

Staff Report

To: Mayor Bazinet and Members of Council
Report From: Janice Hallahan, Chief Administrative Officer
Meeting Date: April 28, 2025
Subject: Opposition to Amendments to O. Reg. 530/22 – Expand Strong Mayor Powers
Attachment(s): 1) Minister's Letter re Expansion of Strong Mayor Powers – April 9, 2025
2) AMO Municipal Governance Backgrounder – Strong Mayor Powers – August 17, 2023
3) AMCTO Advocacy Update: Expansion of Strong Mayor Powers – April 9, 2025
4) Province of Ontario's Strong Mayor Power and Duties

Recommendation:

1) That Goderich Town Council approve the Chief Administrative Officer's suggested motion – Opposition to Proposed Amendments to O.Reg. 530/22 - Expand Strong Mayor Powers

WHEREAS on April 9, 2025, the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced the expansion of Strong Mayor powers to 169 additional municipalities, including the Town of Goderich, as a Strong Mayor community granting enhanced powers to the Mayor, effective May 1, 2025

AND WHEREAS the 169 municipalities affected by the April 9 Strong Mayor powers letter supplied insufficient time for any meaningful feedback and coordinated response on O.Reg. 530/22 from Councils given the six (6) business day turnaround deadline for comments of April 16 - procedural notice provisions to call a special Council meeting and short notice scheduling conflicts of Council members;

AND WHEREAS the Strong Mayors powers has raised significant concerns regarding the centralization of power, reduced accountability, alters the balance of governance at the municipal level by ultimately undermining the role of Council and decision-making by weakening the fundamental democratic principle of majority rule, diminishes the role of elected municipal councillors in representing the diverse interests of the community, and the potential for the abuse of power;

AND WHEREAS the Town of Goderich has a long history of collaborative, transparent, and accountable local governance built upon a foundation of Council debate and shared decision-making;

AND WHEREAS municipal elected officials across the province and members of the public have expressed significant concerns regarding the negative impacts on public trust, democratic participation, and municipal decision-making processes if Mayors are granted the ability to bypass Council decisions without adequate consultation or oversight;

AND WHEREAS the Town of Goderich did not formally request or express a desire to be designated under the Strong Mayors framework;

AND WHEREAS a growing number of municipalities and elected officials across the province of Ontario are questioning the appropriateness of a Strong Mayor system, and are calling for its reconsideration or repeal;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Council of the Town of Goderich formally expresses its opposition to the Ontario government's proposal to expand Strong Mayor powers, in order to preserve local democracy, transparency, and accountability;

AND THAT the Council of the Town of Goderich request the Premier of Ontario, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing immediately remove the Town of Goderich from the list of municipalities designated under Strong Mayors legislation;

AND THAT the Town of Goderich encourages advocacy for democratic principles and for municipal governance systems that prioritize collaboration, inclusivity, and democratic engagement;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT a copy of this motion be forwarded to The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, The Honourable Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and MPP for Elgin-Middlesex-London, The Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs, and MPP for Huron-Bruce, all Ontario municipalities, as well as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) for their awareness and support.

2) That Goderich Town Council further direct the Mayor work with the Chief Administrative Officer and Town Solicitor to research available options to delegate Strong Mayor authority should it come into effect May 1, 2025.

Report Summary:

On April 9, 2025, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced the expansion of Strong Mayor powers to 169 additional municipalities, including the Town of Goderich.

Background and Analysis:

On April 9, 2025, the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced a significant expansion of Strong Mayor powers to 169 additional municipalities, including the Town of

Goderich (see attached Minister's Letter). The proposed amendments to [O.Reg. 530/22](#) – Strong Mayor Powers, is to come into effect on May 1, 2025, with the government's expectation that the Mayor will make use of these powers in a similar way, supporting provincial priorities that will help the Province and communities grow; supporting the construction of new homes, economic development and building infrastructure that supports community growth, including housing-enabling infrastructure like water and wastewater infrastructure, as well as roads, highways, transit and more.

The Strong Mayor legislation would enable the Mayor to:

- Appoint the municipality's Chief Administrative Officer
- Hire certain municipal department heads and establish and re-organize departments
- Creating committees of Council, assigning their functions and appointing chairs and vice-chairs of committees of Council;
- Propose the municipal budget, which would be subject to Council amendments and a separate head of Council veto and Council override process;
- Propose certain municipal by-law if the Mayor is of the opinion that the proposed by-law could potentially advance a provincial priority identified in regulation. Council can pass these by-laws if more than one-third of all Council members vote in favour.
- Veto certain by-laws if the head of Council is of the opinion that all or part of the by-law could potentially interfere with a provincial priority;
- Bring forward matters for Council consideration if the head of Council is of the opinion that considering the matter could potentially advance a provincial priority.

The expansion of powers builds on the initial introduction of Strong Mayor powers for Toronto and Ottawa in 2022, which has since been gradually rolled out across the province. Currently, there are 47 municipalities who have received these enhanced executive authority powers to support and deliver shared provincial-municipal priorities to assist in 'cutting red tape'. Attached is a more detailed copy of the Province of Ontario's Strong Mayor Power and Duties.

In discussion with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, I propose Council adopt the Opposition to Proposed Amendments to O.Reg. 530/22 - Expand Strong Mayor Powers motion outlined in the Recommendation section of this report and further direct the Mayor work with the Chief Administrative Officer and Town Solicitor to research available options to delegate Strong Mayor authority should it come into effect May 1, 2025.

Linkage:

N/A

Financial Impacts and/or Source of Funding:

No costs or revenue associated with this report.

Consulted With:

Greg Stewart, Town Solicitor

Approved By:

Janice Hallahan, Chief Administrative Officer

Andrea Fisher, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk