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Spring-summer legislative and policy updates

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July 19, 2023

### In this issue...

- [Introductions and Highlights](#)
- [Policy Spotlight](#)
- [Policy Updates](#)
- [Bills and Lawmaking](#)
- [Resources](#)

## Introduction & Highlights

The Legislative Assembly has risen for the summer. Several pieces of legislation received Royal Assent at the final sitting, wrapping up an eventful couple of months for the municipal sector. With Ontario moving forward with **third-party audits** of municipal finances and development fees of select municipalities, the Royal Assent of the ***Hazel McCallion Act (Peel Dissolution), 2023*** and appointment of the **Transition Board** to oversee the dissolution, and the expansion of strong mayor powers, the Government has certainly indicated that municipalities cannot expect the status quo going forward.

We have been working with our members to help facilitate conversations on how to adjust to some of the big changes affecting municipalities, including strong mayor powers (more on that below). We are also looking forward to the 2023 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Conference where we will continue to advocate for a strong administrative legislative framework for municipalities.

Although the House is not expected to sit again until September 25, meaning that new legislation will not be introduced or receive Royal Assent during the summer, the Government is continuing to

propose regulatory changes that impact municipalities. We are continuing to monitor [Ontario's Regulatory Registry](#) and the [Environmental Registry of Ontario](#) for proposals that may be of interest to the sector.

## Policy Spotlight

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Effective July 1, 2023, the Government expanded strong mayor powers to 26 additional municipalities beyond the City of Toronto and the City of Ottawa. The extension was made by updating [O. Reg. 530/22](#) under the *Municipal Act*.

On June 30, 2023, the [Province asked 21 additional municipalities](#) to identify locally appropriate Municipal Housing Targets and develop a Municipal Housing Pledge to increase and accelerate housing supply. Minister Clark has suggested that heads of council of those municipalities that sign the pledge could be included in future iterations of strong mayor regulations.

As affected municipalities are aware, AMCTO is supporting municipalities in this transition by:

1. Providing a secure, shared location for available strong mayors documents (reports, research, etc.) to facilitate information and resource sharing for those affected municipalities.
2. Facilitating regular meetings with affected municipal representatives to discuss implementation strategies and to learn from one another.

Municipalities that do not yet have these powers may want to begin to consider some of the policy, program, and process changes that may need to be made to support this transition in their own communities.

As an Association, we will continue to advocate for reasonable timelines to implement Provincially mandated changes to structures, governance or other matters, which can lead to undue administrative and operational burden on municipal staff who implement these changes.

## Policy Updates

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### **Temporary Extension of Hours for Ontario Liquor Sales**

**Licensees During FIFA Women's World Cup 2023** - The Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) is permitting licensees to extend their hours during the World Cup, but municipalities have the option to object.

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### **Regulatory Registry Posting: Proposed Approach for Regulations under the *Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act, 2022***

The Government is seeking feedback on its approach for regulations under the *Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act*, which would require public sector entities to give preference to Ontario businesses.

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**Province Extends Comment Period for PPS Review** – The Province is continuing to seek input on new proposed provincial policy statement (PPS) that takes policy from [A Place to Grow: Growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#) and the existing [Provincial Policy Statement, 2020](#) to support housing objectives. Comments are due by Friday, August 4, 2023.

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**IPC Transparency Showcase Launched** – The Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC) transparency showcase has launched, sharing innovative projects or programs in the areas of transparency and open government. Six projects from municipalities were included.

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**Third Party Audits of Municipal Finances and Development Charges** – The Province announced its plan to move forward with audits of the City of Toronto, the Region of Peel, the City of Mississauga, the City of Brampton, the Town of Caledon, and the Town of Newmarket.

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**Federal Public Service Data Strategy** – The federal public service has released its 2023-2026 Data Strategy for the Federal Public Service that supports government-wide priorities and aims to align and shape the landscape of federal, national and international digital and data-related initiatives.

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**Administrative Burden Advocacy – Roadside Zoos and Exotic Animals** – Earlier this spring, we wrote to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Solicitor General to encourage the Province to develop a mandatory licensing regime for the keeping or use of exotic animals.

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## Bills & Lawmaking

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### *Bills Passed & Government Bills:*

**Bill 91, *Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023 (Royal Assent)*** – This omnibus Bill supports [Ontario's Spring 2023 Red Tape Reduction Package](#) that includes 42 new initiatives such as amending the *Building Broadband Faster Act* and updating the Building Broadband Faster Guidelines to improve efficiency

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**Bill 97, *Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenant Acts, 2023 (Royal Assent)*** – This is the latest Bill to support the Housing Supply Action Plan, and amend several acts to protect tenants and streamline provincial land-use policy.

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**Bill 98, *Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023 (Royal Assent)*** – Of potential interest to the municipal sector, this Bill makes changes to the *Legislation Act* to require school boards to adopt a code of conduct for board members. It also allows the Minister to make regulations governing codes of conduct including prescribing codes or parts of codes of conduct and matters to be

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addressed and includes provisions for dealing with code breaches. Through this Bill, the Minister would also be allowed to create a roster of integrity commissioners for school boards.

**Bill 112, Hazel McCallion Act (Peel Dissolution), 2023, (Royal Assent)** – This Bill provides that on January 1, 2025, the Regional Municipality of Peel is dissolved and the City of Mississauga, the City of Brampton, and the Town of Caledon are continued as single-tier municipalities. It also lays out some of the process for the dissolution, including that Ontario will appoint a **transition board**.

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#### *Private Members' Bills:*

A summary of Private Members' Bills that are of relevance to Ontario's local governments.

**Bill 125, Life Leases Act, 2023 (First Reading)** – A life lease is a written tenancy agreement that involves payment of an entrance fee for a rental unit. The person who is first entitled to occupy the rental unit is granted a right of occupancy for life or for a fixed term of not less than 50 years. This Bill authorizes certain payments in respect of life leases and requires the disclosure of information relating to life leases.

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## Resources

**Magnetic North: Attraction, Retention, and Reconciliation: Priorities for a Prosperous Northern Ontario** – This Conference Report provides concrete actions to guide organizations looking to work collectively to create and maintain welcoming communities in Northern Ontario.

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**Strong(er) Mayors in Ontario – What Difference Will They Make?** - This forum paper from the Institute on Municipal Finance & Governance (IMFG) by Zack Taylor et al provides commentary and contextualizes on a public panel convened by IMFG in October 2022 This paper considers additional provisions in the *Better Municipal Governance Act, 2022* and addresses questions such as the risk of politicizing public service and the implications for small and regional municipalities.

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**Ethics in Artificial Intelligence and Government** - Part of a monthly series of reports on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and government that attempts to explain the impacts of AI on society and the challenges it presents to government functions. The report aims to contribute to the development of best practices and policies around the use of AI.

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