



Honourable Rob Flack
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
College Park, 17th Flr,
777 Bay St
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3
minister.mah@ontario.ca

Monday, June 9, 2025

Subject: Reaffirmation of WOWC Position on Strong Mayor Powers

Dear Minister Flack,

On behalf of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC), I am writing to reaffirm our position regarding the expansion of Strong Mayor Powers and to respectfully share the concerns raised by our members in light of recent developments.

At our most recent meeting on April 25, 2025, the Caucus passed the following motion;

#10: Moved by Jones, seconded by Charbonneau: THAT staff be directed to send a letter to the Province reiterating the 2023 position of the WOWC regarding Strong Mayor Powers to reflect the current context and that the letter be circulated to all 117 WOWC municipalities.

Carried.

The expansion of Strong Mayor Powers continues to raise unease among both municipal staff and elected officials, many of whom are questioning the long-term implications of shifting legislative authority from Council as a whole to the Head of Council. This shift, in the view of the Caucus, does not appear to offer clear democratic benefits and risks undermining the collaborative decision-making processes that are foundational to effective local governance.

Furthermore, the short consultation windows provided on these changes have made it difficult for municipalities to engage meaningfully with the Province on a matter of such significant consequence. These ongoing concerns are also connected to broader challenges we are experiencing in the recruitment and retention of qualified municipal professionals and elected representatives—challenges that are increasingly acute in rural and small urban communities across Western Ontario.

As always, the WOWC remains committed to working with the Province to tackle shared priorities, particularly the housing and affordability crisis. We believe that a strong, respectful partnership between municipal councils

and the Province is essential to making meaningful progress. Empowering municipalities means ensuring that local councils continue to have a central role in the governance of their communities.

We ask the Province to reconsider the continued expansion of Strong Mayor Powers and to engage in a renewed dialogue with municipalities—one grounded in collaboration, respect, and a shared commitment to democratic governance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Burns Gallagher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "K" and "B".

Kate Burns Gallagher
Executive Director

Encl.
2023-10-24 WOWC Resolution Strong Mayors Powers

cc:
Hon. Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Housing
Matthew Rae, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
WOWC MPPs
Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus
WOWC Municipalities



October 24, 2023

Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
premier@ontario.ca

and

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Send electronically via email
minister.mah@ontario.ca

Re: Strong Mayor Powers

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Calandra

Please be advised at the regular meeting of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus held on October 13, 2023, the following resolution was passed:

Moved by M. Ryan, seconded by B. Milne:

THAT item of correspondence 7-1(b) be received; and

WHEREAS the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus Inc. (WOWC) is a not-for-profit organization representing 15 upper and single tier municipalities in Southwestern Ontario with more than one and a half million residents;

AND WHEREAS the purpose of WOWC is to enhance the prosperity and overall wellbeing of rural and small urban communities across the region;

AND WHEREAS the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022, S.O. 2022, c. 18, for select municipalities, transfers legislative responsibility from the deliberative body of the Council to the Head of Council;

AND WHEREAS the Better Municipal Governance Act, 2022, S.O. 2022, c. 24 provides for provincially appointed facilitators to assess the regional governments to determine the mix of roles and responsibilities between the upper and lower-tier municipalities;

AND WHEREAS the Building Faster Fund arbitrarily ties housing supportive funding to municipalities that establish a housing target based solely on population size;

AND WHEREAS "responsible and accountable governments with respect to matters within their jurisdiction;

AND WHEREAS overcoming the housing and affordability crisis in Ontario requires sustained, strategic, and focused efforts from all levels of government, informed from the expertise of all levels of government.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT WOWC calls on the provincial government to work with municipalities in Ontario, as a responsible and accountable level of government, to focus all efforts on tackling the housing and affordability crisis in Ontario by:

Revoking existing 'strong mayor powers' and not implementing legislation that transfers legislative responsibility from the body of Council to the Head of Council.

Respecting spheres of jurisdiction, recognizing that municipalities are best positioned to determine the mix of roles and responsibilities between upper and lower-tier municipalities and only conduct structural and service delivery reviews of municipalities or regions where a majority of municipalities included within the region, request the same.

Recognizing rural and small urban municipalities are critical to overcoming the housing and affordability crisis in Ontario and not allocating the majority of scarce provincial housing supportive funding to a limited subset of large urban municipalities in Ontario.

AND THAT WOWC calls upon the provincial government to provide all municipalities with the financial resources to tackle the housing and affordability crisis in Ontario that is pricing too many people, especially young families and newcomers, out of home ownership, while amplifying socio-economic disparities and reliance on municipally provided human services;

AND THAT this resolution be forwarded to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario for support so that the future governance of our communities is in the hands of its constituents;

AND THAT this resolution be forwarded to: the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier of Ontario; WOWC Members; the EOWC, and all WOWC area MPs and MPPs. - **CARRIED**

Please contact Kate Burns Gallagher, Executive Director, Western Ontario Warden' Caucus, kate@wowc.ca should you have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,



Glen McNeil
Chair, Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus



cc.

Hon. Rob Flack, Associate Minister of Housing

Rob.Flack@pc.ola.org

Matthew Rae, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Matthew.Rae@pc.ola.org

WOWC MPPs

WOWC MPs

Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus