

Background information follows:

Strong Mayor Powers and You



Strong Mayor Powers and You by Members of the Governance, Finance & Civic Engagement Committee of the NOTLRA

Did you know that, following the October 26 municipal election in Niagara on the Lake, the Lord Mayor will only need the support of two amenable Councillors to make decisions that could have serious impacts on our town and residents for decades?

The combination of strong mayor powers and the reduction in the number of Councillors contesting the 2026 election can result in three people having the legal authority to override the will of the majority of Council members that we elect this fall.

Two Government of Ontario decisions are responsible for this erosion of democracy.

First, Ontario's Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022 legislation became law on September 8, 2022. NOTL's Lord Mayor was designated as a "strong mayor" by provincial regulation filed on May 1, 2025.

Second, earlier this year the provincial government made a regulation reducing the number of NOTL's Councillors from eight to six, making official what the current Council decided without due notice to the public at its meeting on March 24, 2026.

Ontario's strong mayor system provides NOTL's Lord Mayor with centralized executive powers to act unilaterally in several areas.

Among other things, it will allow our newly elected Lord Mayor to propose future municipal budgets, and veto Council amendments to budgets with the support of only two Council members. Our Lord Mayor can also appoint or dismiss the Chief Administrative Officer and certain other department heads, direct town staff and reorganize the town's departments. This authority raises the troubling prospect of politicizing our town staff.

Moreover, the new Lord Mayor will have the authority to propose by-laws related to the provincial priorities set out below and pass those by-laws with the support of two Council members.

Provincial priorities set out in the strong mayor legislation are:

- Building 1.5 million new homes by December 31, 2031; and,*
- Constructing and maintaining infrastructure to support housing, including:*
 - transit*
 - roads*
 - utilities*
 - servicing*

If the Lord Mayor is of the opinion that all or part of a by-law proposed by a Council member would interfere with one of these provincial priorities, he or she could veto it.

This veto power could be overridden if two-thirds of Council members vote to do so.

Shockingly, the Lord Mayor's vote counts as a vote on the veto. Thus, the Lord Mayor,

together with two Council members, could defeat a veto supported by a majority of Council members.

Strong mayor powers erode democracy, diminish residents' voices and blur lines of accountability and transparency. Concerned residents are encouraged to write Council@NOTL.com and urge Councillors to advocate for removing strong mayor powers from Ontario's laws and regulations.

This year's municipal election is unlike any other in the history of Niagara on the Lake.

Your vote could determine what our town looks like in the years ahead.

Be informed before you vote this fall. Vote wisely.

Note: further information regarding strong mayor powers can be found here:

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-municipal-councillors-guide/10-strong-mayor-powers-and-duties#section-2>