



Honourable Rob Flack
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
College Park, 17th Floor
777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON, M7A 2J3

Re: Strong Chair Powers and Weighted Voting

Dear Minister Flack,

On behalf of our local Niagara municipalities, we would like to take this opportunity to share with the Province of Ontario important suggestions that could support a brighter future for Niagara.

Most residents of Niagara recognize that change was necessary, and we are excited to see how the Regional Municipality of Niagara can be transformed into a more effective organization. Some of us do not support Strong Chair powers, which could potentially favour some municipalities over others or urban over rural issues. If Strong Chair powers are to be granted, we recommend that there will be limitations on these powers to ensure that Niagara continues to function democratically and that all municipalities can prosper.

Collectively, we feel it is important that Strong Chair powers not be identical to Strong Mayor powers, because Strong Chairs are not tied to any individual community and have not been directly elected. Specifically, it is not felt that a Strong Chair should be able to vote with the same frequency as an elected Mayor; hence, our recommendation below is that the Strong Chair vote only in the event of a tie.

With respect to future governance at the Region, one of Niagara's great strengths is that it has always respected both its urban and its rural communities. It is critically important that the new system provides a mechanism to ensure that this continues. From this perspective, we are proud to present two key concepts which we believe should guide governance in Niagara:

1. Strong Chair Powers

We acknowledge that a Strong Chair may be helpful in the efficient delivery of Regional services. As such, if Strong Chair powers are to be granted, they should be limited to the annual budget, the hiring and firing of senior staff, appointments to Regional committees and subcommittees and voting only in the event of a tie.

2. Double Majority – The Best Form of Weighted Voting

Having reviewed multiple governance models across Ontario, we have not found an entirely ideal one that could be applied to Niagara. As such, we believe that a 'double majority' would constitute



a made-in-Niagara solution that could both respect the needs of urban populations, while also protecting rural needs.

We recommend that the Niagara Region adopt a 'double majority' requirement for passage of important items during the next term of Council. This would mean that at least half of all Niagara municipalities (six) would need to support a measure, and that those municipalities must represent at least half of the total Region population. The elegance of this model considers that urban centres would have the population but not adequate community support, while smaller centres would have the community support but not enough overall population. This would compel both groups to continue to work together on all issues. This will ensure that Niagara can deliver housing, jobs, infrastructure, and prosperity.

Many of Niagara's local municipalities have met with you to discuss the specifics of a double majority vote and how this would work at Regional Council. We propose a technical paper, with procedural rules and weighted voting parameters, to be provided to your Ministry in October 2026. In general, we believe that for day-to-day, simple business items, all municipalities would have one vote. For critical, major financial or legacy-type decisions, weighted voting would apply.

Our local municipalities welcome all opportunities to work with the Provincial government in delivering excellent results for all Niagarans, and we look forward to continuing this important dialogue.

Signed by:

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 Marvin Junkin, Mayor
 Town of Pelham

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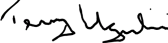
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 Cheryl Ganann, Mayor
 Town of West Lincoln

Signed by:

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 Jeff Jordan, Mayor
 Town of Grimsby

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 Brian Grant, Mayor
 Township of Wainfleet

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 Terry Ugolini, Mayor
 City of Thorold

Signed by:

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 Gary Zalepa, Mayor
 Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Signed by:

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 Wayne Redekop, Mayor
 Town of Fort Erie

Signed by:

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 William C. Steele, Mayor
 City of Port Colborne

cc: Sam Oosterhoff, Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries