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**To:** Mayor and Council

**From:** Sasha Helmkey-Playter, Clerk/Director of Legislative Services

**Meeting Date:** May 12, 2025

**Subject:** Report # LS-010-2025 – Strong Mayor Powers Overview

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## Recommendation

Be It Resolved that Council of the Township of Clearview hereby receive report LS-010-2025 (Strong Mayor Powers Overview) dated May 12, 2025, for information.

## Background

\*It's important to note that throughout this report the term head of council and mayor will be used interchangeably and have the same meaning.

On April 9, 2025, the Township of Clearview received official correspondence from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing that Strong Mayor Powers were being given to our municipality, effective May 1<sup>st</sup>. Attached as Appendix A is the correspondence. These powers were granted to 169 municipalities with councils of six members or more to support shared provincial-municipal priorities, such as encouraging the approval of new housing and constructing and maintaining infrastructure to support housing, including roads and transit. Most municipalities in Simcoe County were included in this round of announcements, except for Essa Township and Tiny Township.

To provide a brief history, Strong Mayor Powers were first introduced by the Province in 2022 under the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act and the Better Municipal Governance Act. The intent behind the change was to offer tools to help heads of council cut red tape and speed up the delivery of key shared municipal-provincial priorities such as housing, transit and infrastructure in their municipalities. This Act amended the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act providing specific powers to the head of council.

The first Strong Mayor Powers took effect in the City of Toronto and the City of Ottawa in the Fall of 2022, with 26 additional municipalities receiving powers effective July 1, 2023, as they had a population over 100,000, or growing to 100,000 by 2031, and submitted a housing pledge to the province. Effective October 21, 2023, Strong Mayor Powers were expanded to another 18 municipalities that had committed to their provincially assigned housing target as part of the province's commitment to build 1.5 million homes by 2031. These additional municipalities included two from Simcoe County; Town of Innisfil and the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury.

As of May 1<sup>st</sup>, 216 municipalities out of 444 now have Strong Mayor Powers.

## Comments and Analysis

As outlined above, Strong Mayor Powers revolve around speeding up the delivery of key shared municipal-provincial priorities. These powers are outlined under Part VI.1 of the Municipal Act, 2001 and O.Reg. 580/22 identifies the provincial priorities as:

- building 1.5 million new homes by December 31, 2031
- constructing and maintaining infrastructure to support housing, including:
  - transit
  - roads
  - utilities
  - servicing

To better understand Strong Mayor Powers, they essentially fall into three broad categories:

- **Legislative Powers** (e.g. the power to veto by-laws, the power to require Council to consider a matter)
- **Budget Duties** (e.g. the duty and responsibility to present a budget to council, and to approve the budget)
- **Administrative and Political Powers** (e.g. the power to appoint or remove a chief administrative officer, the power to establish committees, and change organizational structure).

It should be noted that the mayor cannot delegate legislative powers or budget duties but can delegate administrative and political powers.

Looking at the three broad categories, below is a more in-depth outline of the specific powers. This information has been obtained from the Province through their [guidance documents](#).

### Legislative

- **Bring forward matters for council consideration related to provincial priority**

The head of council can bring forward matters for council consideration if they are of the opinion that considering the matter could potentially advance a provincial priority in this regulation.

When bringing forward such a matter for council consideration, the head of council should consider whether any rules with respect to notice and public consultation apply to the exercise of a particular municipal authority.

- [By-law power related to provincial priorities](#)

The head of council can propose certain municipal by-laws if they are of the opinion that the proposed by-law could potentially advance a prescribed provincial priority. When using this power, the head of council can only propose by-laws made under:

- the [Municipal Act, 2001](#)
- the [City of Toronto Act, 2006](#)
- the [Planning Act](#)
- section 2 of the [Development Charges Act](#)

When proposing the by-law, the head of council must provide a copy of the proposed by-law and their reasons for the proposal to the clerk and each member of council. The head of council can require council to consider and vote on the proposed by-law at a meeting (despite any rules in a local procedure by-law). By-laws proposed by the head of council using this power are passed if more than one-third of all council members vote in favour of the by-law. The head of council is also able to vote on passing the by-law. Municipal procedure by-laws and by-laws related to filling a vacancy on council are excluded from this power.

- [Veto power and council override](#)

The head of council can choose to veto certain by-laws if they are of the opinion that all or part of the by-law could potentially interfere with a provincial priority. Only by-laws approved by Council made under the Municipal Act, 2001, the City of Toronto Act, 2006, the Planning Act, and section 2 of the Development Charges Act may be vetoed by the head of council. There is a separate veto process related to the municipal budget which is outlined later in this report.

It is up to the head of council to determine if they will consider vetoing a by-law, regardless of whether they attend a council meeting. The head of council must provide written notice to council of their intent to consider vetoing the by-law on or before two days after council voted in favour of the by-law.

If the head of council decides to use their veto within 14 days after the day council voted in favour of the by-law, the head of council must provide a written veto document (which includes the veto and reasons for the veto) to the clerk on the day they use the veto power. The clerk must then share the written document with each member of council by the next business day and also make the written document available to the public.

If the head of council uses their veto power, Council then has the ability to override the veto. Within 21 days after the clerk provides the written veto document to the members of Council, Council may override the veto if two-thirds of all council members vote to override the veto. During this process, the head of council remains as a member of council for council decision-making with one vote.

- [Direct staff](#)

The head of council can direct staff to do certain things related to their additional powers and duties. Direction from the head of council to staff under this authority must be provided in writing. For example, the head of council could direct staff to undertake research and provide advice on policies and programs or to implement any decisions related to their additional powers and duties.

## **Budget Duties**

With all the new powers now provided to Strong Mayors, budget duties are arguably the most significant. O.Reg. 530/22 defines the process to approve budgets which includes strict timelines for proposal, amendments, vetoes and overrides. The powers now state that the head of council is required to propose the budget for the municipality each year by February 1. The head of council must share the proposed budget with each member of council and the municipal clerk and make it available to the public. If the head of council does not propose the budget by February 1, council must prepare and adopt the budget.

After receiving the proposed budget from the head of council, council can amend the proposed budget by passing a resolution within a 30-day review period. The head of council then has 10 days from the end of the council review period to veto any council amendment. To veto a council amendment, the head of council must provide written documentation of the veto and rationale to each member of council and the municipal clerk on the day of the veto. Within a 15-day period after the head of council's veto period, council may override the head of council's veto of a council amendment if two-thirds of all council members vote to override the veto.

At the end of this process, the resulting budget is adopted by the municipality.

Municipalities who have already been through a budget process under Strong Mayor Powers have worked with their mayors to develop procedures to make the process move efficiently and effectively. In many instances the head of council issues a Mayoral Decision to have staff prepare the budget, some with parameters (i.e. budget proposes no more than a 3% increase), and some without.

## **Administrative and Political Powers**

- [Appoint a Chief Administrative Officer](#)

The head of council has the power to appoint or dismiss their municipality's chief administrative officer (CAO). Under the Municipal Act, 2001, the main responsibilities of the CAO are to:

- Exercise general control and management of the affairs of the municipality for the purpose of ensuring the efficient and effective operation of the municipality; and

- Perform such other duties as are assigned by the municipality.

\*This power can be delegated to Council.

- Hire municipal division heads and change organizational structure

The head of council can hire or dismiss certain municipal division heads — excluding statutory positions. Positions that are excluded from this power include:

- the clerk or deputy clerk
- a treasurer or deputy treasurer
- an Integrity Commissioner
- an Ombudsman
- an Auditor General
- a registrar, as described in section [223.11](#) of the Act
- a chief building official, as defined in the Building Code Act, 1992
- a chief of police, as defined in the Police Services Act
- a fire chief, as defined in the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997
- a medical officer of health, as defined in the Health Protection and Promotion Act.
- other officers or heads of divisions required to be appointed under the Municipal Act, 2001, the City of Toronto Act, 2006, or any other Act
- any other persons identified in regulation

\*This power can be delegated to Council or the CAO.

- Organizational structure

The head of council can also choose to create and re-organize the structure of the municipality. When making any changes to the organizational structure of the municipality, the head of council and municipality are subject to legal requirements including any terms in existing collective agreements or contracts that may apply.

\*This power can be delegated to Council or the CAO.

- Create, assign functions and appoint chairs of committees

The head of council can create new committees of council made under the Municipal Act, 2001 where all members are council members, and assign their functions. The head of council is also able to appoint the chairs and vice-chairs of such committees of council.

\*This power can be delegated to Council.

## **Exercising Powers**

When exercising powers, the head of council shall do so in writing to ensure accountability and transparency. This is done through either a Mayoral Decision or a Mayoral Directive.

Mayoral decisions are records of decisions made by the mayor regarding governance and policy and are required to be made public.

Mayoral directives are records of directions made by the mayor and given to staff to do research and preparation on an item under Section 284.3 of the Municipal Act, 2001. In certain circumstances, this may also include directions to carry out duties to implement those decisions. These are made public for transparency, notwithstanding any exemptions under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The Clerks Department has made templates for Mayoral Decisions or Directives, based on other municipal examples. Attached as Appendix B is the template for a Mayoral Decision to approve the by-laws passed at a Council meeting. Having this written approval signed immediately after a meeting shortens the two-day period before by-laws are deemed to be passed – unless the Mayor exercises the veto power. The Clerks Department will also work with the Mayor and the Finance Department to create templates for the budget process, as needed.

A [page](#) on the Township's website has already been created outlining the Strong Mayor Powers and a repository for any Mayoral Decisions or Directives made.

## **Training & Workshops**

There have been various training sessions offered to staff members through their associations, including AMCTO and MFOA regarding Strong Mayor Powers. These sessions have been beneficial in outlining experiences from other municipalities, best practices and processes, and further interpretation of powers from the province.

For Council training, the Clerks Department did reach out to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to inquire if there would be workshop sessions being provided for Council members to attend. The Ministry advised that they are currently developing sessions but don't have dates yet. The Clerks Department will update Council when the sessions come available and see if there is further interest from Council to hold its own workshop.

For reference, the County of Grey held a Special Joint Meeting of Councils on April 17, 2025, for an education session regarding Strong Mayor Powers. John Mascarin, a municipal lawyer with Aird Berlis provided the presentation. The education session and discussion was livestreamed on the County's YouTube page and can be found [here](#).

It provides a good background of how the legislation came to be and an in-depth review of the powers.

### What has changed?

To summarize, what has essentially changed? At the very core, the Township has now shifted from what has commonly been referred to as a Weak Mayor System to a Strong Mayor System. Below is table that has been created by AMCTO that succinctly identifies the key differences between a Strong Mayor System and a Weak Mayor System.

Strong Mayor System	Weak Mayor System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Council has more power and authority than other members of Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Council role a figurehead for Council with the same authority as other members of Council</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses authority to make independent decisions in some areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No formal authority outside of council</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has authority over administrative matters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role is political and provides oversight when acting with the whole of council</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided with veto power in some areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses relationships and influence to collaborate with other members to make decisions for the municipality</li> </ul>

### Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

### Clearview’s Strategic Plan

The above initiative supports the following strategic pillars:

- Communication

### Report Appendices

Appendix A – 2025-04-09 MMAH Itr re. Strong Mayor Powers

Appendix B – Mayoral Decision Template

## **Approvals**

**Submitted by:** Sasha Helmkey-Playter, B.A., Dipl. M.A., AOMC,  
Clerk/Director of Legislative Services

**Reviewed by:** Krista Pascoe, Dipl. M.A., Deputy Clerk

**Financial Implications  
Reviewed by:** Kelly McDonald, Treasurer

**Approved by:** John Ferguson, CAO