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June 10, 2026

The Honourable Rob Flack  
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
College Park  
17th Floor, 777 Bay Street  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Flack,

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) supports effective, meaningful decision making by municipal governments. We oppose the provincial government's decision to establish an authority to appoint regional chairs, the Warden of Simcoe County, and the Chair of the District of Muskoka. Municipal leaders should be elected by their communities. This keeps heads of council directly accountable to local voters.

We are very concerned that Bill 100 is the latest in a series of decisions that continues to remove authority from local officials and the voters they serve in favour of concentrating decision making at Queen's Park. These changes weaken accountability to voters and erode the trust underpinning our democracy. Furthermore, they undermine the ability of councils to represent the interests of their residents, move forward on local priorities, and deliver effective services.

Through the Standing Committee of Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy, [AMO spoke](#) against appointed regional chairs with strong chair powers and provided recommendations on ways to strengthen local governance that would be informed by local voice. Municipalities have never asked for heads of regional council to be appointed by the Province, or for strong chair powers. AMO is disappointed the Province has made the decision to proceed with appointing regional chairs against this advice.

### **Democratic accountability between heads of council and the communities they serve**

Elections are a fundamental part of Canada's democratic system. They establish clear lines of accountability between government and the residents they serve. Even in counties where councils are empowered to elect a Warden from among their own elected members, the members vote during an open council meeting which allows local voters to hold them accountable for that decision. This ensures heads of council with a strong, local mandate to deliver decisive action and drive regional growth.

In contrast, provincial appointments have no such connection between local residents and the head of council. It is important to ensure appointed regional chairs are seen to have democratic legitimacy and a strong, locally driven mandate. If appointed chairs are seen as outsiders who answer to Queen's Park, not voters, it will undermine their ability to build consensus that brings council and the public together to deliver on ambitious goals like housing and economic development.

Further, the combination of provincially appointed heads of council with “strong chair” powers is fundamentally undemocratic. It erodes the ability for local residents to hold their elected officials to account and elect people who care about their priorities.

The introduction of Strong Mayor powers has been divisive with strong opinions on both sides. There’s concern that some of these powers undermine the collaborative nature of municipal government that has long been a strength of our system. Allowing provincially appointed regional chairs to make law with the support of just one third of Council runs counter to fundamental democratic principles. Similarly, allowing an appointed regional chair to hire and fire the heads of departments and reorganize municipal administration is at odds with good corporate governance practices. For the first time, Ontario voters will have the chance this October to choose the Heads of Council they think will best wield Strong Mayor powers. But under Bill 100, voters have no say in the provincially appointed Strong Chairs making critical decisions on their behalf. More concerning – provincial appointees, accountable only to Queens Park, with no mandate from residents will be able to overturn decisions made by democratically elected officials. Not only is this undemocratic, but it also directly contradicts the government’s own rationale for introducing Strong Mayor powers: that elected heads of council should have the right tools to advance the mandates they were given by voters.

### **Appointees must have the right experience and skills to be successful in their roles**

Regional municipalities are facing generational challenges requiring them to deliver on ambitious housing and economic growth goals in a way that meets the service-delivery expectations of residents while being fiscally responsible and sustainable for taxpayers. Meeting these goals requires leaders that can build consensus, trust and buy-in across the Council table, and throughout the community. Even with the use of Strong Mayor powers, regional chairs cannot advance municipal business without brokering agreements and bringing council together around shared goals.

Regional chairs also need to have a deep, functional understanding of how municipal government works. The statutory framework that municipalities operate in is fundamentally different from other levels of government, non-profits, or corporate environments. Regional chairs need a technical understanding of municipal governance and accountability frameworks, and the responsibilities of public office to be set up for success.

Simply put, regional chair is not an entry level job. At the same time, there is no credential, certification, or test that can prove an individual is qualified for the position. The test is standing for election – a candidate communicates their skills, competencies and values to electors, and it’s the electors who decide if they are qualified.

### **Keep the selection of regional and district chairs and county wardens local**

We urge you to reverse these new rules and require all regional chairs and county wardens be directly elected by their communities. This establishes a clear line of accountability to the residents they serve. Unlike provincial appointments, this keeps heads of council directly accountable to local voters.

If the Province is determined to move forward with regional governance changes, we strongly recommend that regional, district, and county councils be empowered to vote to elect a head of council from among their own elected members. This model is already standard practice across counties and ensures that heads of council have a democratic mandate directly from the residents they serve. Appointing a regional strong chair in this manner combines the collaborative strengths of peer selection – where the leader is vetted by fellow mayors – with the authority to drive regional growth. It also maintains direct accountability to local constituents. Locally selected chairs and wardens are best positioned to work effectively with their local colleagues and advance shared community priorities.

## **Conclusion**

AMO and its members are committed to working with the Province to deliver strong, effective local governance. 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.

Strong local governance turns collective vision into reality, fostering a sense of belonging, and ensuring that progress is rooted in local values and priorities. 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.

Local democracy is at the centre of our communities and municipalities are the level of government closest to the people. Changes that centralize decision making and disconnect the line of accountability from voters directly to elected officials undermine the democratic principles that Ontarians expect. Furthermore, they undermine the ability of councils to represent the interests of their residents and deliver effective services.

We call on you to restore the balance of local governance by reversing Bill 100 and maintaining the democratic election of heads of council. As the level of government closest to the people, municipal governments have long stood up for democracy and strong local governance. We urge you now to join us in protecting our local democracy and work with us, not in place of us, as you explore governance changes.

Sincerely,



Robin Jones  
AMO President  
Mayor, Village of Westport

cc: Martha Greenberg, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing