards?

Are you in favour of reducing the size of Council to four (4) Councillors and one (1) Mayor for the Township of Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards?

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