

Councillor P. Banks - Rebuttal to Mayoral Decision MD-2025-05-a

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1. Housing Supply Acceleration

The assertion that this motion does not support housing supply acceleration rests on a categorically false premise. First, Chantry has not been selected as a site. The motion specifically directs staff to advance multiple options, hold public consultations, and provide costed comparisons before Council makes any decision. To claim that ***“this facility in Chantry”*** will not contribute to housing approvals misrepresents what is actually before Council.

Second, the idea that administrative infrastructure is unrelated to housing is shortsighted. A municipality cannot accelerate approvals or deliver servicing without a functional headquarters where planning, engineering, and permitting staff can operate effectively. The current Chantry office is deteriorating, inaccessible, and inadequate, which directly impairs the Township’s capacity to process housing applications, manage growth, and coordinate the infrastructure that enables residential development.

Third, the motion itself embeds safeguards against waste by requiring side-by-side cost comparisons, peer review with Beckwith Township, and alignment with the Township’s Asset Management Plan. These measures ensure fiscal discipline so that resources remain available for roads, utilities, and servicing, the very infrastructure that supports housing growth. Suggesting that this process ***“diverts attention”*** ignores the motion’s explicit commitment to transparency, accountability, and long-term financial responsibility.

In short, rather than undermining the provincial housing mandate, the motion strengthens the Township’s ability to deliver it by ensuring the organizational, financial, and operational capacity needed to accelerate housing approvals and growth management.

2. Infrastructure That Supports Housing

The veto argues that the motion ***“lacks analysis”*** of road access, transit corridors, and growth-area alignment. Respectfully, this objection is premature. Such analysis cannot be completed until a site is selected. The very purpose of the motion is to **seek public input to help determine that site**. To demand pre-analysis before consultation reverses the normal, transparent process of municipal planning.

The veto frames the motion as “contrary” to O. Reg. 580/22, yet nothing in that regulation prohibits municipalities from responsibly planning their administrative capacity. In fact, efficient municipal administration is a prerequisite to processing housing applications, managing growth, and coordinating infrastructure approvals. A decaying municipal office is, in reality, a barrier to

achieving housing outcomes. Letting it further decay with no plans or funding to fix it is irresponsible.

It must also be noted that Council did have a preferred direction previously, and the mayor opposed it. That is why Council is now going to the public. To veto consultation after opposing the earlier preferred option because it lacked consultation is confusing.

3. Resource Allocation and Strategic Focus

The mayor contends that pursuing two design paths to the 90% stage is inefficient, yet he brought that same motion to council prior, asking us to support him on that very motion. However, this structure was deliberately chosen to ensure a **fair and transparent side-by-side comparison** between renovating Chantry and constructing a new office elsewhere. Without equally advanced costing and design, Council and the public would be asked to decide on incomplete information. That approach would be less fiscally responsible, not more.

The mayor's veto raises the specter of competing infrastructure priorities but does not identify a single housing-supportive project currently being advanced by staff that would be displaced by this motion. In contrast, Rideau Lakes' current municipal office is in escalating disrepair, affecting both staff capacity and public accessibility. To delay site selection and consultation on the grounds of hypothetical future projects is neither strategic nor responsible.

4. Mischaracterization of Motion PW Rec 154-2025

The mayor's reasons for veto repeatedly assume that Chantry is the selected site when, in fact, the motion expressly calls for public feedback, professional peer comparison with Beckwith Township's experience, and a transparent financial plan before any final decision. The veto thus rejects a process designed to inform decision-making, not to predetermine it.

5. Withholding Information and Strong Mayor Powers

This veto, like the two before it, is not simply a policy disagreement. It is an attempt to block Council, staff, and the public from obtaining the information they require to make an educated decision about the Township's future office infrastructure. Public consultation, side-by-side costing, and professional peer comparison are not outcomes in themselves, they are tools to allow Council and the community to evaluate options responsibly. By repeatedly vetoing the very process that would generate this information, the mayor is using strong mayor powers not to advance provincial priorities, but to prevent informed decision-making.

The *Municipal Act, 2001* — specifically the strong mayor provisions in s.284.16 and related sections, makes clear that these powers are to be exercised to advance prescribed provincial priorities. Nothing in the Act authorizes the head of council to use these powers to block access to information, obstruct Council's deliberations, or prevent staff from carrying out the preparatory work necessary for Council to fulfill its statutory duties. To do so undermines not only the intent of the strong mayor framework, but also the principles of transparency and good governance that underpin municipal decision-making in Ontario.

Conclusion

The mayor's decision mischaracterizes the intent of Motion PW Rec 154-2025 and applies standards inconsistently. Far from interfering with provincial housing priorities, the motion strengthens the Township's administrative foundation so that staff can better deliver on housing, infrastructure, and growth objectives.

For the **third time**, this veto delays urgently needed attention to Rideau Lakes' failing municipal office infrastructure. Council should not allow procedural obstruction, or the misuse of strong mayor powers, amplified by misleading statements, to prevent the Township from responsibly planning for both its governance capacity and its future growth.