

Council Members

Mayor Neil Nicholson
D-Mayor Cathy Regier
Councillors:
Mark Bell
Connie Tabbert
Chris Olmstead
Micheal Moore
Joey Trimm

Honorable Rob Flack
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street, 17th floor Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2J3

June 4, 2025

RE: Proposed Amendments to O. Reg. 530/22 to Expand Strong Mayor Powers and Duties to Additional Municipalities

Dear Minister Flack,

Thank you for your letter dated April 9, 2025, regarding the expansion of Strong Mayor Powers and Duties to the Township of Whitewater Region. Our Council discussed this issue in an open forum at our council meeting on May 22 and are firmly of the belief that this effort undermines the value of collaboration between the Mayor, Councillors, and Staff. Increasing the powers of the Mayor eliminates shared decision making, create divisiveness at the council table, and blurs the lines between administrative and political roles. Our council believes that this would result in an erosion of the democratic process at the Municipal level, especially in small municipalities like Whitewater Region.

Our council works as a cohesive unit, firmly focused on the goals of advancing and encouraging growth and making our community a wonderful place in which to live and invest. Each of member of council brings their own set of skills, knowledge, values and perspectives to achieve these goals, and has worked extremely well together.

Since it was sworn in, our Council has been collectively focused on advancing provincial priorities by delivering much needed housing, building infrastructure that supports community growth and the construction of new homes, including housing-enabling infrastructure such as water and wastewater. The Township of

(613) 646-2282



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www.whitewaterregion.ca



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Whitewater Region has grown significantly over the last decade (the fourth fastest growing municipality in the County of Renfrew) and, as a rural municipality, we have added a large amount of new housing to meet market demands.

Whitewater Region has invested in our planning department with delegated planning authorities from the County of Renfrew. With a qualified planner, we can very quickly process most planning matters with the exception of plans of subdivisions. With our expanded building inspector staff, we have been able to reduce permit processing times. We do all of this while keeping permits and planning application fees suppressed, augmenting our planning and building department with general taxation revenues to support growth in our community and contribute to meeting Provincial priorities.

Whitewater Region averages approximately 30 new single family detached homes per year over the past 10 years. Although we only have one of our rural communities with both water and wastewater services, it is positioned well for additional development; with one subdivision partly built out and a second subdivision in its planning stages. This sizeable development is constrained by water and wastewater services, stormwater management and road access to the provincial highway.

Our challenge is not with the balance of power around our Council table or our relationship with staff, it is that we simply do not have the funds (or technical staff) needed to update or expand our infrastructure services to support development. Whitewater has implemented Development Charges as a means of raising additional funds, and have purposefully suppressed them to \$5,000/home in order to promote affordable development. Whitewater staff have applied to grants made available by the Province of Ontario, but with no success. Our Council has plans to use your governments' increases to our OCIF and OMPF but these only barely satisfy 20% of our existing Asset Management Program shortfall. This shortfall was further exasperated when OPP billing has increased at the same rate as our OMFP increases. Whitewater Region simply cannot afford to support additional development, let alone invest in our current infrastructure.

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In closing, our Council requests that the Ontario Government excludes the Township of Whitewater Region from its proposed amendments to O. Reg. 530/22 to Expand Strong Mayor Powers and Duties to Additional Municipalities, and work with us to identify funding to support expansion of its infrastructure systems to support existing and future residential and commercial growth. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Please feel free to contact me through our offices if you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,



Mayor Neil Nicholson

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Deputy Mayor Cathy

Regier

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Certified True Copy

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

Re: Resolution - Strong Mayor Powers Update

At its meeting of May 21, 2025, the Council of the Township of Whitewater Region adopted the following resolution:

WHEREAS the Province of Ontario has proposed to designate the Township of Whitewater Region as a "Strong Mayor" community, granting enhanced powers to the Mayor effective May 1, 2025; and,
WHEREAS the Strong Mayor powers significantly alter the balance of governance at the municipal level, undermining the role of Council in decision-making and weakening the fundamental democratic principle of majority rule; and,
WHEREAS the Township of Whitewater Region has a long history of collaborative, transparent, and accountable local governance built upon a foundation of Council-debate and shared decision-making; and,
WHEREAS many municipally elected officials across the province and members of the public have expressed significant concern regarding the imposition of these powers; and,
WHEREAS the Township of Whitewater Region did not formally request or express a desire to be designated under the Strong Mayor framework; and,
WHEREAS a growing number of municipalities and elected officials across Ontario are questioning the appropriateness of the Strong Mayor system and are calling for its reconsideration or repeal;
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Council of the Township of Whitewater Region formally request that the Premier of

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Ontario and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing immediately remove the Township of Whitewater Region from the list of municipalities designated under the Strong Mayor legislation;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, all regional Members of Provincial Parliament, all Ontario municipalities, and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) for their awareness and support.

Carried - Resolution #2025-5335

Sincerely,



Carmen Miller
Clerk/CEMC

