

October 18, 2025

8:00am – 9:00am Breakfast

9:00am – 9:30am Opening & Forum Framing

- Eddy Robinson, Indigenous Knowledge Keeper
- Robin Jones, President, AMO
- Lindsay Jones, Executive Director, AMO

9:30am – 10:15am Turn Up the Turn Out

Launching AMO's new resource developed in partnership with Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU)—Turn Up the Turn Out: A Resource on Voter Participation in Local Elections. An exploration of what impacts voter turnout, structural barriers, educational gaps and motivations to vote. And the encouraging strategies and examples of approaches to improve voter turnout.

- John Beebe, Founder, Toronto Metropolitan University Democratic Engagement Exchange
- Stewart McDonough, Lead, AMO Healthy Democracy Project

10:15am – 11:00am Get Out The Vote

A discussion with national leading GOTV practitioners about successes, challenges and the best paths forward toward encouraging greater voter participation in municipalities, including a focus on youth civic participation and voter turnout.

- Moderator: Laura Wood, Co-Founder, elect HER Now
- John Beebe, Founder, Toronto Metropolitan University Democratic Engagement Exchange
- Amanda Munday, Executive Director, New Majority
- Umair Ashraf, Executive Director, The Canadian-Muslim Vote

11:00am – 11:45am Indigenous Outreach and Civic Inclusion

Municipal Indigenous leaders discuss and share best practices on how to build relationships and trust towards increased civic participation and voter turnout with urban Indigenous communities. This conversation builds from [AMO's newly released Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan](#).

- Moderator: Eddy Robinson, Indigenous Knowledge Keeper
- Katelyn LaForme, Director of Indigenous Relations, City of Hamilton
- Devin Oad, Advisor, Equity Office, City of Brampton
- Mark Atanasoff, Manager, Indigenous Engagement, City of Toronto

11:45am – 12:30pm Workshop: Creative Currency Voter Turnout Campaign

The team from the award-winning agency Creative Currency will explore how lessons from brand marketing can strengthen local democracy. The session unpacks how campaigns can move beyond “get out the vote” to build long-term trust, belonging, and participation. Attendees will see how AMO's new campaign can be used and adapted locally to make participation feel like pride.

- Lauren McDonald, Vice President, Strategy, Creative Currency
- Sarah Litchfield, Senior Digital Strategist, Creative Currency

12:30pm – 1:15pm Lunch and Networking

1:15pm – 3:15pm Inside the Campaign: How Creative Strategy Drives Connection

Join Creative Currency for an interactive two-part session and panel. First, the team will share the strategy behind AMO's 2026 candidate recruitment campaign. Then, in a live campaign strategy panel, Creative Currency's campaign experts will discuss real-world challenges and campaign experiences and show how creative insight, messaging, and recruitment marketing can inspire more Ontarians to step forward and serve.

- Lauren McDonald, Vice President, Strategy, Creative Currency
- Sarah Litchfield, Senior Digital Strategist, Creative Currency

3:15pm – 3:30pm Break

3:30pm – 4:00pm Fireside Chat: Velma Morgan in Conversation with Zahra Ebrahim

- Velma Morgan, Chair, Operation Black Vote Canada
- Zahra Ebrahim, Co-Founder, Monumental Projects

4:00pm – 4:30pm Closing Keynote

- Mary Rowe, President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Urban Institute

4:30pm – 4:45pm Closing Ceremony

October 19, 2025

8:00am – 9:00am Breakfast

9:00am – 9:45am Opening & Forum Framing

- France Bélisle, Former Mayor of Gatineau
- Joanne Chianello, Director, StrategyCorp

9:45am – 10:30am Data & Diagnosis

A discussion about trends in levels of trust, polarization, and civic expectations. And an exploration of the concerns and experiences of municipal officials.

- Andrew Parkin, Executive Director, Environics Institute
- Dr. Erin Tolley, Canada Research Chair in Gender, Race, and Inclusive Politics, Carlton University

10:30am – 11:30am The Political Experience

A panel discussion about the lived experiences of incivility in public service, and an exploration of the pressures of campaigning, council cultures, and social media.

- Moderator: Tammy Hwang, Councillor, City of Hamilton
- Michelle Boileau, Mayor, City of Timmins
- Stephanie Donaldson, Executive Director, Ontario Public School Board Association
- Marianne Meed Ward, Mayor, City of Burlington
- Melanie Pilon, Mayor, Municipality of Wawa

11:30am – 12:15pm Conversations from the Inside

A discussion about the challenges that incivility and political tensions bring to the staff side of municipal leadership. A discussion around recruitment, retention, role clarity, navigating political/administrative tensions, and how to maintain professionalism under public and political pressure.

- Moderator: Stacy Hushion, Vice President Government Relations, StrategyCorp
- Oliver Jerschow, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Innisfil
- Sandra Datars Bere, City Manager, City of London
- Jessica Chase, Director, Children's & Community Services, City of Hamilton

12:15pm – 1:00pm Lunch & Networking**1:00pm – 1:45pm Journalism, Social Media & the Public Sphere**

A panel discussion about the impact of the shrinking local news environment on civility and accountability challenges that incivility and political tensions bring to the staff side of municipal leadership. A look at emerging models, local outlets, community media and digital platforms.

- Moderator: Brian Lambie, President, Redbrick Communications
- Inori Roy, Associate Editor, The Local
- Supriya Dwivedi, former Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister and contributing columnist to The Toronto Star
- Matthew Gray, Director of Public Policy & Media Partnerships, Torstar Corp

1:45pm – 2:15pm Democracy Fitness**2:15pm – 3:15pm Thematic Solutions Workshops: Round One**

Two rounds of conversations around potential solutions to incivility and harassment based on the following categories:

1. Civic Literacy & Public Education
2. Support & Protection for Municipal Staff and Politicians
3. Media & Information Ecosystems
4. Council Culture & Leadership Development
5. Systemic Levers: Provincial Role & Oversight Tools

3:15pm – 4:15pm Thematic Solutions Workshops: Round Two**4:15pm – 4:35pm Plenary Readout & Synthesis**

Participants and moderators share key insights and ideas from their workshops. What were the cross-cutting themes and tensions. What feels actionable. And where's the most alignment.

4:35pm – 4:45pm Closing