



Municipality of Port Hope

Staff Report

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Report Title: Provincial Proposal to Expand Strong Mayor Powers to Port Hope

Report to: Council

Date of meeting: April 15, 2025

Report Author:

Shrishma Davé, Municipal Clerk/Manager of Legislative Services

Department responsible:

Corporate Services

Report Number: CS-08-25

Recommended Motion:

That Council receive Report CS-08-25 for information.

Highlights:

- On April 9, 2025, the Province announced its intent to extend strong mayor powers—previously limited to select municipalities—to a broader group of municipalities, including the Municipality of Port Hope, effective May 1, 2025.
- Staff are actively reviewing the proposed legislation, including its legal, operational, and governance implications.

Background:

This report is to formally notify Council that staff have received correspondence from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Hon. Rob Flack, dated April 9, 2025, regarding a significant legislative proposal to expand “strong mayor” powers to an additional 169 municipalities across the province, including the Municipality of Port Hope, effective May 1, 2025.

On April 9, 2025, the Province [announced](#) a proposal to extend strong mayor powers—originally introduced for Toronto and Ottawa in 2022—to heads of council in municipalities with at least six council members. This expansion is intended to support provincial priorities such as housing, infrastructure, and transit development.

These proposed powers include, but are not limited to:

- The ability for the head of council to appoint the municipality’s chief administrative officer (CAO).
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- 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 favor.

The full details of the proposed changes are currently posted on Ontario's Regulatory Registry for public review until April 16, 2025, with implementation anticipated on May 1, 2025. At this time, it is unclear whether the Province is inviting municipalities to comment on this proposal, or whether it is collecting public comments in general.

In Northumberland County, the Province is proposing strong mayor powers to three other municipalities in addition to Port Hope: Cobourg, Brighton and Trent Hills.

In Ontario, 47 municipalities currently have strong mayor powers, many of which were granted in 2023. This includes municipalities to the west of Port Hope, including Clarington, Ajax, Whitby and Oshawa.

It is important to note that for those municipalities that received these strong mayor powers in 2023, 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.

Discussion:

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 Municipality.

Staff will analyze the proposed legislative framework to better understand the scope, intent, and operational requirements associated with the expanded strong mayor powers, and its applicability to the Municipality. This is a substantial shift in the municipal governance landscape that has direct implications for the Municipality. 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.

Staff also need to gain additional clarity on voting thresholds identified in the legislation and will consult the Ministry, other municipal administrators, and governance professionals to gather broader insights.

Staff are monitoring developments and will report back promptly with further information and recommendations. This will include options for preparing for any changes and potential impacts on municipal procedures, policies, by-laws, etc. Staff will also investigate setting up additional training for Council on strong mayor powers.

Financial Considerations:

There are no noted financial considerations for this report. Potential impacts to regular budget preparation processes will be further reviewed by staff.

Communication and Public Engagement:

The full details of the proposed changes are currently posted on Ontario's Regulatory Registry for public review until April 16, 2025 and can be reviewed by members of the public [here](#).

Should the proposed legislation come into effect on May 1, 2025, it will be important to ensure that residents understand what strong mayor powers are, how they differ from current governance structures, and how these changes could impact local decision-making in Port Hope.

Staff will develop a communication strategy that may include but not limited to, the following components:

- Additional content on the Municipal Website
- Media Releases and Public Notices
- Social Media updates
- Additional Mayor/Council messaging
- Future staff reports to Council

Conclusion:

The Province's proposal to expand strong mayor powers to municipalities like Port Hope represents a significant and unexpected shift for the Municipality of Port Hope. While these changes are not yet in effect and will not come into force until May 1, 2025, staff are actively reviewing the legislation to understand the specific implications of the legislation. Over the coming weeks, staff will assess the operational and governance impacts, consult with relevant stakeholders, and return to Council with more information.

Attachments:

None.