

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor, Council and Residents

**FROM:** Tara Stephens, Director of Legislative Services/City Clerk

**DATE:** April 17, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Strong Mayor Powers Explained: What Residents and Candidates Should Know

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This memo explains Strong Mayor Powers in clear, plain language for residents of the City of Welland and for people who may be considering running for elected office, as Mayor or a member of Council. It is intended to help increase understanding on how the role of Mayor has changed under provincial law, ahead of Nomination Day for the municipal election.

### **Where Do Strong Mayor Powers Come From?**

Cities and towns in Ontario, including Welland, get their powers from the Province of Ontario. This includes the Strong Mayor Powers given to the Mayor.

The Province created Strong Mayor Powers through the Municipal Act, 2001 by changing provincial law. These changes were mainly made to support the advancement of prescribed provincial priorities including building homes and maintaining infrastructure to support housing including transit, roads, utilities and servicing.

The City of Welland has been designated by the Province as a municipality where these Strong Mayor Powers apply.

### **What Can the Mayor Do Under Strong Mayor Powers?**

Strong Mayor Powers do **not** remove the role of City Council. Council continues to debate issues, pass by-laws, and represent residents. However, in a Strong Mayor system, the Mayor is given some additional authority in specific situations.

## **Key Powers Related to Housing Priorities**

When housing or related infrastructure is involved, the Mayor may:

- Bring certain matters directly to Council and require Council to discuss and vote on them
- Bring forward certain by-laws that relate to housing, which can pass with support from more than one-third of Council members
- Veto certain by-laws if the Mayor believes they interfere with provincial housing or infrastructure goals
  - Council can override a veto with a two-thirds vote

These powers can only be used when the Mayor believes the issue is connected to provincial housing priorities.

## **Powers Related to the Municipal Organization**

The Mayor also has authority in certain administrative areas, including the ability to:

- Appoint or remove the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
- Decide how the municipal organization is structured
- Hire or dismiss department heads, excluding for certain positions such as the Clerk and Treasurer
- Create certain committees and appoint their chairs

These powers can be delegated by the Mayor if they choose.

## **Budget Responsibilities**

Under the Strong Mayor framework:

- The Mayor prepares and presents the City's budget by February 1 each year
- Council members can suggest changes to the proposed budget
- The Mayor can veto budget changes made by Council
- Council can override a budget veto with a two-thirds vote

## **Transparency and Accountability**

To support openness and accountability:

- All Strong Mayor decisions must be made in writing
- Written decisions must be shared with all members of Council and the City Clerk
- These records are generally available to the public

- The Mayor must still follow conflict-of-interest rules set out in law

### **Clarifying Strong Mayor Powers**

- The Mayor **does not** make all decisions alone
- City Council **continues to** debate and vote on by-laws
- The Mayor **does not have** unlimited authority on all city matters

City Council continues to play a central role in governing the City of Welland.

### **Why This Matters for the Municipal Election**

For people thinking about running to be Mayor or a member of Council, it is important to understand the scope of Strong Mayor Powers. Under Provincial legislation, the role now includes:

- More authority for housing-related decisions
- A lead role in preparing the City's budget
- Greater accountability, since some decisions are made directly by the Mayor

For residents, understanding Strong Mayor Powers helps explain how local decisions are made and what to expect from the Mayor moving forward.

### **For More Information**

Residents can learn more by:

- Visiting the City of Welland's website:  
<https://www.welland.ca/Council/StrongMayorPowers.asp>
- Reviewing provincial legislation related to municipal governance
- Contacting the City Clerk's Office with questions about elections or municipal decision-making

*This memo is provided for general information only and does not replace provincial legislation or legal advice.*