

# Strong Mayor Powers in Ontario – Candidate FAQ

## 1. What are “Strong Mayor Powers”?

Strong mayor powers are special authorities granted by the Province of Ontario that give the head of council (mayor) enhanced decision-making powers under Part VI.1 of the Municipal Act, 2001. These powers only apply to certain municipalities designated by regulation.

They were introduced through the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022 and related regulations to help advance provincial priorities, particularly housing, infrastructure, and transit.

## 2. What legislation governs strong mayor powers?

Strong mayor powers are set out in provincial legislation and regulations, including:

- Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022 (Bill 3)
- Municipal Act, 2001 – Part VI.1 (Special Powers and Duties of the Head of Council)
- Ontario Regulation 530/22 – Powers and Duties
- Ontario Regulation 580/22 – Provincial Priorities

These laws define what powers the mayor has, how they are exercised, and the limits and checks placed on those powers.

## 3. Does this apply to Neebing?

Yes. The Municipality of Neebing was included in the provincial expansion of strong mayor powers effective May 1, 2025.

## 4. How is this different from the traditional system?

Traditionally, Ontario used a “weak mayor” system:

- Mayor had one vote (same as councillors)
- Decisions required majority council approval

Under the strong mayor system:

- The mayor has executive authority in key areas
- The mayor can veto decisions and control the budget process

## 5. What powers does the mayor have?

Under strong mayor legislation, the mayor can:

- Appoint or dismiss the CAO
- Hire and dismiss certain senior staff
- Reorganize municipal departments
- Create and structure council committees
- Propose the municipal budget

- Veto certain by-laws
- Bring forward matters tied to provincial priorities
- Direct municipal staff in writing

The mayor cannot hire or fire statutory positions such as the clerk, treasurer or fire chief.

## **6. What is the mayor's role in the budget?**

The mayor is responsible for:

- Preparing and proposing the municipal budget by February 1 each year

After that:

- Council has 30 days to propose changes
- The mayor can veto those changes
- Council can override with a 2/3 vote

If the mayor does not present a budget by February 1, council must prepare the budget instead.

## **7. What is the veto power?**

The mayor can veto certain by-laws passed by council if they believe the by-law conflicts with a provincial priority, such as housing or infrastructure.

- Council can override the veto with a 2/3 majority vote
- If the override fails, the by-law does not take effect

## **8. What are "provincial priorities"?**

Provincial priorities are defined in Ontario Regulation 580/22 and include:

- Building new housing (target of 1.5 million homes by 2031)
- Supporting infrastructure such as roads, transit, and utilities

Some mayoral powers (like vetoes and certain by-laws) must be tied to these priorities.

## **9. Can the mayor pass something without majority council support?**

In limited cases, yes.

For certain by-laws related to provincial priorities:

- A by-law may pass with only one-third (1/3) of council support

This is a significant change from the usual majority rule.

## **10. Can the mayor direct staff?**

Yes. The mayor can:

- Direct municipal staff to conduct research

- Require staff to prepare reports or implement actions

All directions must be in writing and are typically made public.

### **11. Can the mayor delegate their powers?**

Some powers can be delegated, including:

- Hiring decisions (in some cases)
- Organizational structure
- Committee responsibilities

Delegation must be done in writing and can be changed at any time.

However, key powers:

- Budget preparation
- Veto authority

generally, cannot be fully delegated.

### **12. What checks and balances still exist?**

Even with expanded powers:

- Council can override vetoes with a 2/3 vote
- Some positions are protected by law (e.g., clerk, treasurer)
- All mayoral decisions must be:
  - In writing
  - Shared with council
  - Made available to the public

### **13. Does the mayor have to use these powers?**

No.

The mayor:

- May choose when and how to use these powers
- May also delegate some responsibilities (delegated authorities can be reversed at any time)

### **14. What has been the general response from municipalities across Ontario to strong mayor powers?**

Many municipalities across Ontario have raised concerns about strong mayor powers, with some formally requesting that the Province reconsider or remove them. A key concern relates to the impact on the democratic process, as allowing decisions to proceed with less than majority council support may alter the traditional balance of representation, transparency, and shared decision-making.

Research to date suggests that use of these powers has been limited and varied, with many mayors choosing not to actively use them or delegating them instead. Implementation has also introduced operational challenges and inconsistencies across municipalities.

The 2026 municipal election marks the first time mayors will be elected under the strong mayor system, which may influence how these powers are understood and used going forward.

### **15. How has Neebing’s mayor used strong mayor powers to date?**

To date, the Mayor of Neebing has not exercised any of the strong mayor powers and has delegated authority where possible.

Published mayoral decisions include:

- Delegating powers related to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
- Delegating powers related to organizational structure and employment matters
- Delegating powers related to committees
- A decision not to exercise strong mayor powers in relation to the 2026 budget

These decisions are issued formally in writing and made available to the public on the municipality’s website.

### **16. What does this mean for candidates?**

If elected mayor, you will:

- Have greater authority over budgets and staffing
- Be able to act more directly on priorities
- Be more accountable for results

If elected councillor, you will:

- Still play a key role in decision-making
- Need to understand override rules (2/3 vote)
- Work within a system with stronger mayoral leadership

### **17. Where can I find more information?**

More details, including mayoral decisions, are available at: [www.neebing.org/strongmayor](http://www.neebing.org/strongmayor)

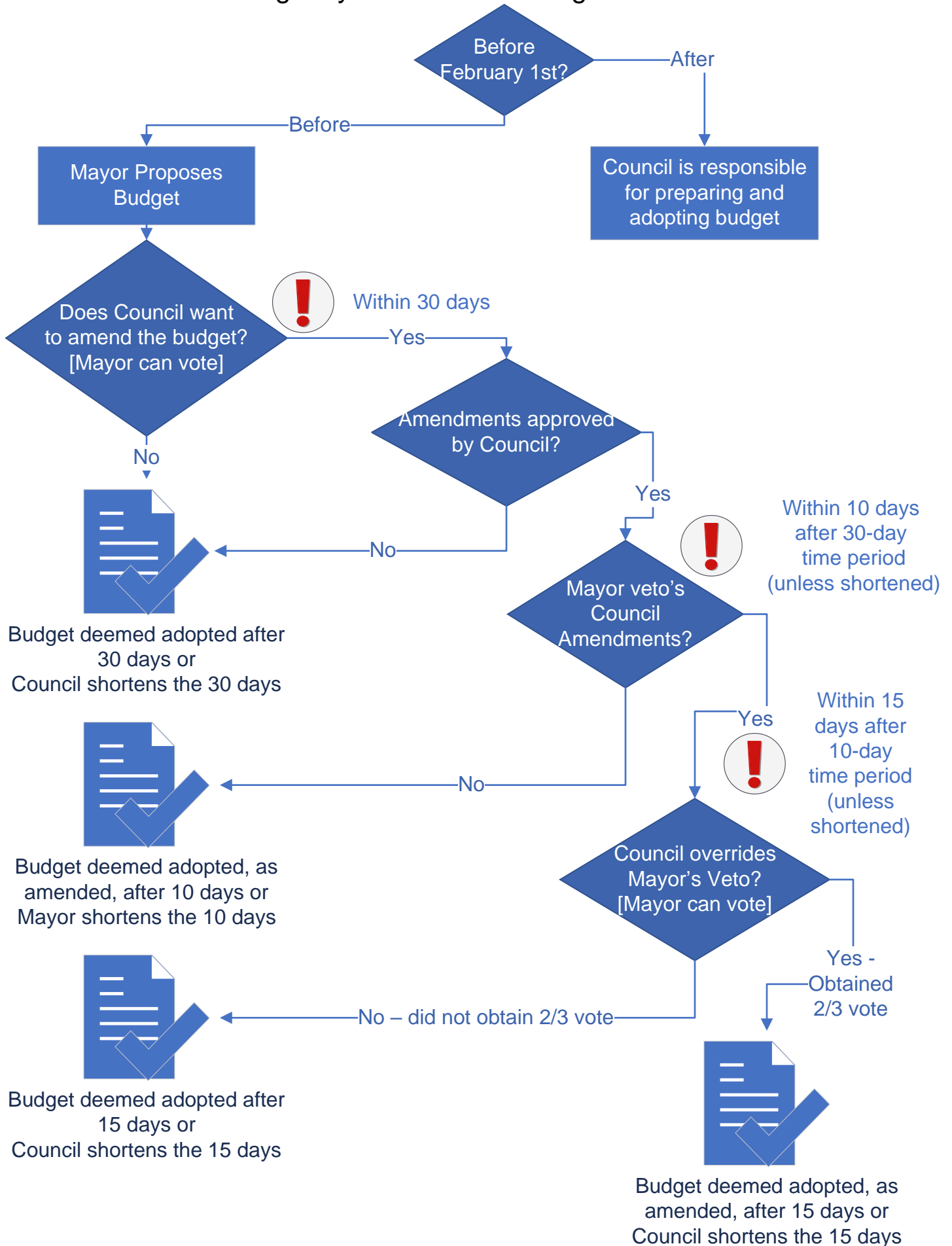
The Province’s Councillor Guide Section 10 – Strong Mayor Powers and Duties:

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

### **Attachments**

- Strong Mayor Budget Flowchart
- Strong Mayor Veto Flowchart

# Strong Mayors Powers – Budget Scenario



# Strong Mayors Powers – Veto Scenario



Council passes by-law  
or Director approves by-law

