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From: AMCTO | The Municipal Experts <amcto@amcto.com>
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Year-End Review/Look Ahead to 2024

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December 13, 2023

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Introduction & Highlights

As another year wraps up and the Legislative Assembly starts its holiday break, we at AMCTO are reflecting on 2023. This year we were pulled in many directions, including advocating for a return to the provincial assessment cycle, supporting municipalities in the transition to strong mayors, continuing our work on the municipal reporting burden, promoting municipal financial sustainability, and researching and laying the foundation for exciting advocacy initiatives in the year to come.

Strong Mayors

Perhaps one of the biggest changes this year was the roll-out of strong mayor powers. There are now 46 municipalities with strong mayor powers. Notably, [four municipalities did not sign housing](#)

pledges and were not included in the updated regulation. This change has brought about significant new challenges for administrators across the province, who have risen to the occasion by developing new processes, protocols, and politics.

We are beginning to see some impacts of this legislation at the local level including organizational repercussions. In addition to supporting municipalities through the strong mayor transition, we will continue to look for opportunities to advocate for the strengthening of municipal administration through clarifying roles and responsibilities between council and staff.

Municipal Modernization

Thanks to the dedication of our members, in 2023 we have made significant strides in advocating for updated municipal legislation through the work of our *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)* Working Group and *Municipal Elections Act (MEA)* Working Group. We look forward to sharing a proactive legislative submission with government regarding MFIPPA modernization in early 2024 and finalizing our recommendations on the MEA early in the new year. We will also be considering how AMCTO can support efforts to modernize the *Provincial Offences Act*.

We continued engagement with Elections Ontario on the voters list transition. Responsibility for provision of the Primary List of Electors (PLEs) for municipal elections will transfer to Elections Ontario from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) on January 1, 2024. We will continue to work with both organizations to support our members through this transition. To learn more about their approach and to get onboarded with their municipal portal, please reach out to Elections Ontario.

Municipal Reporting Burden

Reducing the reporting burden continues to be an advocacy priority. This year, we were pleased to see some successes, such as our feedback on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's reporting regulation resulting in the roll-back of their request for historical data. Understanding that there is more work to be done, we are continuing to collect and analyze data to help better identify and understand the most common, problematic reporting requirements. Please continue to provide your feedback through our intake form (linked below).

SUBMIT YOUR CONCERNS

AMCTO's advocacy would not be possible without your support, feedback, and subject matter expertise. We encourage you to volunteer as part of our Roster of Municipal Advisors. This is a great way to advance important sector issues and have your voice heard.

JOIN OUR ROSTER OF ADVISORS

Policy Spotlight

Many municipalities across the province offered online voting during the 2022 municipal elections. With increasing costs of administering elections, more municipalities may be considering online voting in 2026 and beyond.

In consultation with municipalities, the Digital Governance Standards Institute has been drafting an online electoral voting standard that specifies technical design requirements for online voting services and best practices for election administrators.

The Digital Governance Council (formerly the CIO Strategy Council), that oversees the Institute,

works “across public and private sectors to strengthen trust in Canada’s digital economy by collaboratively identifying, prioritizing and acting on digital governance opportunities and challenges”. As part of this work, the Institute develops technology governance standards to help enable greater trust and confidence in Canada’s digital systems.

According to the Institute, municipal election administrators can use the voluntary online electoral voting standard to assess their online voting service providers, as well as to inform requests for proposals if they are considering implementing online voting in their elections. It can also be used to help guide election administrators in the development of policies and procedures related to online voting.

While this standard is not government policy nor a requirement, it could be useful for Ontario municipalities looking to begin or improve online voting in their communities. As we prepare our *Municipal Elections Act (MEA)* proactive submission, it is important for us to consider cross-jurisdictional work such as this which could improve the security and operational experience in local elections.

The Institute has launched a public review of its standard and is seeking comments until **February 28, 2024**. Feedback from our members would help ensure the standard is as useful as possible to those working on-the-ground and that local issues are taken into consideration.

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Policy Updates

Government Announces 2024 Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) - The Government announced that it will be continuing to provide \$500 million in funding through the OMPF.

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Ontario and Toronto Announce New Deal - Premier Ford and Toronto Mayor, Olivia Chow, have released the details of their new deal, a result of 10 weeks of working group discussions. As part of this new deal, Ontario has agreed to provide the city with up to \$1.2 billion in provincial operating supports over three years as well as capital relief.

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Supreme Court of Canada Ruling for Municipalities – A recent decision from the Supreme Court of Canada may result in increased liability for municipalities undertaking important infrastructure and construction projects.

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Bills & Lawmaking

Bills Passed & Government Bills:

Bill 136, *Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023* (Royal Assent received December 6) - This *Act* amends the *Greenbelt Act, 2005* and other acts to restore lands previously removed from the Greenbelt, and ensures that future changes to the Greenbelt can only be made through legislation.

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Bill 139, *Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act*, 2023

(Royal Assent received December 4) - This *Act* represents the legislative component to the Government's fall 2023 red tape reduction package. Highlights include reducing paperwork demands for physicians, amending the *Ontario Heritage Act*, 1990, to make it easier for faith groups to alter their places of worship, and reviewing regulations under the *Nutrient Management Act*, 2002.

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Bill 141, *Life Lease Act*, 2023 (Referred to Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy) -

This Bill would enact a new act to make it easier to engage in life lease arrangements. If passed, this would define a life lease as a written tenancy agreement that involved 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. The act would set rules for how life lease arrangements would work in Ontario.

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Bill 146, *Building a Strong Ontario Together Act (Budget Measures)*, 2023 (Royal Assent received December 4) - This *Act* is the legislative component to the Fall Economic Statement introduced on November 2.

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Bill 149, *Working for Workers Four Act*, 2023 (Referred to Standing Committee on Social Policy) - If passed, this would make various changes to protect employees including requiring employers to discuss salary ranges in job postings and if artificial intelligence is used during the hiring process. It would also ban the use of Canadian work experience as a requirement in job postings or application forms.

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Bill 150, *Planning Statute Law Amendment Act*, 2023 (Royal Assent received December 6) - This *Act* reverses official plan decisions for the Cities of Barrie, Belleville, Guelph, Hamilton, Ottawa and Peterborough, the Regions of Halton Niagara, Peel, Waterloo and York, and the County of Wellington. This winds back provincial changes to official plans and official plan amendments, including changes to urban boundaries.

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Bill 154, *New Deal for Toronto Act*, 2023 (Royal Assent received December 6) - This *Act* enacts the *Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto)*, 2023, and the *Rebuilding Ontario Place Act*, 2023 to help implement the changes announced

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through the New Deal for Toronto.

Bill 159, Preventing Unethical Puppy Sales Act, 2023 (Ordered for Second Reading) - This Bill would amend the *Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019* to allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations governing record-keeping with respect to dogs and prohibit the sale or transfer of dogs. It would also prohibit the operation of puppy mills.

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Private Members Bills:

Bill 156, Homes You Can Afford in the Communities You Love Act, 2023 (Ordered for Second Reading) - This Bill introduced by Green Party Leader, Mike Schreiner, would make various amendments to the *Planning Act* to require official plans to contain policies authorizing the use of up to four residential units in settlement areas, and require the council of each local municipality to pass a bylaw to give effect to such policies. If passed, it would also require official plans to authorize midrise housing developments from 6-11 stories on major streets, including transit corridors.

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Resources

Advocacy & Policy Resources for Members - As an AMCTO member, you have access to additional policy tools and resources available on our website. Sign in to view the latest reports, guides, research papers and more.

Academic Research - Here you will find reports, datasets, papers, tools, resources and other research of interest. Our objective is to be a conduit for municipal research and the advancement of the municipal profession by bridging the important work done by academics, think-tanks, and other expert organizations and professionals. Our aim is to assist AMCTO members with enhancing their professional practice by incorporating evidence-based information with the latest research and analysis from Ontario, Canada and international sources.

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Curated Sector Research & Reports - In order to further support our members' and municipal professionals' knowledge and understanding of sector best practices, and in order to provide a look ahead at policy and public sector trends, we have put together the following curated list of academic research and reports. The goal of these tools and resources is to inform and educate. The content listed here does not represent AMCTO's specific advocacy or policy positions or constitute endorsements of any kind.



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AMCTO Thought Leadership - Here you will find several reports and position papers that demonstrate our municipal sector expertise and illustrate our members' breadth of knowledge and hands-on approaches to municipal government operations and administration. This includes recent papers and reports from students and recent graduates of our Executive Diploma in Municipal Management and Diploma in Municipal Administration programs.

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