

Caledon Votes 2026 : Council candidates weigh in on future, value of Strong Mayor powers

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Many communities across Ontario were given Strong Mayor powers by the Provincial Government during the outgoing Council term ? including Caledon.

Strong Mayor powers apply to the heads of Council to speed up matters considered Provincial priorities, such as housing construction, bypassing the traditional requirement to have a Council majority vote.

This week, we asked the candidates running for council if they support the use of Strong Mayor Powers and here's what many of them had to say:

WARD 1

AANYA SHAHI ? ?I do not believe Strong Mayor powers should be the normal way of governing. Municipal government works best when decisions are made through open debate, collaboration, and accountability to the residents who elected each member of Council. I recognize there may be limited circumstances where these powers are necessary, particularly when an urgent decision needs to be made or when there is a clear public interest. However, their use should always be clearly justified and transparent. Residents deserve to know why a decision could not be handled through the regular Council process, what alternatives were considered, and how the decision serves the community. As Ward 1 Councillor, I would support a collaborative approach to decision-making, encourage meaningful Council debate, and push for clear explanations of major decisions so residents understand not only what was decided, but why.?

TOM SWEENEY ? ?No, I do not support the use of Strong Mayor powers. The use of Strong Mayor powers are anti-democratic in theory and practice. The citizens of our community vote for representatives that can consider, discuss and debate the issues as they come forward. These discussions allow different areas of the community to have their input, and hopefully result in a well-considered decision. Because the Strong Mayor powers are only effective in promoting the building of homes, there is only one side to the issue. No consultation, no thought on negative effects, and no accountability for the mayor. The Strong Mayor powers should be removed from our province, period.?

(Responses from Ward 1 candidates Jeffrey Halsall, Kate Hepworth and Keri Parfitt were not received by deadline.)

WARD 2

HUNAR KAHLON ? ?I do not support the use of Strong Mayor powers. I believe a Strong Mayor is one who brings Council together, builds consensus, and earns the support of elected Councillors, not one who relies on additional powers to override them. Disagreements are part of democracy. Local Councillors are elected to represent their wards, bring forward residents' concerns, make their case at the Council table, and work with other members to find a way forward. If a majority of Council reaches a decision through that democratic process, I believe it should be respected. Concentrating too much decision-making power in one person risks undermining the role of elected Councillors. Strong leadership should come from collaboration, persuasion, and consensus, not from overriding the democratic will of Council.?

(Responses by Ward 2 candidates Yogi Chahal, Rakesh Madhok and Jagraj Sekhon were not received by deadline)

WARD 3

(Responses by Ward 3 candidates Stan Cameron and Doug Maskell were not received by deadline)

Ward 4

HEATHER FRENCH ? ?I do not support the use of Strong Mayor powers in Caledon because real democracy depends on collaboration, not concentrated control. As your Ward 4 area Councillor, I am committed to working transparently with all of Council to serve our community. Lasting progress comes from teamwork, transparency, and a shared purpose. By collaborating with fellow Councillors who understand their wards, we can ensure a local government that listens and leads together. Let's keep Caledon's future democratic, fair, and collaborative.?

(Responses by Ward 4 candidates Cheryl Connors, Pat Fortini and Paul Parete were not received by deadline)

WARD 5

(Responses by Anthony Caputo, Diana Mollicone and John Muir were not received by deadline)

WARD 6

COSIMO NAPOLI ? ?I think it's important to understand that Strong Mayor powers were established by the Province of Ontario. Whether I personally agree with the system or not, it is the framework we have to work within. As a Councillor, my responsibility is to represent the residents of Ward 6 and work collaboratively with the Mayor and my fellow Councillors. I'm not going to spend my time fighting the system. I'm going to use my experience, my judgment and my vote to make sure the decisions being made are in the best interests of our residents. At the end of the day, it's about working together, respecting the role of the Mayor, and making sure Ward 6 has effective representation at the Council table.?

CARMELA PALKOWSKI ? ?I do NOT believe in Strong Mayor powers. The decision to use them by a Mayor is totally undemocratic. In an environment where Strong Mayor powers is present, it is up to a Ward Councillor to stand by his/her constituents and advocate together for their needs. If Councillors do not speak up for their residents in this environment, they are not speaking up for the residents ? which is what they've been elected to do.?