Who Does What in the Ontario Government?

The Legislative Assembly

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario (also called the Ontario Government, the House, Queen’s Park, or the Legislature/the “Leg”) has 107 seats, representing the total number of ridings, electoral districts or constituencies in Ontario. Each riding is represented by 1 elected Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP).

MPPs usually belong to 1 of 3 parties: the Liberals, The Conservatives and the New Democrats. Independent MPPs do not belong to a political party.

Majority governments forms when they have over half of the seats (54) in the Legislature. Minority governments have less than 54 seats.

Members of the opposition are MPPs from parties that do not form government. They hold the government to account by asking questions to the Premier and Cabinet Ministers through Question Period, written notices, debates and statements.

The Legislative Assembly votes on legislation, introduced as bills and brought forward by any member of the Legislature. When MPPs who are not Cabinet Ministers bring forward a bill, it’s called a Private Members’ Bill. However, only government bills can propose any spending of public funds or a new tax. The Assembly also votes on the provincial budget.

Bills become an Act and law after they have received “three readings” and “Royal Assent” or proclamation by the Lieutenant Governor (LG).

Elections: Ontario has a fixed-date four-year election cycle. When the governing party has a majority, elections are usually held every four years on the first Thursday of October. A government can lose power if it loses the confidence of the Legislature (for example, if a vote on a major government bill is lost).

The Cabinet

The Premier selects MPPs from the governing party to make up the Executive Council or Cabinet. They are called Ministers and each leads a ministry. Ministers are accountable to the Legislative Assembly and to the public.

The Premier has the flexibility to change the number of Ministers and ministries as well as the MPPs who will serve as Ministers. This can take place in mid-term...
and virtually always happens when a party is elected or re-elected to form government.

The Cabinet makes the major decisions about government policies and priorities, including provincial budgets. Cabinet members introduce legislation for consideration in the House. The decisions made in Cabinet provide direction for policy development and implementation in the Ontario Public Service (OPS) or the “bureaucracy”.

**The Ontario Public Service**

The Ontario Public Service (OPS) is made up of non-partisan staff who develop policy for and implement Cabinet decisions and direction.

At present, the OPS consists of over 25 ministries. This includes three ministries – the Ministry of Government Services, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Renewal – that have government-wide responsibilities.

Cabinet Office, which supports the work of the Premier and Cabinet, is responsible for leading the implementation of government direction and initiatives. The Secretary of Cabinet is Ontario’s chief public servant.

A Deputy Minister in each ministry leads the policy development and implementation that supports the work of government. Deputy Ministers report to the Secretary of Cabinet.

Ministries are organized into divisions, each led by an Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), who reports to a Deputy Minister.

Divisions are organized into branches, each led by a Director, who reports to an ADM. Managers report to the branch Director and staff report to managers.

The Ontario Government includes five special-purpose secretariats that are part of the OPS. Their work is cross-government and impacts several ministries:

- Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat
- Office of Francophone Affairs
- Pan/Para-Pan American Games Secretariat
- Seniors’ Secretariat
- Women’s Directorate
**Ministry Responsibilities**

Here are the major responsibilities of the Government ministries that relate most to nonprofit and charitable organizations. Please note: this is not a complete list. The sector is very diverse so this is a snapshot of those ministries that often work with sector organizations.

Find more details for each ministry and program: [www.ontario.ca](http://www.ontario.ca).

**Ministry of Children and Youth Services**
- Aboriginal Children and Youth
- Children’s Aid
- Early Childhood
- Ontario Child Benefit
- School Nutrition
- Special needs
- Youth and the Law
- Youth Opportunities programs

**Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration**
- Partnership Project
- Newcomer Settlement Program
- English and French Adult Language Classes
- Ontario Bridge Training
- Global Experience Ontario
- Opportunities Ontario: Provincial Nominee Program
- Language Interpretation Services
- Challenge the World: Youth Volunteer Challenge
- Provincial Honours and Awards

**Ministry of Economic, Trade and Employment**
- Programs, services and tools to help business innovate and compete
- Open for Business
- Accessibility Directorate
- Young Entrepreneurs Program
- Communities in Transition Program

**Ministry of Education**
- Child Care
- Full-day Kindergarten
- Elementary Education
- Secondary Education
- Parent and Family Literacy Centres
**Ministry of Health**
- Assistive Devices
- Cancer Screening
- Emergency Health Services
- Healthy Kids
- Healthy Smiles Ontario
- HIV and Aids
- Mental Health and Addictions
- Midwifery
- OHIP
- Public health
- Seniors’ care
- Telehealth Ontario

**Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport**
- Tourism Policy and Development
- Tourism Planning and Operations
- Culture
- Sport, Recreation and Community Programs

**Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities**
- Post Secondary Education (including OSAP)
- Employment Ontario
- Youth Employment Fund
- Second Careers
- Apprenticeship
- Adult Learning

**Ministry of the Attorney General**
- Family Law
- Criminal law
- Human Rights
- Wills and Estates
- Court Services
- Victims of Crime
- Family Justice
- Public Guardian and Trustee
- Office of the Children’s Lawyer