

Local Government

AMO Position

- Local democracy is the engine of community life. It is the most direct and accountable way for residents to shape the world they live in. Our neighbourhoods should be guided by the people who call them home.
- When we champion vibrant municipal democracy, we aren't just protecting a system, we are empowering the local leadership and diverse voices necessary to build a resilient, self-determined future for every community in Ontario.
- Changes in Bill 100 to appoint regional chairs with "strong chair" powers are fundamentally undemocratic. Municipalities must retain meaningful authority over decisions that directly affect their communities, supported by transparent and accountable governance frameworks.
- While AMO supports efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of municipal governance systems, it stresses that reforms must be developed in partnership with municipalities and reflect local priorities. Neighbourhoods belong to the people who call them home, not to the province.

Overview

- Municipalities play a key role in delivering services and infrastructure that Ontarians rely on, and effective governance requires clear roles and responsibilities across orders of government.
- Bill 100 establishes a provincial authority to appoint regional chairs with strong chair powers. AMO opposes these changes and maintains that municipal leaders should be elected by their communities.
 - These changes cannot be considered in isolation. They come against a background of ongoing provincial action in areas of municipal jurisdiction that serve to undermine municipal authority and centralize decision making at the province.
 - From conservation authorities to special economic zones to appointed "strong chairs," the list of provincial intrusion into municipal jurisdiction continues to grow.
- AMO is concerned that these changes weaken accountability to voters, erode trust in democratic institutions, and undermine the ability of councils to represent the interests of their residents, move forward on local priorities, and deliver effective services.
- Strong mayor powers have been divisive with strong opinions on both sides. AMO continues to have concerns about the impact of strong mayors on the collaborative decision making that is a hallmark of local governance.
 - For the first time, Ontario voters will have the chance this October to choose the Heads of Council they think will best wield these powers.
 - But under Bill 100, voters will not have a say in choosing the provincially appointed strong chairs making critical decisions on their behalf. These appointees will be able to turn decisions made by democratically elected council members without a mandate from the public.
- It is important that regional chairs are seen to have democratic legitimacy, a strong, locally driven mandate, so they can build consensus that brings council and the public together to deliver ambitious goals like housing and economic development.

Key Facts

- Ontario municipalities deliver a wide range of core services and infrastructure, including transportation, housing-enabling infrastructure, emergency services, and community facilities that impact the day-to-day life of residents.
- Bill 100 made changes to regional governance structures that affect municipal council composition, voting arrangements, and regional decision-making processes.
 - Changes including provincial appointment of the head of council affect the Regional Municipalities of Durham, Halton, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo, and York, the District Municipality of Muskoka, and the County of Simcoe.
- Bill 100 makes changes to the council composition of Niagara Region and Simcoe County, reducing the number of council members, and allows the Minister to make similar changes to the councils of the Cities of Thorold and Port Colborne, and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.
 - Ontario municipalities already represent about 4,000 residents per councillor—roughly triple the national average, and over 30,000 residents per councillor in regional municipalities.
 - AMO supports keeping decisions on council size local to maintain effective representation and decision-making capacity.¹
- AMO opposes provincially appointed regional chairs and is concerned that appointed heads of council lack a direct democratic mandate from local residents and weaken accountability to voters.

Other Resources and Reports

- [AMO's 2026 Pre-Budget Submission](#)
- [Bill 100, *Better Regional Governance Act, 2026*](#)
- [AMO's Presentation to Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy on Bill 100](#)
- ["Protecting Democracy and Local Governance", AMO's Submission to Standing Committee on Bill 100](#)
- [AMO's Letter to Minister Flack on Appointed Regional Chairs](#)
- [AMO Policy Update, "Strong Mayor Powers Expanded"](#)

For more information: Contact the AMO Media Team at media@amo.on.ca

¹ AMO, 2026, Protecting Democracy and Local Governance

² AMO, 2026, Presentation to Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy