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August 17, 2022

Hon. Steven Clark

Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing

777 Bay Street, 17<sup>th</sup> floor  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

Dear Minister:

**Re. BILL 3: Strong Mayors, Building Better Homes Act, 2022**

The Federation of Citizens' Associations (FCA) represents 70 community groups in the City of Ottawa. Our members are volunteer citizens who, through their community associations, seek to improve the quality of life on their neighbourhoods. Consequentially they are concerned about policies and programs at the City that may contribute to this. Bill 3 and its impact on good government in Ottawa clearly concerns us.

As you know, the City of Ottawa was incorporated in 1855, pre-dating Confederation. Since then, its residents have been governed by a City Council democratically elected by them. The responsibilities and decisions of Ottawa's civic government have been the collective responsibility our elected City Council. It has allowed Ottawa to grow to Ontario's second-largest city and the nation's capital. While democracy isn't always perfect, our citizens have been generally satisfied with our form of representative government.

Bill 3's Schedule 2 permits the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing to designate municipalities to be subject to its provisions. It is our understanding that the Minister will designate Ottawa under Schedule 2, despite no consultation with or consent from its citizens on the necessity of this arbitrary move. We oppose this initiative.

Bill 3 would permit the head of Council to take over powers currently shared across the entire Ottawa City Council, to hire and dismiss the City's chief administrative officer and senior members of City staff, including the city clerk, police chief, fire chief, and medical officer of health (among others).

The importance of these municipal positions is obvious and provides the rationale for City Council to have the collective responsibility for these positions, rather than just one member of Council. There has been no compelling reason offered to change what has worked reasonably well in staffing these municipal positions for well over a century. We oppose this measure.

Bill 3 would permit the head of Council to veto any bylaw that he or she felt would violate provincial policy. This measure is fraught with difficulty and could lead to litigation if there was a dispute over the legitimacy of such a veto. The Minister already has such powers under the Municipal Act to veto any such bylaw. There is no need to complicate matters by granting such powers to the head of Council.

Bill 3 would permit the head of Council to propose the municipality's annual budget and permit the head of Council to veto any amendment to the budget by Council (such veto could be overturned by a vote of 2/3 of Council).

This measure is entirely unwarranted and undemocratic. Since 1855 Ottawa City Council has had the collective responsibility for adopting by majority vote the annual budget of the City, and levying the taxes to fund it. This practice has worked for nearly 170 years. The government has offered no compelling reason as to why this should change.

Citizens in Ottawa elect their local Councillor to represent their interests at City Council, which are quite diverse in our city. Our budget process requires a majority of Council to approve it and provide the programs citizens want, be it park maintenance, public transit, recycling, etc. In this way, Councillors are able to arbitrate across competing demands and pass budgets that meet most concerns. What Bill 3 proposes here obviates this democratic process. We oppose this measure.

In conclusion, the FCA opposes Bill 3 as unwarranted and injurious to our well-established democratic practices in Ottawa. While "Building Homes" forms part of the bill's title we see no provisions in this bill that would accomplish this.

We ask that the Government withdraw Bill 3: Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022.

Yours truly

Robert Brinker  
President FCA

Cc Ottawa City Council

Ottawa area MPPs

Leaders of the Opposition Parties