

Mayor Cam Guthrie
Members of Council
City of Guelph
1 Carden Street
Guelph ON
N1H3A1

23 June 2023

Dear Mayor Guthrie and council members,

I am writing to urge council to oppose the Ford government's expansion of mayoral powers to this city's government. As an American living in Guelph for over twenty years now, I find it interesting that the Ford government's expansion of mayoral power is framed as adopting the American model. In fact, over the course of the twentieth century, American cities abandoned this form of municipal government in large numbers. Today, cities such as San Jose, Dallas, Wichita, Boulder, Dayton, and many more, have embraced the manager-council model of governance. 92 million Americans live within manager-council municipalities; and it is the most popular form of government in cities over 2,500 people – according to the California City Management Foundation (https://icma.org/sites/default/files/302618_Council-Manager%20or%20Strong%20Mayor%20-%20The%20Choice%20is%20Clear.pdf).

Mayor Guthrie himself has spoken at length about the dangerous impact strong mayoral powers will likely have on the health of democratic practices within the city of Guelph:

“To think that in the end it may have all been an imaginary display of democracy would have crushed the very thing inside of me that drove me to even want to be mayor. A strong mayor initiative assumes that voters are unaware participants in a democracy and that the mayor should be able to just overrule the opinions of the people who voted for him” (<https://guelphpoliticast.podbean.com/e/guelph-politicast-378-strong-mayors-podcast/>).

These powers will do little to address the affordable housing problem that Guelph and other Ontario cities desperately need to address. Instead, they will further entrench the partnership between political leaders and moneyed interests that prevents our cities from effectively and fairly coping with the social and environmental problems that face us. That is the lesson of Tammany Hall and the strong mayoral power in America.

Sincerely,

Matthew Glass

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Guelph ON

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