If real estate is your profession, politics is your business.
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The Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) is encouraging its members to become more politically active. We believe that involvement in political affairs is both a privilege and a responsibility. Election campaigns give individual REALTORS® and local boards a unique opportunity to participate in the political process and ensure that politicians of all parties understand REALTOR® issues and support REALTOR® positions on those issues.

Politicians point out that the single most important approach to influencing the course of government is often overlooked – the grass roots efforts of private citizens who are politically motivated and involved. Politicians give serious consideration to the views of people who work hard to elect them, who provide input during their term in office and upon whom they depend for re-election.

With the exception of voting in a general election, most Canadians are not very politically active. In fact, less than five per cent of the population ever perform the simplest political activity such as wearing a candidate’s button – let alone get involved in party politics. The potential impact of REALTOR® political activity is therefore not to be underestimated. There are over 50,000 REALTORS® spread across all regions of Ontario. As experts in the field of real estate, REALTORS® know their communities and know the voters as both clients and as neighbours. That combination of size, distribution and expertise can represent a potent political force. Election campaigns provide the best opportunity to educate and influence candidates for elected office and to allow REALTORS®, both individually and collectively to participate in the political process.

This manual is intended to serve as your guide to getting involved in the political process. Outlined are some general principles, as well as specific information that relates to municipal, provincial and federal elections. The focus is primarily on the election period and opportunities for local boards to influence public policy prior to government being formed, but there are also a number of sections that focus on helping individual REALTORS® participate in the political process.

The activities outlined will encourage increased political awareness by your members and will help individual REALTORS® become well-informed citizens. They will increase your profile in the community, increase your clout with politicians of all parties and help get your issues to the top of the political agenda.

You Can Be Political and Not Be Partisan

Becoming more politically active as a board does not mean becoming partisan. For example, one goal of participation in an election campaign may be to elect the candidate, regardless of party affiliation, who will best represent REALTOR® concerns on REALTOR® issues. Because your decision is based on issues, concerns and candidates – not on party preferences – this is not a partisan act.

From riding to riding, the selected REALTOR® friendly candidate may differ from one political party to another. Involvement in the campaign should be driven by commitment to promote the interests of your membership and property owners. Supporting one candidate doesn’t necessarily mean support for a party. Nor does support for a party position necessarily mean support for every party candidate. One only has to look at the thousands of community groups, associations and interest groups that campaign based on specific issues and not on behalf of a particular party.

This principle does not apply just to boards. Many individual REALTORS® will identify with specific issues and may choose to support any number of candidates from different political parties based on their position on those issues. REALTORS® can get involved in the political process and fight for the issues that matter to them without being labeled as right-wing, left-wing or a supporter for any particular party.
It’s up to you!

While OREA encourages each board to participate in upcoming elections, the decision rests solely with each board. This manual outlines, in a step-by-step fashion, activities your board can undertake. Participation in election campaigns and politics may take a number of forms – it is entirely up to your board to decide what level of participation it feels is best for the members and the community. How much is up to you.

*Remember – if real estate is your profession, politics is your business.*
The goals of involvement by local boards in election campaigns are:

• To encourage REALTOR® participation in political affairs;

• To enhance contact with politicians;

• To raise the profile of local boards with politicians and in their communities;

• To support candidates who support REALTOR® issues;

• To encourage REALTORS® to run for office; and

• To gain political experience for future campaigns.

This is not an exhaustive list of goals. Your board may identify other goals you wish to achieve through more active political involvement.
This section is designed to provide background information on party politics and applies primarily to federal and provincial politics as there are no formal party affiliations at the municipal level.

The basic organizing unit of party politics is the local riding association. Each party at both the federal and provincial levels has a local riding association for each constituency. The association handles all aspects of party activity in the constituency and is the basic component within the central party structure. Each riding association participates in the following activities:

1. Membership Drives
2. The Riding Executive and Board of Directors
3. Fundraising
4. Riding Nomination Meetings
5. Party Conventions and Leadership Contests
6. Elections

Each political party and its respective associations deal with these matters in a slightly different way. The specific details about how these functions are conducted are generally laid out in the party constitution or in various by-laws. For information on these specific details, you should contact the individual political party directly. Contact information for the main political parties can be found in Appendix A.

Between elections, membership within a riding association tends to be limited to a core group of supporters (usually 50-100 people) and, of that group, generally 15-35 people are consistently fairly active.

The requirements for party membership are relatively simple. Unlike voting requirements, you don’t have to be 18 years of age and you don’t have to be a Canadian citizen. A party will usually insist that you not be a member of another party. Most members in a riding association are residents of the riding but parties will allow so-called ‘out-of-riding’ members, up to a certain cut-off – usually 10 to 15 per cent of the membership.

Party membership levels often swell dramatically during a nomination campaign, a leadership contest or a general election as candidates try to recruit supporters to ensure victory. In recent years, some riding associations have gone from having 50 members to thousands in a matter of weeks. It has not been uncommon to see bus loads of people mobilized to come out and vote at a nomination meeting or during a leadership race. However, many of these individuals choose not to remain active in the party over time. Their fleeting involvement in the process is usually limited to a one-time vote for the candidate they support.

Knowing this membership pattern is valuable to individual REALTORS® who might wish to become more politically active and get involved in the local riding association between elections. By getting in on the ground floor, you could be a real force in your riding association when the next election rolls around.

1. Membership Drives

Joining a political party is a relatively simple act. At the most basic level, it involves filling in and signing a membership form and paying the necessary fee (usually between $5 and $20 per year).
member in good standing may stand for election for the executive and vote at the meeting.

Executive members handle the day-to-day operations of the association such as organizing meetings, liaising with the central party, fundraising, debating policy and other issues.

In addition to the Executive members, some associations also have a larger Board of Directors that will meet on a regular basis to discuss issues brought forward by the Executive. Boards can be as large as 30-50 people and provide a low-key opportunity for REALTORS® to get involved in party politics while still having an influence on the direction of the association.

Executive and Board members are often called upon to assist with association activities such as fundraisers, meetings and of course, campaigns.

3. Fundraising

Money has often been called the “Mother’s Milk of Politics.” All riding associations need money, particularly as an election approaches. Most have fundraising dinners or receptions throughout the year and as year-end approaches most riding associations will solicit their members for additional funds. Within the association, one or two individuals, usually the treasurer and the president, are responsible for keeping accurate records of the donations and for issuing tax receipts. Both provincial and federal political contributions are eligible for tax credits. Municipal political contributions are not.

The money collected by a riding association is used for riding events such as social occasions, newsletters to the membership and other mailings. The funds may also be used for more political purposes to prepare for an election such as advertising in the local media or commissioning public opinion polls. When an election is called, a riding association will generally transfer the bulk of its funds to the campaign for their selected candidate.

During the election, fundraising is a major focus for the candidates and their campaign teams.

Elections can be won or lost based on the finances available to run a successful campaign. Everything from lawn signs, to the rent for a campaign office, to the brochures and literature produced by candidates are paid for through fundraising efforts. If not enough money is raised prior to – or during – the election, candidates may have to limit the amount of material they produce. As one might expect, the candidate that has the funds available to produce quality materials and advertise will always have a distinct advantage over the candidate with limited financial resources.

As you might imagine, a large percentage of the work done by Executive and Board members centres around fundraising efforts. There are very specific rules about how political parties are allowed to fundraise, and the rules differ dramatically at the different levels. Before getting involved in a political fundraising initiative, REALTORS® should make sure they understand the basic rules about what type of donations can be accepted on behalf of a political party or a candidate.

Some additional information on this subject is provided in the later section: Election Activities for Individual REALTORS®. For more specific information please refer to the following links:

Information regarding fundraising and financing for federal political parties can be found on the Elections Canada website (www.elections.ca).

Information regarding fundraising and financing for provincial political parties can be found on the Elections Ontario website (www.electionsontario.on.ca).

Information regarding fundraising and financing for candidates in municipal elections can be found by selecting the Municipal Election Guide provided by the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing at (www.mah.gov.on.ca).
4. Nomination Meetings

The nomination process is one of the rare opportunities for individual members of a local riding association to have an impact on the political system. Nominations can be very important. In some cases, winning the nomination is as good as winning the election itself, particularly in areas where the party has held the riding for a number of years. Each riding association is usually responsible for selecting one of its members to be the party’s candidate in an election. Members of the association gather at a special meeting called by the party executive to choose among a slate of candidates. Only members of the riding association in good standing are eligible to vote (often it is required to have been a member for a set amount of time prior to the nomination meeting – usually two to six weeks). The winner earns the right to stand for election as the official party candidate. Such meetings can be divisive for a party if a nomination is hotly contested.

A successful nomination campaign involves getting support from existing members and recruiting new supporters as well. There is no easy way to recruit new members. It usually means going door-to-door or making hundreds of phone calls to persuade voters to join the party and support a particular candidate for the nomination. It’s very hard work but it is the best way to ensure that a candidate secures the nomination.

Occasionally a nomination is won by acclamation. Typically, an established politician or incumbent will not face any opposition in the nomination process. Alternatively, a would-be candidate for a party that has virtually no chance of winning the riding (i.e. the Marxist-Leninist Party) would seldom face a contested nomination.

Nominations are usually held in a large venue such as a high school auditorium or a hotel ballroom depending on the number expected. In some hotly-contested nominations, competing candidates may bus in hundreds of supporters in an attempt to win the nomination. After short speeches by the candidates, the secret ballot voting begins. Again, depending on the numbers, the voting process can take several hours or a few minutes to complete. The trend in recent years has been towards very large meetings, especially when members expect their candidate to win the riding in the election.

Generally, nominations will take place over a period of approximately six months prior to an election. In some cases where an election call is not expected, nomination contests in some ridings may extend a week or two into the campaign. The specific rules for nomination contests are generally determined by the association Board or Executive under the guidance of the party’s constitution.

5. Party Conventions and Leadership Contests

Each party at both the provincial and federal level holds annual meetings, policy and leadership conventions. Typically, the public sees the main event at these gatherings, i.e. the election of a new leader. Behind the scenes however, there are a number of activities underway including the election of party officers, policy debates, youth activity and social events.

The policy process begins long before the convention begins. It involves drafting and debating resolutions at the riding level and sending them to the party’s convention. Once a policy is voted on and passed at the convention, it becomes part of the party’s policy platform.

Generally, conventions run over the course of a weekend and the fee to attend ranges from $200 - $500. While this seems expensive, they generally include a large banquet and provide an excellent opportunity to network with hundreds of like-minded people.

For details about the timing of conventions for a particular party, please contact the party directly.
6. Elections

During an election an association is very active. Members are often called upon to perform a variety of tasks such as making phone calls, knocking on doors, putting up lawn signs, delivering literature or helping with fundraising events. Often, senior members of the association (members of the Executive and Board) are asked to play a central role in the campaign and take on responsibility to chair a certain component. For those who are interested in being involved in the heart of an election campaign, active participation on an association Board will make you stand out when candidates put together their campaign team.

Perhaps the most important role a riding association may play during an election is supplying volunteers to the campaign. While it is usually a core group of supporters who get involved in an election campaign, many riding association members will do something in support of the party candidate. Most members can be counted on to take a lawn sign for the party’s candidate. Some will come out to canvass voters either with the candidate or as part of a blitz crew. Still others may volunteer to come out one night a week to conduct a telephone canvass. In the end, the number of volunteers and how well organized they are can have a significant impact on the outcome of an election.
Free elections are the cornerstone of our democratic society and separate democracies from dictatorships. Democracy bestows many privileges and freedoms. However, there are responsibilities that go with the rewards of democracy. We can best safeguard these rewards by protecting and promoting the integrity of the electoral process. Our foremost responsibility is the simple yet essential act of voting, but as you will see in the pages that follow, voting is just the beginning.

**Election Timing and Tradition**

Election timing in Canada has traditionally followed the same pattern as in other Westminster (British) model jurisdictions, but this trend has changed somewhat in recent years. Historically, governments at both the federal and provincial levels call elections within four years of being elected. Under law, the maximum term allowable for any government before an election is called is five years.

As mentioned, these historical trends are changing. The provincial government has already moved toward fixed election dates and the federal government has opened preliminary discussions on the same issue. The following is meant to provide a brief overview of how and when elections are called at each level of government.

## 1. Municipal Elections

Up until 2006, municipal elections were automatically held every three years on the second Monday in November.

Now, municipal elections are held every four years, on the fourth Monday in October. At this time, all elected municipal officials must return to the polls and run in an election to retain their seats on council.

### Future election dates:

**October 27, 2014**

The length of municipal election campaigns is also extremely long. The period during which nominations for election can be accepted begins early in January of the election year and remains open until approximately seven weeks prior to the election date. The campaign period begins for each candidate immediately following their nomination.

### Municipal Elected Offices

There are several positions contested during a municipal election, but the specific numbers may change from municipality to municipality. The following is a list of the most frequently contested positions, but you should contact your local municipality for specific details regarding the number of positions and the specific titles and job descriptions.

a) **Head of Council (Mayor / Reeve)** – One to be elected by all electors of the municipality.

b) **Local and Regional Councilors** – Numbers vary from place to place. Some councilors are elected in specific geographic areas and some are elected by voters from across the entire municipality.

c) **Regional Chair** – One to be elected to represent the upper-tier municipal government. Some municipalities may not have a regional government.

d) **School Board / Conseil Scholaire** – There are generally four different school board elections: English language public school board, French language public, English language separate school board and French language separate school board.
2. Provincial Elections

The Province of Ontario has recently moved to a fixed-election date. Starting on October 4, 2007, elections are being held in Ontario every four years on the first Thursday in October. The provincial campaign will usually run for a period of 28 days leading up to election day.

Future election dates:
October 6, 2011
October 1, 2015
October 3, 2019

The notion of fixed elections dates is not unique (for example, British Columbia has instituted fixed election dates as well), but it is a significant change in Ontario.

Up until the last election, the timing of a provincial election was left to the discretion of the Premier of the day. The Premier would make a request for the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve parliament and issue a writ of election. From that point, all matters relating to the election are handled by the Chief Electoral Officer and officials from Elections Ontario.

This is an age-old tradition that has generally provided the governing party with the upper hand going into an election as they will always have advance notice of when the election is likely to be called.

Of course there are exceptions to this rule. In the case of a minority government, the opposition parties can exercise their power by passing a vote of non-confidence in the government. The passage of such a vote forces the Premier to request the dissolution of parliament as the government no longer has the confidence of the House to govern (this has not happened in Ontario since 1985).

The number of MPPs elected is also changing. In 1996, the government decided to change the riding boundaries in Ontario to match those used by the federal government. The intent was to prevent confusion amongst voters who found themselves voting in two different ridings in provincial and federal elections. At that time, the number of ridings in Ontario was reduced from 130 to 103 – the same as the number of federal ridings in Ontario.

At that time, the government also included legislation that automatically changed the provincial riding boundaries to match the federal riding boundaries prior to each election. The boundaries are redrawn following each census to ensure an equal balance of population between ridings.

The current government decided to break that mold heading into the 2007 election. Under the old legislation, Ontario would have increased the number of ridings to 106. However, this change would have included a number of ridings being eliminated from Northern Ontario due to declining population. The government has decided to amend the rules and maintain the current complement of 11 ridings in Northern Ontario while following the federal pattern in Southern Ontario. The result is that there are now 107 ridings in Ontario.

3. Federal Elections

Elections at the federal level still follow the traditional Westminster (British) parliamentary model. The Prime Minister of the day can at any time ask the Governor General to dissolve the House of Commons and issue a writ of election to the Chief Elections Officer who – with the assistance of officials at Elections Canada – will conduct the election.
Recently there has been a great deal of attention focused on the ability of members of the opposition parties to voice non-confidence in a minority government with a vote in the House of Commons. Such an indication of non-confidence triggers an election as well. Canadians saw the result of a successful non-confidence vote as recently as the defeat of Paul Martin’s government and the resulting 2006 federal election.

Any time a minority government is in place in Ottawa, there is no guarantee that the Prime Minister will have the luxury of determining the date of the next election or whether the government will be defeated by a vote of non-confidence.

There is a requirement by law that federal campaigns last a minimum of 36 days. The 1997, 2000 and 2004 and 2008 elections were all of the minimum 36 days in length which has led to a common misconception that elections must be 36 days long. However, prior to 1997, elections averaged much longer: aside from the 47 day campaign in 1993, the shortest election period after World War II was 57 days and many were over 60 days in length. The 2006 federal election campaign was 55 days in length.

Voting day in federal elections is always on a Monday (unless it would fall on a statutory holiday, in which case it is held on the following day.

People vs. Parties vs. Policies

Just as parliamentary government has grown increasingly “presidential” with its focus on the Prime Minister/Premier, recent elections have tended to focus almost exclusively on the party leaders. Success or failure at the polls often hinges on popular support for the party leader and a few broad issues. More and more, these issues tend to include specific qualities of the party leaders as well. Several campaigns in recent time have focused on a party leader’s abilities, character and personal history.

Every election is in fact two elections in one. As the national campaign among the leaders is taking place, there is a parallel campaign fought in every riding across the country. Both national and local contests can have a significant impact on each other. National issues, for example, may dominate a local campaign but it is not uncommon that a local issue or incident can dog a national leader and upset a well planned political agenda.

The popularity of the leader will usually dictate the strategy for both the national and the local battles. Even the most popular local candidate will have difficulty countering a strong national trend. In fact, most candidates are unable to directly influence any more than five per cent of the vote in their ridings (i.e. if the central party is polling at 35 per cent in riding ‘A’, the candidate of that party cannot hope to garner much more than 40 per cent of the total vote no matter how strong their local campaign). Of course there are plenty of exceptions to this rule, but with the recent focus on party leaders and the level of communication and media coverage focused on the central campaign, it is very difficult for local candidates to overcome a significant deficit in the party’s popularity.

This is an important aspect to understand about a local campaign. While on the surface it may appear that local campaigns are futile – far from it! In reality, local campaigns must fight twice as hard to ensure that they do earn that five per cent
of the vote. Often that five per cent will be the difference between winning and losing the election.

Other factors may be taken into consideration when preparing a campaign strategy, such as the popularity of the party (sometimes the party will be more popular than the leader), the relevant issues, historic regional strength of the party, etc. In the case of a very popular leader, the strategy will be to promote the leader and possibly play down the party affiliation. If the leader is not popular or trail the party in popularity, the strategy may be to promote the “team” or the party record as opposed to focusing on the leader.

The leader focus in our system however makes it much more difficult to run the second type of campaign. There are, for example, a number of campaign elements that focus on the leader, such as media reports on the leaders’ tours, the leaders’ debates, campaign advertising etc. These make it very difficult to negate those leader-based impressions of a modern campaign.

The Local Campaign Team

Most campaigns have the following key team members:
1. Candidate;
2. Campaign Manager;
3. Chief Financial Officer/Official Agent; and
4. Chairs of various components of the team i.e. fundraising, sign installation, phoning etc.; and
5. Other Campaign Volunteers.

1. Candidate

The candidate is the person chosen by the riding association to represent the party. (In some cases, a party leaders may bypass the riding and designate the candidate they want.) The candidate’s job is simply to go out, meet the voters, talk about the issues and persuade local voters that they (and their party) deserve voters support. Everything the candidate does is geared to this goal.

Successful candidates share many common attributes. They usually have a track record of community service and leadership in business or community organizations, are very comfortable meeting people, are very articulate, can be diplomatic when disagreeing with some voters’ views, have a grasp of the issues, and have the stamina needed to endure the rigors of a campaign. While the candidates must be comfortable in taking direction from their campaign team and performing any number of tasks that are asked of them, they do have the final say on all facets of the campaign – after all, it is their name on the ballot.

2. Campaign Manager

The campaign manager is usually chosen by the candidate and will work hand in hand with the candidate to develop a sound campaign strategy. They are also responsible for all aspects of campaign organization. It can be a full-time job, and starts long before election day. It has become tougher to recruit volunteers to take on the job, unless they are retired or have very flexible work arrangements. As a result, they are now often paid during the campaign. Election laws also make the campaign manager, along with the chief financial officer, legally responsible for campaign finances and donations. The campaign manager, working with the candidate, is responsible for assembling and motivating the campaign team, allowing the candidate to concentrate on getting elected. The campaign manager is often called upon to speak to the media when the candidate is not available or when questions are being asked about campaign activities.

3. Chief Financial Officer/Official Agent

There are limits placed by law on how much money each candidate can spend on the campaign. These limits are generally calculated according to a specific formula (i.e. in a municipal campaign, candidates can spend $0.70 per eligible voter in their area). The chief financial officer (provincial) or the candidate’s Official Agent (federal) is responsible for ensuring that campaign spending
is within the limits prescribed by law. This involves a very careful accounting of all purchases and receipts as well as the donations of money or goods and services received by a campaign. Often this role is filled by someone with an accounting or bookkeeping background.

4. Campaign Chairs and Volunteers

A campaign cannot function without a team of dedicated individuals who take responsibility for organizing various activities. Many well qualified candidates have lost elections because they do not have enough volunteers to support all of the activities needed to win.

Campaign activities vary as much as people do, so there genuinely are roles for everyone. Some of these different tasks for different volunteers include the following: telephoning, hosting coffee parties, installing lawn signs, fundraising, stuffing envelopes and supervising mass mailings, door to door campaigning, delivering literature, helping with Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) drives, driving the candidate to events, scrutineering polls on election day and the list goes on. When it comes to political campaigns, nothing is more valuable than a volunteer.

Campaign Activities

Most well organized campaigns undertake the following activities:
1. Candidate Canvass;
2. Literature Drop;
3. Phone Canvass;
4. Lawn Signs;
5. All Candidates Meeting;
6. Media Events;
7. Leader’s Tour; and Minister’s Tour; and

1. Candidate Canvass

Usually a campaign will attempt to make sure that the candidate canvasses the entire riding at least once during the campaign. This involves going to every residence in the riding and attempting to meet people at home. At every visit, the candidate and a campaign volunteer will leave a piece of campaign literature. This is a tiring experience but is important to demonstrate the candidate’s commitment to the people of the riding. Generally the candidate will canvass at least once every day for between two and six hours depending on their daily schedule. On the weekends, it is common for large groups of people to canvass with the candidate in order to complete entire neighbourhoods. Depending on the stage of the campaign or the strategy developed by the campaign manager, campaigns may employ different canvass styles including ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ canvassing.

The so-called “soft canvass” describes the first attempt by the campaign to deliver campaign literature and meet people in every household in the riding. This can be accomplished by volunteers called Poll Captains, each of whom may take a poll (a riding is divided into geographical areas called polls, each of which usually includes 300-400 voters) within the riding. The candidate does not generally participate in the soft canvass, but in some cases will be asked to canvass certain neighbourhoods in this fashion.

It is called a soft canvass because the intention is to gently inform the electorate about the candidate, not to probe and possibly irritate the voter who may not even know that an election has been called. The task of identifying voting intentions is deliberately delayed until later in the campaign.

Of course, voters may spontaneously admit that they always vote for a particular party. Campaign workers will take note of this for later use.

As implied by the previous point, the “hard canvass” involves a much more focused door-to-door canvass to determine whether a candidate
will have the support of the voters. Each Party obtains the enumeration lists from the Elections Office in the riding and uses them to attempt to identify the support in each and every address in the riding. This is also the time when the campaign will try to identify and sway the undecided voters. The candidate is often critical to the success of a hard canvass as many voters will want to meet the candidate face-to-face before deciding how to cast their vote.

2. Literature “Drop”

At times, the campaign may not have enough time to conduct a proper canvass or may wish to get a piece of information out to parts of the constituency as quickly as possible. One method is to use a group of volunteers to distribute campaign literature to every household in a particular area without stopping to actually canvass the people inside. This literature “drop” allows the campaign to get its message into the hands of voters with having it filtered or watered down through the media. It is also much more cost effective than mailing literature or having it stuffed inside of newspapers or distributed along with other flyers, but these methods are also used if a campaign is short of volunteers.

3. Phone Canvass

Another technique used to canvass the intention of voters is a phone canvass. Campaigns will often choose to use this technique over a traditional canvass due to geographic logistics. Although a phone canvass is not as personal as a traditional canvass, many rural ridings are simply too large to canvass by foot and a phone canvass may be the only way to contact some voters. A phone canvass may also be used to address specific issues as they arise during a campaign. Because more voters can be contacted in a shorter amount of time, a phone canvass can be an effective way to distribute an important message to certain parts of a riding. Also, there is a belief that a phone canvass gets a better appreciation of a voter’s intentions, as some people are more comfortable telling one candidate’s team that they are voting for the other candidate, while on the phone rather than in person.

4. Lawn Signs

While lawn signs will not win or lose an election on their own, they are an important, visual indication of support for the candidate. Perhaps the most visual part of any campaign, lawn signs are a long standing tradition in politics and can contribute greatly to the momentum of a campaign. Their impact is greatest just after the election is called. When an election is called, nothing is more impressive than a vast and instant array of signs for a candidate. This gives the impression of a highly organized campaign machine. The visual impact of hundreds of signs immediately boosts the morale of any campaign team and can help sway undecided voters and make others reconsider their previous favourites.

5. All Candidates Meetings

As more and more people take an interest in politics and begin to understand how to use political campaigns to influence public policy, the number of All Candidates meetings during campaigns seems to be on the rise as well. In the past, there would generally be one or two public debates where all of the candidates would gather and present their ideas on issues, present their policy and respond to direct questions. These meetings were generally sponsored by the local newspaper or a large community group such as the Chamber of Commerce. In recent times, more and more groups have begun to host all candidates meetings as an opportunity to have issues specific to their organization debated and addressed by the candidates. It is not uncommon for there to be as many as 20-30 requests for All Candidates meetings during an election campaign. This has significantly increased the demand for a candidate’s time and resulted in negotiations between candidates to determine which meetings they will or will not attend. These are difficult decisions because every group feels their issues are paramount and often the media will report on the meetings.
6. Media Events

Media in larger urban centres often concentrate on the national or provincial leaders and issues. However, in some instances, a local issue (e.g.: garbage dump, group home) may dominate. In these cases, the positions taken by the candidates will be much more important and will consequently receive an appropriate amount of local media attention. Outside the large urban centres, local media may focus more on the local candidate. That said, candidates are still competing against one another for the media spotlight. For that reason, part of the campaign strategy will often include media events where the candidate will announce his or her specific position on an issue or present a key component of their platform. These events are usually conducted in a location of interest in order to attract the attention of the public and the media and consist of a brief speech followed by a question and answer period. It is also helpful to have supportive dignitaries present to show support for the candidate such as a senior politician from the candidate’s party or a prominent business person from an industry being discussed at the event.

7. Leader’s Tour and Minister’s Tour

In ridings where the party has a fair chance of victory or where the campaign needs an extra push, the central party organization may decide to send the party leader in for a visit. These occasions are usually brief, tightly scripted events where the leader is whisked in, says a few words to the campaign team, poses for photos and joins the candidate for 20 minutes of meeting voters. If the leader is very popular, such a “whistle-stop” appearance can provide a much needed boost to the local campaign and usually receives local media coverage.

Similarly, Ministers are expected to spend time visiting other ridings to help the candidates. So in addition to spending time canvassing in their own ridings, they must travel to help others. In any given campaign, different ministers may visit a riding on multiple occasions.

8. Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) and Election Day Activities

This is the apex of the election campaign when all the hard work and hours of canvassing pay off (for someone).

Advance Polls are the first place campaigns focus to get their votes out. Advance Polls are usually held 10 to 14 days ahead of voting day. People can also vote at the Returning Office. Campaigns encourage their volunteers to vote in the Advance Polls so that they are free to work on Election Day. On Election Day, all activities are focused on getting identified supporters to the polls. The campaign achieves this by carefully monitoring voter turnout at the polling stations throughout the riding. Voters who the campaign has identified as a supporter that have not yet voted are reminded to come out to support the candidate with phone calls or by a volunteer visiting their home. Often times, a campaign may contact a voter three to four times in the 48 hours up to the vote. Every vote counts, and as we have seen many politicians have been elected with single or double digit majorities. After the polls close, scrutineers from each campaign observe the official ballot count to ensure there is agreement on the final count.
A general election is just that – general. That can be daunting for an individual REALTOR® or members of a real estate board interested in becoming politically active. You don’t have to be well versed in everything. If you believe in particular causes, use those to guide your activities. If not, look around your community. No one knows their communities better than REALTORS®, and you can probably list at least three issues that need attention.

The important thing about promoting issues at election time is being organized so REALTORS® speak with one message. A real estate board can have several voices, but a but a coordinated effort to determine and promote the priority REALTOR® issues will ensure those voices are heard.

REALTOR® Issues

REALTOR® issues are those issues that directly affect the way we as REALTORS® conduct our business. To illustrate, property rights, land transfer taxes, rent controls and tax rebates benefiting homeowners are examples of REALTOR® issues. Abortion, capital punishment, transportation policy, and agricultural subsidies are important matters but are definitely not REALTOR® issues.

If assessing the candidates in your ridings, your board is strongly advised to limit the scope of your evaluations to REALTOR® issues. This will demonstrate that you are not being partisan but are in fact dealing exclusively with those issues that directly affect your members’ professional interests as REALTORS®. While members of your board or PAC may have strong personal views on many issues, your board’s political involvement should be driven by REALTOR® issues only.

Remember, your expertise is real estate. You can speak with authority and credibility on that subject. You may damage your credibility when you address issues that don’t affect real estate.

Quality of Life

Rather than just focusing on issues that directly impact the way you conduct your business, OREA has adopted an approach called Quality of Life. This philosophy reflects a commitment to improving Quality of Life around the province by supporting growth that encourages economic vitality, provides housing opportunities and builds communities with good schools and safe neighbourhoods.

That means considering how any issue impacts your community – including your clients. The Quality of Life philosophy is based on the following five principles:

1. Ensuring Economic Vitality
2. Providing Housing Opportunities
3. Preserving Our Environment
4. Protecting Property Owners
5. Building Better Communities

OREA uses these principles when considering issues, and strives to strike balance among them. These principles are also an excellent way to establish common ground with politicians, because it’s very difficult to argue with these values. After establishing that common ground, you can move on to more specific issues related to the principles.

By taking a broader approach, the real estate profession can build strength, credibility and trust.

For background information, tools and ideas on how you can use the Quality of Life program to advance REALTOR® issues please visit www.orea.com/qualityoflife.
Getting Organized

If your board decides to participate in an election campaign, you will need a structure to ensure your activities are done well and proper procedures are followed. As a first step, it makes sense to have your existing Political Affairs Committee review the idea of election campaign participation and devise an action plan based on some or all of the activities outlined in this manual. Next, your committee should make its recommendations to your Board of Directors for their review and (hopeful) approval.

If your action plan is approved, the next step is organizing for implementation. For example, your board might wish to set up a separate Election Committee, reporting directly to the Board of Directors or to the Political Affairs Committee. The Board of Directors should select a chairman who is politically astute, but not partisan, and ask the membership for volunteers to serve on that committee. Remember, you want a committee that is committed to political participation – not committed to political parties.

Once your election committee is set up, the chairman should delegate responsibility for specific projects (e.g. All Candidates meetings, media relations, candidate assessments, etc.) to individual committee members and then monitor their activities to ensure the work is being done in a timely fashion.

The committee chairman should also ensure that regular committee meetings are held and that regular reports are made to the Board of Directors and the membership at large.

Remember, one of the objectives of participation in an election campaign is to educate your own membership about REALTOR® issues and the importance of political participation – give everyone in your board the opportunity to do something, even if it’s just to put up a lawn sign for the candidate of their choice.

Once you’ve decided to participate in the election process, your board can decide to what extent it will get involved. Listed below are some activities your board may decide to pursue:

1. Board Leadership Meeting with the Candidates
2. Candidate Survey
3. Sponsoring an All Candidates Meeting / “Meet the Candidates” Breakfast Meeting
4. Candidate selection programs
5. Undertaking media relations
6. Organize a “REALTORS® VOTE” campaign

1. Board Leadership Meeting with the Candidates

This is the opportunity for a one-on-one meeting for the Board leadership with each of the candidates. This is best conducted with no more than two to three Board members and the various candidates one at a time. Plan for 45 minutes to an hour over a cup of coffee to achieve a good discussion.

This provides the opportunity to outline key REALTOR® policy proposals, research and issues of importance to your local board. At the meeting you can also ask them to fill out a candidate survey and invite them to an All Candidates meeting or meeting with the broader group of local REALTORS®.

It also provides the opportunity for the candidates to explain their parties’ policies, and discuss key issues of importance to the riding.

The best approach is to send an email to each of the candidates individually requesting the meeting, then follow-up with a phone call to schedule. These meetings can be done prior to the start of the election campaign.

2. Candidate Survey

One of the best ways to raise your profile with candidates during an election is a candidate survey, also sometimes referred to as an issues assessment. This accomplishes two main goals: first, it acquaints every candidate with the issues...
your board believes are important and, second by publishing the responses to those issues for your members and local media, you become better informed REALTORS®.

To conduct a candidate survey, do the following:

• First, identify the official candidates in the election. During Ontario elections, OREA maintains a list of declared provincial candidates along with their contact information. To get a list of declared candidates in your riding please contact the OREA government relations department. In federal elections, candidate information can be found by contacting the political parties directly or by contacting Elections Canada for a list of federal candidates. In the case of a municipal election, contact your local municipality for information about nominated candidates.

• Second, agree on a list of questions to be used in a candidate questionnaire or interview covering the major REALTOR® issues of concern to your board.

• Next, you may decide to rate the answers to your questions. A score of ten would exactly match the REALTOR® position on an issue – a score of zero would be the exact opposite of the REALTOR® position. If you don't wish to rate the candidate positions on the issues, you can publish their positions to your members and the public at large through news releases, media interviews, etc. Either way, you should report to your members on the results of your issues assessments.

NOTE: If your board decides to undertake a candidate selection program, the issues assessment activity should be incorporated in that section.

3. Sponsor an All Candidates Debate/ “Meet the Candidates” Breakfast Meeting

i) All Candidates Debate

Holding an All Candidates meeting is an excellent way to raise the profile of your board and to make politicians more knowledgeable and accountable on REALTOR® issues. What candidates say or how they perform at an All Candidates meeting can have a great impact locally. These meetings often attract local media and occasionally will draw provincial/national media attention. Media reports will often mention the meeting was sponsored by your board.

The All Candidates meeting can also be another important element in determining whether your board will endorse a candidate.

To organize an All Candidates Meeting

When the election is called, contact the campaign managers for the candidates from ridings you wish to attend. It’s important to get your request in very early as the candidates’ time is booked far in advance and there will be several organizations competing for their time to host their own candidates meetings. It is recommended that you limit your meeting to candidates from a single riding, but this does not prohibit you from hosting multiple meetings for different ridings.

Another approach is to partner with a like-minded organization – such as the Chamber of Commerce or Business Association – to organize the all candidates debate.

It is also important to determine which candidates you will invite. Some associations choose not to invite candidates from fringe parties that garner little public support (i.e. Marxist-Leninists) as they take time away from the more serious candidates and can steer your meeting away from the issues you wish to have addressed. It is a good idea to appoint a specific individual to arrange the logistics for the meeting such as securing an appropriate venue with ample space for the public to attend, appropriate sound systems, tables and podiums, etc. No detail is too small – plan everything well in advance. You do not want the omission of a small detail to take away from the impact of your meeting. Appoint another person to arrange for publicity of the event for both your members and the public local newspapers and in co-operation with the candidates involved.

The more people in attendance, the more people will understand REALTOR® issues and consider them when they cast their ballot. This individual
can also advise the media of the meeting. Make certain they are aware of the time, place and general topic for the meeting. It is a good idea to keep in contact with your local news reporters and remind them about the event a day before and again a few hours before the meeting. Media presence is key to getting your message out to as many people as possible. (See Appendix ‘B’ for a sample media advisory).

Other tips:
• Organize the room with theatre seating with the candidates and a moderator sitting at the front.
• Consider using your board president as the moderator.
• Allow each candidate three to five minutes for opening remarks.
• Prepare a few REALTOR® questions to be asked by the moderator.
• Open the floor for questions from the audience.
• Have a floor microphone to ensure questions can be heard (you may wish to screen questions to keep the meeting focused on REALTOR® issues).
• Allow each candidate a limited amount of time to respond to each question (one minute is usually sufficient).
• Speak to the media attending the meeting to build the profile of your board.

ii) “Meet the Candidates” Breakfast Meetings

An alternative to the All Candidates Debate is to hold a series of “Meet the Candidates” breakfast meetings. Mornings are usually a good time for candidates because their canvassing hasn’t begun and you aren’t competing for the critical evening time. It also has the benefit of normally being a good time for REALTORS® which provides a greater opportunity for attendance.

This type of event is where you invite each of the Candidates to meet with REALTORS® on an individual basis. It can be an informal cup of coffee and muffins or a more formal full breakfast. They can be held on a “cost-recovery” basis i.e. charging a small fee to those REALTORS® attending to cover the costs of coffee and any room rental fees. This breakfast series can be held over the course of a couple of weeks, and can even begin before the election campaign begins.

It provides the opportunity for:
• Introductions and opening remarks from the Board President or designate
• Remarks from the Candidate on the key issues as they see them
• Questions from REALTORS® on issues of importance.

As with the All Candidates meetings, prepare some questions to ask the candidates. It is also good to have a standard set of questions that can be asked of each candidate.

Like an All Candidates meeting, it is a great idea to invite local members and the board. Make sure to give at least 10-14 days notice if possible to ensure good attendance. Since these meetings are targeted to REALTORS®, you can choose whether you wish to advertise or simply use direct communication methods like email.

While doing the meetings one-on-one provides for the best chance of dialogue, you can take a modified version of the All Candidates meeting and hold it in the morning, inviting all the candidates for one meeting. In this case, you may choose to open it up to the general public, or keep it focused to REALTORS®.

4. Media Relations

Each of the ideas and activities discussed so far can provide your board with an opportunity to raise your public profile and get public support for your issues through media relations activities. To launch an effective media relations campaign during the election, try these suggestions:

• Appoint a person responsible for media relations, perhaps the president, PAC chairman or election committee chairman.
• Develop a relationship with your local media.
• Contact the local papers, get a contact name, email, fax and phone number. Find out when they publish and their deadlines. Contact local radio and television stations as well to let them know about your board's election activities.
• Be the voice for real estate. Demand that the candidates address your issues. Publicize the results of your questionnaires, etc.
• Cable TV programs and radio talk shows are often looking for guests. Call them and offer to appear on their shows to discuss the election from a real estate perspective.
• Consider issuing a news release (see Appendix ‘C’) to announce the board’s involvement in the campaign.

5. Organize a "REALTORS® VOTE" Campaign

Getting out the REALTOR® Vote (RV) is the final component to a successful board election effort. It is essential to note that there are two types of REALTORS® Vote activities.

The first type is where the board directs its RV activities on behalf of a board supported candidate or candidates.

The second type of RV activity is generic. This is where a board encourages its members to vote on election day, but not on behalf of a specific candidate or candidates. This activity will heighten your members’ awareness of the importance of voting on election day, thereby encouraging REALTORS® to vote.

Key RV Principles

The goal of REALTORS® Vote is to get every board member to the polls.

RV campaigns require planning well ahead of time, usually four weeks.

• RV campaigns can be helpful in most elections, but can be significant in closely contested races and when lower voter turnout is expected.
• Your board’s limited resources can be specifically aimed at your own members.
• The RV message is straightforward: ask and encourage fellow REALTORS® to vote and provide them with useful information (such as polling hours and locations).
• RV can be utilized in local or provincial elections in addition to federal contests; however, any RV campaign should be approved by your Board of Directors. Depending on the type of election, RV should follow some basic organizational guidelines.

RV Co-ordinator

A RV co-ordinator should be appointed as early as possible in the campaign. The coordinator should be knowledgeable about the campaign, and know the politics of the area. No one person can conduct a RV effort, so volunteers will be needed to assist the co-ordinator to carry out the RV activities.

Designing RV Programs

The extent of your RV program will in part be determined by a number of considerations, including geography of your RV areas, the number of volunteers in your volunteer pool and time involved. The basic RV programs rely upon telephone contacts and direct mailings, which includes email.

Telephone Contacts

RV telephoning usually begins the last weekend before the election and runs through election day. However, preparation for the effort begins weeks in advance with the drafting of scripts, securing phone locations, finding volunteers, working out logistics, etc.

RV telephoning should provide basic information to the voter as well as encouragement to vote. Get a list of the locations of the polls where fellow REALTORS® will vote. Appeal to voters that their vote counts and that it is important they do so.
With any Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) program, volunteers provide the energy and enthusiasm. Volunteers will need to be selected and trained.

Phone scripts will need drafting. Scripts should be short and get across the required information in the shortest period of time to a caller. Writing a script is important, because it is essential that volunteers communicate the same messages, know what is being said by all volunteers, and conduct the phone calls in a professional manner.

Volunteers will need accurate lists of names and phone numbers of REALTOR® voters. These are available in the local board offices.

Phone banks should be scheduled during evening hours when most REALTORS® are home, and on weekends during the day and evening. Do not make phone calls in the late evening hours. You will only hurt your cause. And if you do morning calls, do not call so early as to cause criticism. Be mindful of the hours when you prefer receiving calls. Let common sense be your guide.

Mailings and Emails

RV mailings have three purposes:

- Mailings remind REALTOR® voters of the location and hours of their polling place.
- Mailings permit direct and targeted delivery of your message and provide strong encouragement for their vote.
- Mailings permit one last opportunity to convey why the election is important.

REALTORS® receiving mailings are normally going to be favourably inclined to your message, as they are targeted voters: those with similar concerns, work issues, etc. It is important that the mailings emphasize that their vote is important and that it can make a difference.

A successful and effective RV mailing must arrive before election day. Timing is everything in politics, so plan your mailings with sufficient lead time to assure their arrival before election day. For planning purposes, it may be useful to develop a workback schedule to fix dates for deadlines for mailing and related efforts.

Plan your mailings to begin arriving the week before the election. If you are doing a hard copy letter, knowing the number of letters to be printed and mailed, the number of volunteers needed to help stuff and stamp envelopes, and the amount of time to get the letter printed after its final draft and approval, should give you a good idea of the dates to begin the final mailing work.

One note to the wise planner: in all campaigns things never go exactly the way they are planned. In a spin-off of Murphy's Law, things can and will go against schedule. Build that into your time line. The earlier you begin your mailing work, the better your chances of completing and having RV letters in voting REALTORS® hands just before the election when voter interest is at its highest peak.

Advance Polls

In most elections, the law provides for an advance poll which allows voters who will be out of their riding on election day the opportunity to vote.

An RV campaign can include an advance poll effort. They may be useful in contests that will be very close and where there are larger numbers of REALTORS® who may be out of town to warrant undertaking the program.

If an advance poll program is implemented, it must begin more than a month before election day. Do not wait until just before the election to begin your advance ballot effort. You can publish the times and locations of advance polls. Board newsletters are useful for this educational effort.
Why Bother?

Rule #1: One Person CAN Make a Difference.

And the difference could affect your business. By taking political action – no matter how small – you can help ensure that the real estate market continues to prosper.

After all, everything that has to do with your business is connected in some way with government. Either you take an active part in determining what kind of people are elected to public office, or someone else – who might not fully understand your issues – may. Worse yet, it may be someone who fully understands your problems and is intent upon making them worse.

Political campaigns cry out for hard-working, interested people. As your level of political awareness and participation rises, you are likely to be asked to participate in an election campaign. In a campaign, the importance of the individual volunteer cannot be overemphasized. As a REALTOR®, you have skills and abilities of tremendous value to any political campaign.

Sometimes campaigns are successful, sometimes not. A little assistance from a dedicated, hardworking volunteer might make the difference in an otherwise hopeless situation.

As an individual citizen, as a campaign worker and as a REALTOR®, you can be of invaluable assistance to candidates for office. Remember, the smaller the campaign, the more they need you and the greater the opportunity for input.

Just Do It

Rule #2: Everybody Talks About Politics, but Nobody Wants to Go First.

Our political processes, especially election campaigns, are structured so individual volunteers can give as much, or as little, time as desired. The more flexible a person’s time, the more likely it is that person can participate in the political process. REALTORS® are in an excellent position to become involved in politics.

Involvement can mean many things, from simply voting to running for office. Want some specific ideas? Try the following.

Vote!

The first step, of course, is voting. You can vote in any municipal, provincial or federal elections if you are:

- 18 years of age or older;
- a Canadian citizen; and
- live in the riding/municipality where the election is taking place.

Exercising your right to vote is the most important step to becoming politically active. Even if you chose not to pursue any further activities, make certain you get out to vote.

Encourage Others to Vote

Voting isn’t just the responsibility of good corporate citizens like you – it’s everyone’s responsibility. Encourage your friends, family and clients to vote, and you can do this very simply in casual conversations or by using a signature line in your email messages. Take the time to make sure your friends, neighbours and colleagues are informed about the issues you feel are most important to you and your business. Their vote may make the difference between your selected candidate winning or losing.

Stay Informed

Political news already figures prominently in the news and everyday conversation. To supplement your knowledge of the issues, read your local paper, watch the evening news and subscribe to OREA’s government relations electronic newsletter, Queen’s Park Plus.

Queen’s Park Plus focuses primarily on provincial government issues and how they affect REALTORS® and real estate in Ontario.
Help With a Campaign

Candidates who depend on REALTORS® to get them elected also depend on REALTORS® for advice when they deal with REALTOR® issues.

Nominate Your Candidate

Remember that one purpose of political participation is to nominate and elect officials who share your convictions on ways to improve government. You will achieve it only if your party accepts you as one of its own and allows you a voice in its leadership.

Party leadership is not difficult to attain. All major parties are in need of more participation and always have been. If you can prove you are serious, prepared to work and willing to play the game according to the established rules, you can rise quickly. All parties want men and women with intelligence, training and influence within the community. REALTORS® will find the welcome mat on the doorstep.

The important thing is to make your voice heard when the candidates are actually chosen through a nominating meeting or convention. Nominating procedures vary from party to party and party rules take up where election laws stop in determining how the parties are organized and what function they perform.

No matter how much discussion there is about the declining role of political parties in Canada, they are still the primary structures for determining the major candidates in most general elections. Even in non-partisan municipal elections for city, town or county office, candidates often seek the endorsement and assistance of one of the major parties.

Candidates who share your same beliefs are more likely to be nominated by your political party if you participate. It is critical that REALTORS® get involved with the political party of their choice and:

• Attend party meetings;
• Participate in party canvasses for membership and fundraising;
• Join the party committee that determine candidate slates and policies; and
• Run for election as a delegate to any party conventions.

If the candidates are already at the gate, get on the phone and do some research. Find out everything you can about the people running, and determine which candidate best reflects your business and personal views. Find your candidate, and offer to help.

Fundraise or Make a Donation

Resources are critical to political success, and your contribution will be welcome. A successful election campaign will need a lot more money than a nomination campaign. You should be prepared to make a contribution to your candidate and also go out and raise money. When making your donation, consider noting on your cheque that you’re a REALTOR® – the more profile the profession gets, the better.

Donations to a political party or donations to a candidate during an election are eligible for generous tax treatment. Details on tax savings and eligibility can be obtained from the political parties and/or the appropriate government department. Some of this information is listed below.

REALTORS® should be aware of the rules regarding political donations and fundraising to ensure they do not violate any election laws. The rules have changed dramatically in recent times in order to improve transparency, so it is more important than ever to make sure the appropriate rules are followed.

Rules for Donations to Federal Candidates / Campaigns / Political Parties

The federal government’s rules are different from provincial rules.

With the passage of the Federal Accountability Act (FAA) at the beginning of 2007 limits were placed upon contributions to federal political parties and also to electoral district associations (EDAs), local candidates and nomination contestants.
The FAA allows for contributions only by individuals who are Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada. Contributions to EDAs, candidates and nomination contestants from corporations, trade unions and unincorporated associations are prohibited.

No agent for an EDA, candidate, nomination contestant or a national party is permitted to receive any single contribution in the form of cash exceeding $20.00.

**Contribution Limits:**

Each individual person who is either a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident can now make contributions as follows:

1) To a maximum of $1,100 per year to each of the national parties; and

2) To a maximum of $1,100 per year to any combination of EDAs, candidates and nomination contestants.

There are however, very generous tax credits provided to those who make political contributions. Once you make a political donation, you will be issued a tax receipt that can be used to claim a tax credit on your personal income tax return. The value of the tax credit will vary depending on the amount, but the following are the general guidelines:

- for contributions between $0 and $400, you will get back 75 per cent;
- for contributions between $400 and $750, you will get back $300 plus 50 per cent of the amount over $400;
- for contributions over $750, you will get back $475 plus 33.33 per cent of the amount over $750 up to a maximum of $650 annually.

Elections Canada does not allow tax receipts to be issued in any other name other than that of the contributor. The contributor is considered to be the holder of the credit card or signatory on the cheque.

**Rules for Donations to Provincial Candidates / Campaigns / Political Parties**

The rules in Ontario are significantly less restrictive for REALTORS® who choose to make political contributions. Under the Election Finances Act, both individuals and corporations are permitted to make political contributions and the limits are significantly higher than the federal rules allow.

In each year, any person, corporation or trade union may contribute up to $9,300 to any provincial party. Also, you may contribute up to $1,240 to any constituency association, but the total contribution to constituency associations of the same party must not exceed $6,200. This means the maximum annual political contribution allowed in a non-election year is $15,500 to each registered party and its constituency associations.

During an election you may make extra contributions. At election time, you may give up to an additional $9,300 to each provincial party and up to $1,240 to any candidate so long as the total contribution to candidates of the same party does not exceed $6,200.

As with federal contributions, there are tax credits associated with political contributions at the provincial level.

The annual contribution levels and resulting Ontario political contribution tax credits are indexed based on requirements specified in the Elections Finances Act.

The formula is:

- 75 per cent of the first $372, plus
- 50 per cent of the next $868, plus
- 33.33 per cent of an amount exceeding $1,240, but not more than $2,821

The maximum yearly Ontario political contribution tax credit is $1,240 which is reached when you have made eligible contributions totalling $2,821. The tax credit is refundable. This means that if your total amount of tax credits is more
than your taxes owing, the Canada Revenue Agency will issue a refund based on the difference.

To be eligible for a tax credit you must be an Ontario resident and you must have made eligible contributions to a registered Ontario political party, registered, constituency association or to a candidate in an Ontario provincial election during that year.

Either spouse or common-law partner may claim the Ontario political contribution tax credit. This tax credit can only be claimed for the year in which the contribution was made.

Tax credit available for corporations making eligible Ontario political contributions under the Corporations Tax Act is non-refundable tax credit under the Taxation Act, 2007.

The maximum tax credit that a corporation can claim in a year is $2,604 based on political contributions at the annual limit of $18,600. Any contributions exceeding the annual limit will be carried forward to a subsequent taxation year, but will be limited to the annual ceiling for that year.

The provincial government has also passed legislation that requires political parties to publicly disclose all donations they receive over $100. The information will be posted on a website through Elections Ontario.

Rules for Donations to Municipal Candidates / Campaigns

The rules for political contributions at the municipal level are far and away the simplest to understand and comply with.

Any individual or business is eligible to make a contribution to any declared candidate in a municipal election up to a maximum of $750. This limitation applies whether the contribution consists of one large donation or is the total of a number of smaller contributions of money, goods or services from the same contributor or from related companies. (*Exception: The limit on contributions to a candidate for the office of mayor of the City of Toronto is $2,500. All other rules on contributions remain the same.)

The maximum total amount a contributor may contribute to candidates in the same jurisdiction is $5,000. Each municipal council and each school board is a separate jurisdiction.

Donations can only be made to the campaign of an individual who has formerly been nominated to run for office in a given election. Donations over $100 will be subject to public disclosure.

Volunteer Recruitment

Every successful campaign needs volunteers, and finding them is just like cold calling. The REALTOR® who doesn’t call won’t find the new listing. The REALTOR® who doesn’t ask repeatedly for volunteers will end up being the only volunteer.

Sources for volunteers are as varied as the jobs volunteers can do. Be specific. Remember that volunteers have to be tasked and scheduled. Tailor the jobs precisely to the volunteers’ abilities. There is a task for every kind of volunteer. Make the task enjoyable and be sure every volunteer feels appreciated.

Anybody can stuff envelopes, seal envelopes, stamp letters and stuff candidate brochures for literature drops. Typing, telephone, and sorting Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) routes all take more skill.

Volunteers are needed for locating phone numbers, running errands, and making banners and placing signs. Very few candidates get elected without the help of volunteers willing to do any job such as licking stamps or stuffing envelopes. Door knockers, parade banner carriers, substitute speakers, drivers, baby-sitters, cookie bakers and more can all be important.

Special skills like writing, serving as office receptionist, locating resources and organizing or raising money are often desperately needed. Remember that every task that is done by a
volunteer saves the campaign money. The money saved can be used for more radio and television ad time, for additional stamps and printing costs, for voter polls and focus groups, for all the unique needs of a campaign that are difficult to replace with volunteers.

Canvassing

The canvass involves volunteering for a poll, knocking on doors and talking to voters. REALTORS® are already experienced at door knocking. The skills are the same. The same friendly smile is essential. The only difference is that for campaign door knocking, a candidate flyer is substituted.

Planning and scheduling are vital parts of this project, too. Use the following checklist to make sure the door knocking campaign is successful:

- Decide the exact purpose of the door knocking effort.
- Plan for appropriate campaign materials.
- Schedule the time for door knocking.
- Organize the assigned areas block by block.

Ask all volunteers to come to headquarters first. Ask them to dress neatly but comfortably. Walking shoes are especially important. A good way to assure volunteers will appear on time is to tempt them with food, doughnuts for breakfast, sandwiches for lunch.

Lawn Signs

Who has more experience than REALTORS®? Lawn signs are a critical element of any election campaign. They’re a highly visible indication of a candidate’s support in the community, and REALTORS® can offer their expertise to make them more effective. REALTORS® can work with the campaign sign committee on the:

- Printing of lawn signs.
- Acquiring wooden or metal stakes.
- Developing the timing of lawn sign delivery.

should the signs be delivered all on the same day or as the sign requests are received?

- Developing the strategy for sign locations. REALTORS® have keen insights on the best locations for signs including busy street corners, heavily traveled roads, corner houses, etc.
- Phone banking for sign locations.
- Keeping a poll-by-poll list of sign locations.
- Track sign locations on a map of the riding – it can be an impressive show of strength!
- Managing a sign replacement effort.

Election Day Activities - GOTV

Election day is almost a separate campaign. Usually, a special team is devoted to planning and executing election day activities, which include monitoring voting turnout and, contacting supporters who haven’t voted to get them to the polls. REALTORS® can help by volunteering personal time and offering their own phone and fax lines after business hours, as well as their cars. After the polls close, you can still participate by serving as a scrutineer for your candidate and overseeing the official ballot count.
Other Opportunities

There are almost as many roles in an election campaign, as there are volunteers. If you don’t like the suggestions above, volunteer to do anything. That’s the best volunteer of all!

As noted at the outset, OREA believes that now is the time for concerned real estate professionals to get politically involved as a group and, most importantly, as citizens committed to improving our democratic process through individual political action.

It is individual involvement, bringing your particular skills and ability to the political process that is most important and most rewarding.

Our political process, and especially election campaigns, are structured so that individual volunteers can give as much or as little time as desired. The more flexible a person’s time, the more likely it is that person can participate in the political process. REALTORS® therefore are in an excellent position to become involved in politics.

The following six steps to political power will work for every REALTOR® in Ontario. It is your opportunity and your responsibility to your community and your profession.

1. Get on the voters’ list
2. Vote
3. Join a political party
4. Make a financial contribution
5. Get involved in a campaign
6. Run for office
Elections Ontario: www.electionsontario.on.ca
Elections Canada: www.elections.ca
Municipal Election Guide: www.mah.gov.on.ca

**Provincial Political Parties:**

**Liberal Party of Ontario:** www.ontarioliberal.ca
10 St. Mary Street, Suite 210
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1P9
Tel: 416-961-3800
Toll free: 1-800-268-7250

**New Democratic Party of Ontario:** www.ontariondp.com
101 Richmond Street East
Toronto, Ontario M5C 1N9
Tel: 416-591-8637
Toll free: 1-866-390-6637
Email: ndpmail@ndp.on.ca

**Ontario Progressive Conservative Party:** www.ontariopc.com
401-19 Duncan Street
Toronto, Ontario M5H 3H1
Tel: 416-861-0020
Toll-free: 1-800-903-6453
Fax 416-861-9593
Email: comments@ontariopc.on.ca

**Green Party of Canada:** www.gpo.ca
PO Box 1132, Station F
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2T8
Tel: 416-977-7476
Toll free: 1-888-647-3366
Email: admin@gpo.ca
Federal Political Parties:

Conservative Party of Canada: www.conservative.ca
#1720 - 130 Albert Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5G4
Tel: 613-755-2000
Toll free: 866-808-8407

Green Party of Canada: www.green.ca
PO Box 997, Station B
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5R1
Tel: (613) 562-4916
Toll free: 1-866-868-3447

Liberal Party of Canada: www.liberal.ca
81 Metcalfe Street, Suite 400
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 6M8
Phone: 613-237-0740
Fax: 613-235-7208

New Democratic Party of Canada: www.ndp.ca
300 - 279 Laurier West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5J9
Tel: 613-236-3613
Toll Free: 1-866-525-2555
Following each census, a federal commission reviews riding boundaries to ensure that there is an equal distribution of the population in each constituency. These changes usually take effect at the time of the first election following the completion of the review. The result is that people may live in two different ridings at the federal and provincial levels that encompass slightly different geographic areas.

For information about federal riding boundaries, to determine what riding you live in or to identify your local candidates in a federal election please refer to Elections Canada: [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).

For information about the provincial riding boundaries, to determine what riding you live in or to identify your local candidates in a provincial election please refer to Elections Ontario: [www.electionsontario.on.ca](http://www.electionsontario.on.ca).

Contact information for individual constituency / riding associations can usually be obtained through the central party. Please refer to the Links / Contacts section.
MEDIA ADVISORY

Voters in (Riding Name) Deserve to Know Where Candidates Stand on Property and Real Estate Issues

YOUR TOWN, ON – The media and the general public are invited to join local REALTORS® at an all candidates debate for the riding of (riding name). Candidates will be asked their position on a range of issues that relate to real estate, home ownership, property rights and taxation.

CANDIDATES INVITED TO ATTEND:

(Name), (Party)
(Name), (Party)
(Name), (Party)
(Name), (Party)

MODERATOR:

(Name), (Association)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

(Contact Name)
(Contact Number)
MEDIA RELEASE

Month Day, Year

<REALTOR® ISSUE> IS THE DEFINING ISSUE FOR OUR COMMUNITY IN THIS ELECTION SAY LOCAL REALTORS®

Voters in <Riding> Should Consider How <Issue> Will Impact Their Community Before Casting Their Ballots on <Election Date>

YOUR TOWN, ON – Local REALTORS® are launching a public awareness campaign to educate voters about the impact of <issue> on our community. Throughout the election, REALTORS® will be questioning local candidates on their position with respect to <issue> and encouraging voters to support the candidate that best represents their personal position.

“<Issue> is about improving the quality of life in our community,” said <REALTOR® representative>. “Residents should consider the impact of <issue> on their quality of life / property / community and the position of the various candidates prior to casting their ballot on <election date>.”

Over the coming weeks, local REALTORS® will issue questionnaires to conduct interviews with each of the candidates for <elected position> to determine their personal position with respect to this important issue. The results of these interviews / questionnaires will be published on the Real Estate Board’s website (web address) / printed in the local newspaper.

“It is our hope that by bringing this issue to the forefront, both politicians and voters will recognize the importance of this issue to the future of our community,” said <Rep. name>.

The local Real Estate Board will also be hosting an all candidates meeting on <date of meeting>, at <location>, to provide voters an opportunity to learn about the candidates positions on a wide range of issues that impact real estate, personal property and our community.

“REALTORS® have long been a part of the community in <riding>,” said <Rep. Name>. “We will continue to contribute to the betterment of the local community and help to educate residents about import issues that have an impact on the future.”

For Further Information:

(Contact Name) – (Contact Number)

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