

Supporting Local Democracy

AMO Position

- Democracy is strongest when more people participate. Municipal government has a direct impact on everyday life—from roads and housing to recreation, emergency services, infrastructure and economic development. Communities benefit when people from different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives choose to serve.
- While many communities have strong candidate races underway for the October municipal elections, a growing number of council seats across Ontario continue to have few—or in some cases no—registered candidates. The trend reflects a broader challenge facing municipal democracy.
- To help encourage participation, AMO expanded its Healthy Democracy Project, providing free learning opportunities for prospective candidates across Ontario. More than 6,000 people registered for workshops featuring experienced current and former municipal leaders who shared practical advice on campaigning, governing and serving effectively. AMO also offered specialized sessions for youth, Indigenous participants and underrepresented candidates to help build more representative councils.
- To support candidates once elected, AMO and the Institute on Governance have also launched Local Leadership Foundations, a new learning program designed to help newly elected and returning municipal leaders build the knowledge and skills needed to succeed.

Overview

Healthy Democracy Project

- AMO's Healthy Democracy Project promotes the value and importance of municipal governments in Ontario's political system, while focusing on the importance of diversity of leadership and perspectives.
- AMO has launched tools to help you strengthen participation in Ontario's local governments:
 - [Turn Up the Turn Out](#) - AMO's voter turnout guide, was created in partnership with Toronto Metropolitan University. It offers strategies and ideas to help drive voters to polling stations in the 2026 municipal election.
 - [Engaging youth in local democracy](#) has never been more important. Today's young people are looking for ways to make a positive difference. AMO's report, created with Apathy is Boring, offers ways to harness that energy.
 - *Placeholder for materials from TMU on voter engagement.*

Local Leadership Foundations

- AMO and the Institute on Governance (IOG) have partnered to create Local Leadership Foundations: a new, practical learning program to prepare councillors for their critically important leadership roles and to give Ontario's municipal elected officials, new and returning, the strongest possible start to the upcoming term.
- The program is built on the experiences of those who have done the job. Throughout the program, elected officials will learn from councillors, mayors, and experts from across Ontario and beyond. It's hundreds of years of collective municipal experience, distilled into practical guidance you won't find in a textbook.

- Engagement with the sector also helped us design a modular, flexible program that complements the full range of municipal onboarding plans and flexes to accommodate busy leaders' calendars.
- In the program, elected officials learn from experts and from each other on key local leadership themes like:
 - Governing in practice: roles, responsibilities, and what good governance means at the local level
 - Making decisions: from mechanics to strategy, how to make good decisions together
 - Municipal finance and budgeting: the processes and trade-offs involved in municipal finance
 - Civility and integrity: creating effective dynamics between council, staff, and the public
 - Engaging the community: serving constituents and the community you lead
- Registration is now open for sessions that begin following the October 2026 municipal election.

Key Facts

- 6,182 Ontarians registered for AMO's Healthy Democracy workshops.
- 179 municipalities had one or more council positions acclaimed in 2022.
- 548 council positions were acclaimed in 2022, up from 477 in 2018.
- 32 municipal councils were fully acclaimed in 2022, up from 26 in 2018.
- 6,306 candidates ran in the 2022 municipal elections, down from 6,658 in 2018.

Other Resources and Reports

- [Healthy Democracy Project website](#)
- [Local Leadership Foundations website](#)

For more information: Contact the AMO Media Team at media@amo.on.ca