



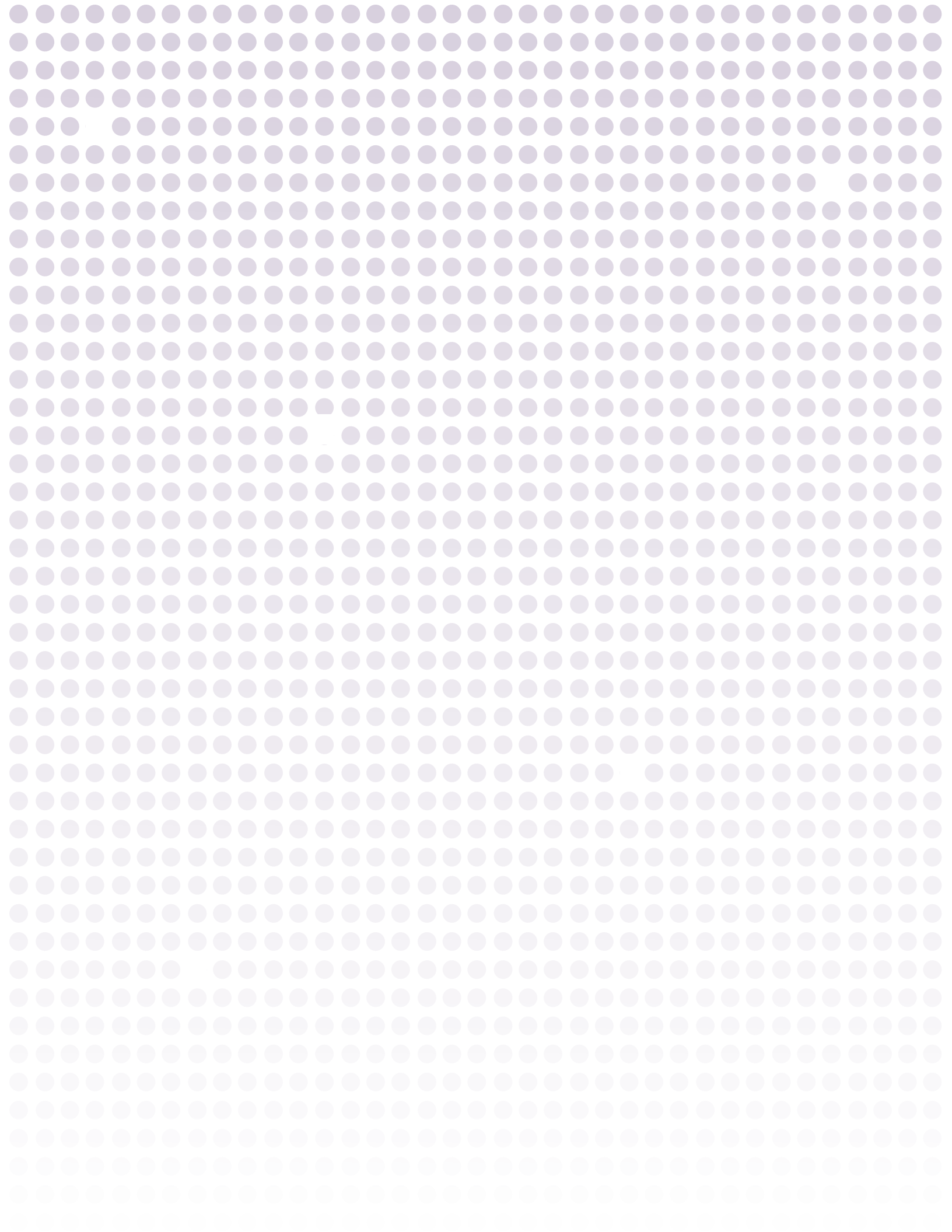
COMMISSIONER OF  
CANADA ELECTIONS

# ANNUAL **REPORT**

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2023-2024





# Annual Report

January 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024



COMMISSIONER OF  
CANADA ELECTIONS

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# Message from the Commissioner



At the close of a particularly busy period, I am pleased to present my annual report, which covers the period of January 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024. You may note that the reporting period has changed and from this point forward, we will be reporting on activities of the office during the course of a fiscal year rather than a calendar year. This annual report reflects not only the work accomplished over the 15-month period it covers, but also our office's resilience and capacity to adapt in a particularly unpredictable electoral context.

The rapidly changing electoral landscape continues to underscore the ongoing importance of our mandate: ensuring that the *Canada Elections Act* (the Act) is complied with and enforced. Since the 2021 general election, several federal by-elections have taken place, highlighting the need to solidify Canadians' confidence in their electoral system and the institutions that protect it.

With this intent firmly in mind, our office participated in the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions. Our participation in both phases of the public inquiry allowed us to share our experience as it relates to enforcement of the legislation that governs federal elections in Canada.

In fact, I'd like to underscore the relevance of the Commission of inquiry's work and acknowledge the contribution of all those involved. The inquiry provided our office the opportunity to share more information about our work, to clarify the scope of our mandate, and to offer potential solutions

to some issues arising out of the current electoral context. As of the writing of this report, the Commission's work has yet to be completed, but I am confident that its conclusions will allow our government institutions to be better informed and equipped to combat some of the threats to our electoral system, including those arising out of foreign interference.

For our office, there are also a number of other significant issues that we are watching closely, including disinformation and the use of artificial intelligence which, during an election, can alter public perception, influence behaviours and undermine public confidence in the electoral process. We are fully aware of these issues and are continuing our efforts to be able to respond to them within the limits of our powers.

Our office has also increased efforts over the past year to ensure that we are prepared for the next general election, which, in the context of a minority government, could occur at any time. To that end, our team has been diligently working to close files in order to be able to address the heightened demands associated with a general election, including an increase in the number of complaints we receive.

On another note, I would like to highlight that since our office's administrative monetary penalty (AMP) regime came into effect in 2019, it has matured – although it still faces certain limitations. For this reason, I plan to recommend new tools to support our administrative investigations, such as

preservation and production orders and the ability to exchange information or evidence with foreign counterparts where necessary and appropriate. I also intend to propose the expansion of the AMP regime, including increasing the maximum penalties, in particular for entities that have violated administrative provisions of the Act. The relatively low dollar value of the penalties I can currently impose may, in some cases, simply be seen as the cost of doing business. Increasing these penalty amounts, along with removing the intent requirement from the wording of certain provisions of the Act subject to the AMP regime, could promote better compliance with the Act, especially in matters related to political financing.

*The year 2024 marks our office's 50th anniversary. After half a century of history and experience, we look to the future with confidence, keenly aware of the challenges that lie ahead. With that in mind, we are committed to serving Canadians to the best of our ability. The knowledge we've gained and the expertise we've developed have allowed us to strengthen our role as a worldwide leader in compliance with, and enforcement of, electoral legislation.*

Our commitment to building partnerships goes hand in hand with our dedication to uphold the values of respect, integrity, excellence, and accountability. These principles guide our daily work, and with that in mind, our office recently undertook an organizational transformation. This will result in a structure that is better suited to our operational needs and will enable us to tackle future challenges.

In closing, I want to acknowledge my team's exceptional work over the past year as well as the contribution and involvement of Canadians who have taken the time to bring matters to our attention. Whether they choose to share their identity with us or choose to do so anonymously, we continue to rely on their support in reporting any situation that may be against our Act.

**Caroline J. Simard**

Commissioner of  
Canada Elections



*Photo credit:  
Esther Campeau*

## Mandate

The Commissioner of Canada Elections (CCE or Commissioner) is the independent officer responsible for ensuring compliance with, and enforcement of, the *Canada Elections Act* (the Act) and the *Referendum Act*.

### The importance of the CCE's role in safeguarding the integrity of federal elections

- » The Commissioner and her staff handle complaints about federal elections and conduct reviews and investigations to determine if there has been wrongdoing under the Act. In such cases, the Commissioner may take any action deemed appropriate to ensure that the Act is complied with and enforced.
- » The Commissioner can initiate a review or an investigation following a complaint, but she may also do so of her own initiative.
- » The CCE's work contributes to maintaining the integrity of Canada's electoral system. The CCE and her staff work to ensure that all participants abide by the rules governing federal elections, which ensures equal chances for all who participate in the federal electoral process.

Keep up to date with CCE news

[www.cef-cce.ca](http://www.cef-cce.ca)

Information about formal measures taken by the CCE are published on its website, social media platforms, and via [email alerts](#).

### The CCE on social media



X  
(formerly Twitter)



Facebook



LinkedIn



YouTube



## By the numbers: Overview of January 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024

### Complaints

**6,773** NEW FILES

These files are the result of complaints filed by the general public and political entities, referrals from Elections Canada, and files opened at the CCE's initiative.



### Formal measures

**70**

ADMINISTRATIVE  
MONETARY  
PENALTIES  
PUBLISHED

**2**

UNDERTAKINGS

**3**

CRIMINAL  
CHARGES LAID

**1**

COMPLIANCE  
AGREEMENT

When the CCE resolves a file by taking **formal compliance or enforcement measures**, details are made public on her website.

### Informal measures

The CCE may choose to address files involving minor acts or omissions informally.

**Informal measures** are used to encourage compliance with the rules and prevent future contraventions.

**29**

files resolved by way of information letters

**570**

files resolved by way of caution letters

**84**

files resolved by other methods of communication, such as email or telephone

# The year 2023-2024 in review

## Breakdown of files

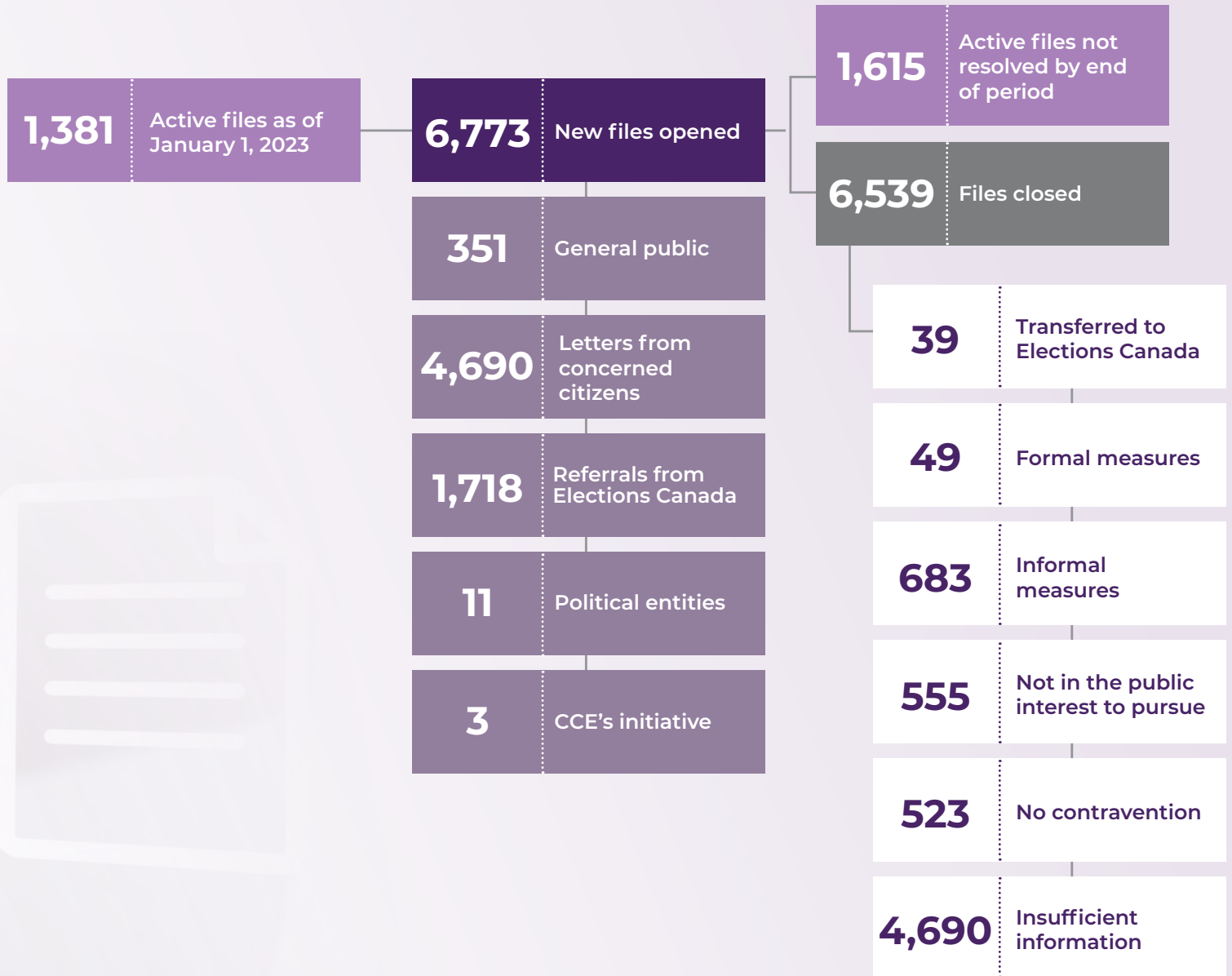
The Office of the Commissioner of Canada Elections (OCCE) receives complaints from the general public, as well as referrals from Elections Canada or other government agencies. For each complaint or referral received, a new file is opened by the office. The statistics in the following section show the number of files the Commissioner and her staff worked on during the 15-month period between January 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024.

In many cases, the Commissioner may receive several complaints about the same issue or alleging the same factual situation. This phenomenon may be due in large part to the use of social media, which amplifies the reach of information and facilitates its transmission on a large scale. In these cases, the issue is reviewed as a whole, but the office opens an individual file for each complaint or letter received.

For example, in March 2023, the OCCE received 4,690 letters from concerned citizens asking for the Commissioner to investigate allegations of foreign interference. The letters presented no evidence to support the allegations.

## Breakdown of files January 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024

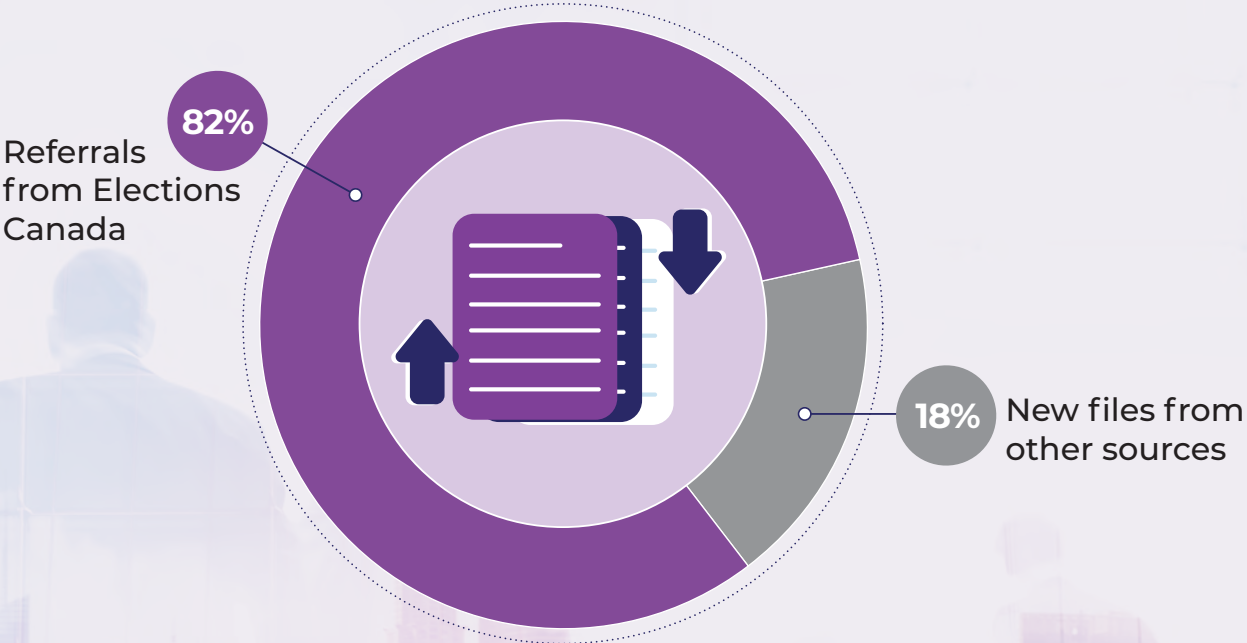
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# Referrals from Elections Canada

The Commissioner receives a significant number of files from Elections Canada, commonly known as referrals. These referrals mainly relate to potential contraventions of political financing rules or the possibility of illegal voting. Regardless of the issue, like complaints received from the public, all files referred by Elections Canada are reviewed.

## Proportion of referrals in total new files\*



\* The total of new files in this chart excludes 4,690 letters from concerned citizens.

## Most frequently received referrals in 2023-2024

Over the course of January 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, Elections Canada referred a total of 1,718 files to the OCCE. Excluding the 4,690 letters from concerned citizens described in the previous section, these referrals represented a significant portion of the files opened during the period covered by this report.

### Subjects of referrals



Between January 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, 61% of referrals the OCCE received concerned potential breaches of political financing rules.

The remaining 39% of referrals involved irregularities related to voting rules during a federal election, such as electors requesting a second ballot or individuals voting while not being eligible to do so.

Political  
financing

1,053

referrals  
(61%)

Voting  
irregularities

665

referrals  
(39%)



## The OCCE's Budget

The OCCE has two sources of funding. It receives funds in part through an annual appropriation, a budget voted on by Parliament each year. This voted authority covers only the salaries of indeterminate employees.

The Commissioner can also use unappropriated funds from the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) for all other expenses. This authority guarantees that she has access to the funds required to conduct reviews and investigations while maintaining full independence from the government. These funds cover salaries for term employees, including casual employees and students. The Commissioner's other expenses, such as the payment of consultants and expenses associated with travel and training, are also paid using unappropriated funds.

Between January 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, the CCE's spending increased compared to previous years, largely to address new requirements in the electoral ecosystem identified by parliamentary and senate committees, as well as the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions. These requirements include the collection, use, and storage of intelligence, along with challenges arising out of investigative files involving the use of artificial intelligence.

| Appropriated Funds                   | Unappropriated Funds – CRF    |                | Total               |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Salaries* of indeterminate employees | Other compensation – Salaries | Other expenses |                     |
| \$4,704,780                          | \$3,305,897                   | \$2,150,316    | <b>\$10,160,993</b> |

\* All employee benefits are included in the unappropriated funds from the CRF.

## Administrative monetary penalties

The administrative monetary penalties (AMP) regime is essential for promoting compliance with the Act. Widely used by federal, provincial, and municipal organizations, AMPs enhance compliance across regulated sectors, including elections, where timely, transparent, and flexible enforcement of the rules is critical.

When an AMP is issued to a person or entity, their name and key details of the contravention are published on the CCE's website, as required by the Act. This allows the Commissioner to inform the public and ensures transparency in the federal electoral system.

As noted in the Commissioner's message, the CCE explored the possibility of expanding the AMP regime in 2023-2024. She intends to recommend legislative changes to, among other things, acquire additional tools for investigative work under this regime and raise the penalty amounts that can be issued to certain businesses.

## Partnerships

While the OCCE carries out its duties independently, it recognizes the need to maintain collaborative partnerships with various Government of Canada departments and agencies, including those in the national security and intelligence community. Collaboration between the OCCE and other government agencies is necessary to fulfill the Commissioner's mandate, and more broadly, to protect the confidence of Canadians in the electoral process.

The Commissioner carries out her duties independently of Elections Canada and the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), who cannot influence her reviews, investigations, or decisions. Nevertheless, the CEO and the Commissioner consult regularly to ensure a shared understanding of electoral issues and a consistent interpretation of the Act's rules. Additionally, the CEO is responsible for reporting to Parliament on the expenditures of Elections Canada and the OCCE, and presenting his recommendations report, along with the Commissioner's, after each general election. More information on the [relationship between the CEO and the CCE](#) is available on the Commissioner's website.

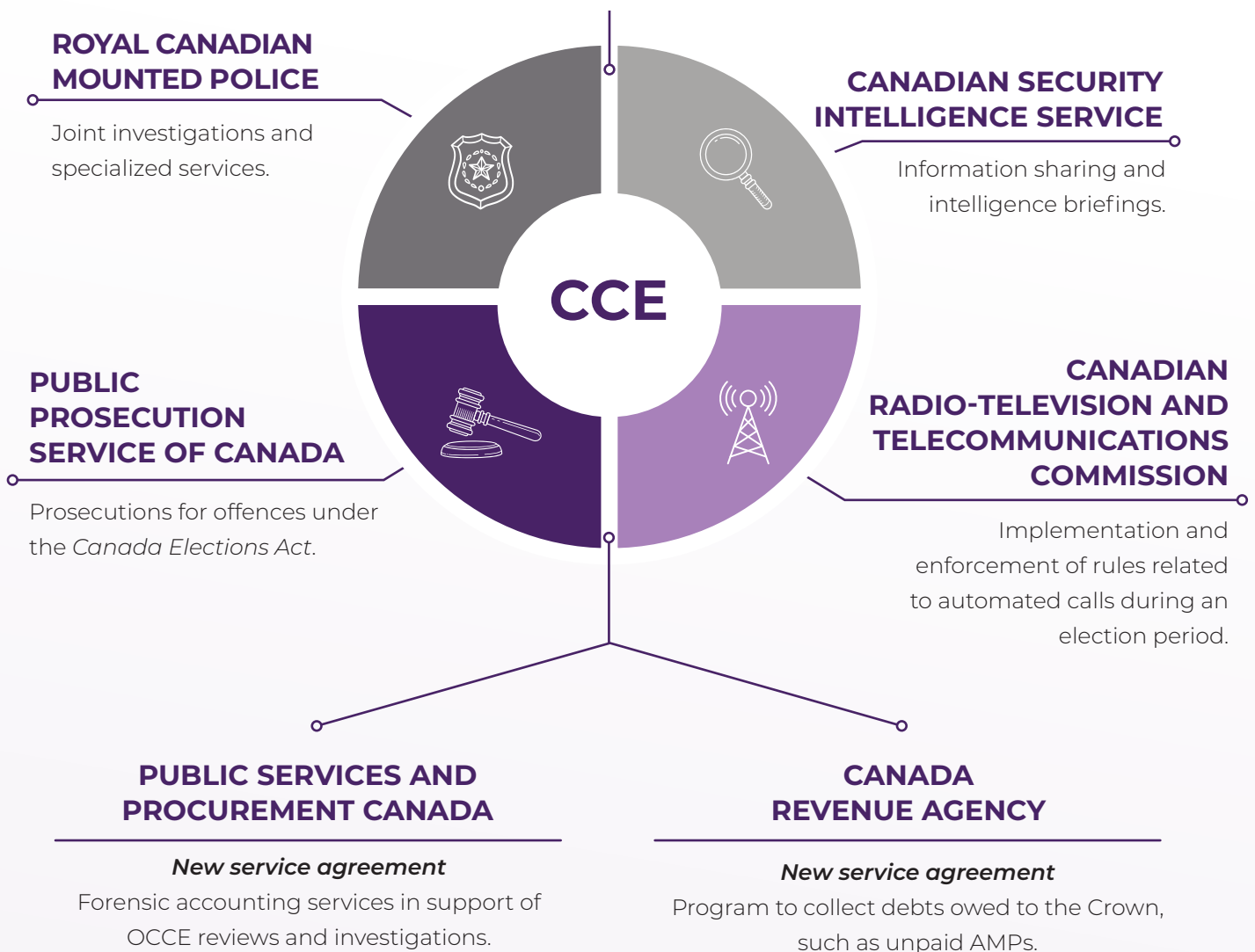
# CCE Partnerships



Memoranda of understanding (MOU) and service agreements define the framework for collaboration between the OCCE and other government agencies, within the limits of what is legally permitted.

## ELECTIONS CANADA

Consultation and information sharing on shared electoral issues, reporting to Parliament, corporate services such as human resources and finance.





# Outreach and engagement



Outreach, awareness and engagement are priorities for the Commissioner of Canada Elections.

In 2023-2024, OCCE representatives participated in numerous engagement opportunities with partners and stakeholders.

## FEDERAL PARTNERS

- » CSIS
- » RCMP
- » Communications Security Establishment Canada (CSE)
- » Global Affairs Canada (GAC)
- » Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)
- » Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections (SITE) Task Force



## PROVINCIAL STAKEHOLDERS

- » Elections BC
- » Élections Québec
- » Elections Ontario
- » Elections PEI
- » Elections Alberta
- » Office of the Manitoba Commissioner of Elections



## INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

- » Sweden (Swedish Election Authority and Psychological Defence Agency)
- » The Netherlands
- » Mexico (*Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación*)
- » Singapore
- » South Korea



## COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

- » Federal Government Investigators Community
- » Community of Federal Regulators
- » Interdepartmental social media meetings
- » Agents of Parliament policy network
- » Intelligence Analyst Community of Practice
- » Canadian Association of Professional Intelligence Analysts (CAPIA)





## OCCE's participation in the Public Inquiry on Foreign Interference

In December 2023, the OCCE was granted standing in the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions. This gave the office a platform to explain the OCCE's role, how the office operates, and the nature of complaints it received during the last two general elections including those related to foreign interference. In March and September of 2024, the Commissioner and members of her staff also provided public testimony to the inquiry.

Significant efforts were deployed by the OCCE to meet the requirements of the public inquiry. These efforts had a substantial impact on its staff and its operations. OCCE personnel worked diligently to meet the commission's obligations and deadlines while also ensuring the continuity of the organization's regular activities.

The OCCE's work on foreign interference is highly complex but represents only a small part of its usual responsibilities. Adapting quickly to this issue and managing a high volume of requests was a major undertaking for a small organization like the OCCE.

# Looking ahead



Ensuring that the Act is complied with and enforced requires ongoing efforts that extend well beyond election periods. Over the past year, the OCCE has worked diligently to be prepared for a general election at any time and make sure that it has the necessary tools to carry out its work. This preparation requires extensive planning and resources, significantly impacting the activities of an organization.

In the coming year, the Commissioner will also continue her efforts to build a stable, skilled workforce to address future challenges and provide excellent service for Canadians, while ensuring proper stewardship of public funds. These activities align with the Commissioner's long-term vision of sound management of the OCCE's human and financial resources, sustaining workforce stability and securing the tools necessary to fulfill her mandate.



## If you see something, say something!

### Information required to make a complaint

For the OCCE to process your complaint, please remember to provide:

- » your full name\* and contact information;
- » a detailed description of the facts, circumstances, or actions that you believe may have led to a potential breach of the Act;
- » the date, location, full names, and contact information of key individuals;
- » any documents or photos you consider relevant.

The initial evaluation of your complaint may be delayed if this information is not provided.

The passage of time can also affect the availability or quality of evidence and the Commissioner's ability to address your complaint; therefore, don't wait to contact us.

\* If you wish to file an **anonymous** complaint, you may do so by completing our online form. It is essential to provide all relevant information or supporting documents, as we will not be able to contact you.

### Submitting a complaint

The best way to file a complaint is by using our [online complaint form](#).

You can also submit a complaint to the CCE by:

- » email: [info@cef-cce.ca](mailto:info@cef-cce.ca)
- » telephone: 1-855-759-6740
- » teletypewriter (TTY): 1-855-759-6734
- » fax: 1-800-663-4908 ou 819-939-1801
- » mail: Commissioner of Canada Elections  
30 Victoria street  
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0M6



## Commissioner of Canada Elections

30 Victoria Street  
Gatineau, Québec  
K1A 0M6

[www.cef-cce.ca](http://www.cef-cce.ca)

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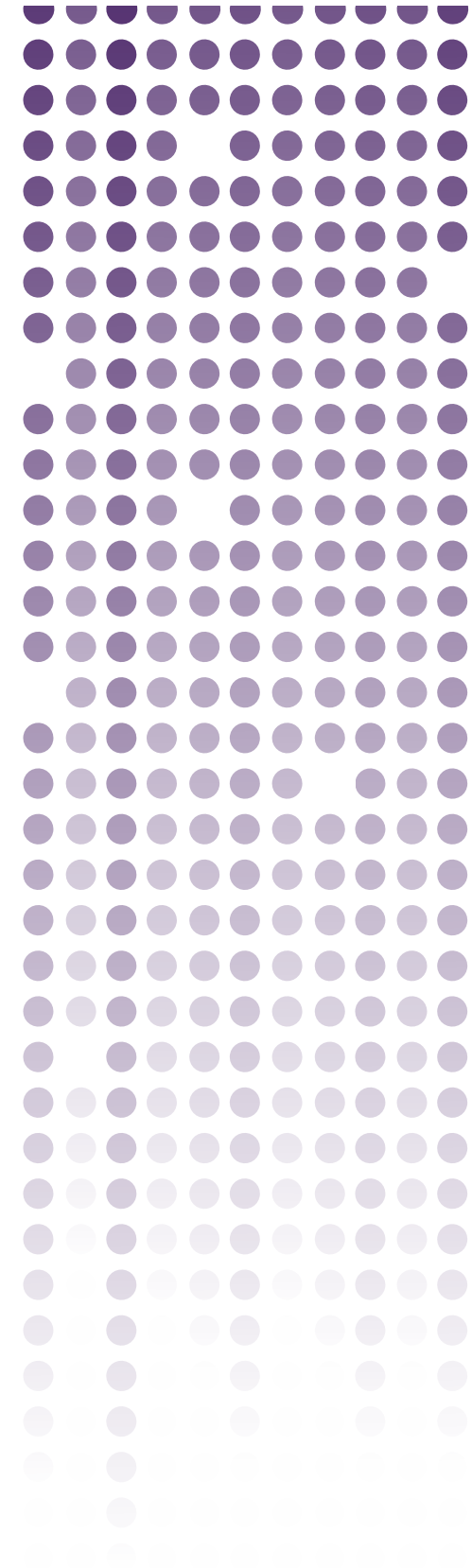


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