

Staff Report

Report To: City Council
Report From: Tim Simmonds, City Manager
Briana Bloomfield, City Clerk
Meeting Date: April 28, 2025
Report Code: CM-25-014
Subject: Provincial Proposal to Expand Strong Mayor Powers

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CM-25-014 respecting the provincial proposal to expand strong mayor powers, City Council receives the report for information purposes.

Highlights:

- On April 9, 2025, the Province announced its intent to expand strong mayor powers, previously limited to select municipalities, to a broader group of municipalities, including the City of Owen Sound, effective May 1, 2025.
- Prior to the communication received on April 9, Staff had no indication that strong mayor powers were being considered for additional municipalities in Ontario.
- Staff are actively reviewing the proposed legislation, including its legal, operational, and governance implications.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: This report supports the delivery of Core Service.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

[Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022](#) – September 2022

[Better Municipal Governance Act, 2022](#) – December 2022

[Proposed Amendments to O. Reg. 530/22](#) (under the *Municipal Act, 2001*) to Expand Strong Mayor Powers and Duties to Additional Municipalities

Background:

On April 9, 2025, the City received [correspondence](#) from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Hon. Robert Flack regarding a significant legislative proposal to expand strong mayor powers to an additional 169 municipalities across the province, including the City of Owen Sound, effective May 1, 2025.

The proposal would expand strong mayor powers, originally introduced for Toronto and Ottawa in 2022, to heads of council in municipalities with at least 6 council members. This expansion is intended to support provincial priorities such as housing, infrastructure, and transit development.

The proposed powers include, but are not limited to:

- The ability for the head of council to appoint the municipality's chief administrative officer (CAO).
- The power to hire certain municipal department heads and establish or reorganize departments.
- The authority to create committees of council, assign their functions, and appoint the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of these committees.
- The ability to propose the municipal budget, subject to council amendments and a separate mayoral veto and council override process.
- The power to veto certain by-laws if they potentially interfere with provincial priorities such as housing, transit, and infrastructure.
- The ability to bring forward matters for council consideration if they potentially advance provincial priorities.
- The authority to propose certain municipal by-laws that could advance provincial priorities, which can be passed if more than one-third of council members vote in favour.

In Ontario, 47 municipalities currently have strong mayor powers, many of which were granted in 2023. For those municipalities that received these

strong mayor powers, many have adopted varied approaches in implementing these powers. Some have delegated certain powers to Council or the CAO through by-laws or mayoral decisions. Others have opted to exercise only a portion of the powers available to them. Conversely, some municipalities have chosen to fully exercise the authority granted under the legislation.

Analysis:

At this time, the expansion of strong mayor powers remains a provincial proposal. The legislation is not yet in effect, and staff are actively reviewing the contents and implications of this development. This announcement was not anticipated by staff, and as such, it will take some time for staff to fully understand the potential impact of these changes for the regular operations of the City.

Staff will analyze the proposed legislative framework to better understand the scope, intent, and operational requirements associated with the expanded strong mayor powers and their applicability to Owen Sound. This is a substantial shift in the municipal governance landscape that has direct implications for the City. While the April 9, 2025, announcement signals the Province's intention to proceed, at this time, this remains a proposal which will not go into effect until May 1, 2025.

On April 17, 2025, a Special County of Grey Joint All Councils meeting was held and John Mascarin, Aird & Berlis LLP and Jeffrey Abrams, Principles Integrity provided information on strong mayor powers. This meeting can be viewed on [Grey County's YouTube channel](#).

Following the Special County of Grey Joint All Councils meeting, a call for questions was sent out to Owen Sound Council and staff so that they could be provided to Mr. Mascarin in advance of this Special Meeting. Attached to the report are the preliminary list of questions provided to Mr. Mascarin. During the Special Meeting, should Council feel a response needs to be discussed in closed session, a motion could be made at that time.

Financial Implications:

There will be legal fees associated with education sessions and reviews of City policies and procedures, if required.

Communication Strategy:

Over the coming weeks, staff will assess the operational and governance impacts, consult with relevant stakeholders, and return to Council with more information.

Attachments:

1. Correspondence from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
2. List of Questions

Recommended by:

Briana Bloomfield, City Clerk

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Tim Simmonds, City Manager at tsimmonds@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1210.