

	<h2>Ontario</h2>
<p>Population – 12,986,857 Total Area – 1,076,395 km² Population Density – 12.07 people/km² Capital (Population) – Toronto (2,503,281) Number of K-12 Schools – 4935 (2008-09) Number of K-12 Students – 2,070,736 (2008-09)</p>	

Ontario is the most populated and most densely populated province in Canada. The Golden Horseshoe has a population of 8,102,163, while the National Capital region has another 1,451,415 people. Excluding these regions, the population density falls to only 3.3 people/km².

K-12 Online Learning

Category	Yes/No	Comments
Province-led programme	No	
Other online programmes	Yes	Both public and private
Provincial-level policy	Yes	

Online Programmes

Ontario was one of the first provinces in Canada to establish district-based online learning programmes—with the Avon Maitland Distance Education Centre being the first programme in Ontario in 1994-95. Since that time many of the school boards in the province have established their own programmes, and 20 of these school boards have come together to form the Ontario eLearning Consortium (OeLC). OeLC is designed to allow its school board members to work together to maximise their online offerings by sharing course offerings, resources and students. During the 2009-10 school year, the OeLC had 9,695 enrolments (up from 6,276 in 2008-09).

While the OeLC has three Catholic school boards as members, recently the Catholic school boards have also created their own Ontario Catholic eLearning Consortium (OCeLC). The purpose of this second organisation “is to provide equity of access for Catholic secondary students to take [online] secondary credits developed and taught by Catholic teachers.” The OCeLC does have an agreement to share students, however, they do not waive the required course fee like the OeLC does.

Finally, since 2001 the 12 French-language school boards in the province have also cooperated to offer distance education to their students through the *Consortium d'apprentissage virtuel de langue française de l'Ontario*. The Consortium, which falls under the same regulations as the two English-language programmes, utilises a primarily asynchronous delivery model. However, the school boards have made the decision that those assigned to teach online do so in a full-time capacity, meaning that students are able to contact their teacher via a 1-800 number or using synchronous tools at any

time during the school day. The Consortium reported almost 1300 successful completions during the 2009-10 school year, with only a 4% failure rate.

The total enrolments in the provincial LMS for 2009-10 were 24,333 students. This does not include students engaged in online or blended learning offered by school boards through their own LMSes. In addition to the public school offerings, there are three private K-12 online learning programmes: Virtual High School (Ontario), Ottawa Carleton e-School and Keewaytinook Internet High School. At present, there are over 4,700 students enrolled in private online schools in the province (i.e., VHS(O) – 3143; OCeS – 1340; KiHS – 220).

Governance and Regulation

There is no mention of distance education or online learning in the *Education Act* in Ontario. However, the Ministry of Education conducted a survey of existing distance education courses in 2004 and consolidated content into a single learning management system (LMS) maintained by the province in 2005-06. During the course development process, the Ministry created a standardised model and each lesson had two sets of evaluations: one for online delivery and one for face-to-face delivery. The online courses are housed in the provincial LMS, while the face-to-face version is made available through the Ontario Education Resource Bank to any teacher, student, or parent of a participating board.

In 2006, the Ministry released an *E-Learning Strategy*, which school boards are required to follow if they wanted to access the free curriculum and technical support provided by the Ministry. The *E-Learning Strategy* includes a policy document outlining specific requirements for the individual school boards in three areas: policies for board delivery of e-learning programmes under the Service Level Agreement, acceptable use policies, and conditions of use policies. The *E-Learning Strategy*, along with the accompanying policy document and Service Level Agreement, describes the responsibilities and restrictions placed on school boards. The responsibilities for the Ministry, school boards, individual schools, and online teachers primarily describe who is supposed to provide what services and how those services should be provided. In some instances the Ministry requirements are quite restrictive (e.g., the provincial LMS cannot be used for blended learning or professional development). Many school boards have chosen to use the provincial LMS and also maintain their own LMS for these other purposes.

School boards that agree to follow these policies are permitted to use this content and the LMS free of charge with their own students. However, unless a prior agreement has been made (e.g., the OeLC members), they are required to charge a fee of \$640 to students from other school boards who enrol in their courses.

Finally, at their 2010 annual meeting, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (one of the four main unions representing teachers in the province) adopted a policy regarding distance education stating, among other things, that they believe that "the Ministry of Education should ensure that all students in publicly-funded schools should have equal access to online credit courses, including but not limited to covering the cost of online credit courses for low-income students and making available computers, modems and Internet access" (p. 29).