

- Good Morning. I'm Gary Scobie and I appreciate the opportunity to delegate to Council on this important motion.
- Living in a democratic country, citizens often take democracy as a given, as something no one would or should take away from us or the people who represent us in government. When the Strong Mayor Powers were offered to many municipalities of mid-range populations in Ontario last summer, most citizens of Burlington put our trust in our local Council to weigh the pros and cons of accepting these powers. We weren't all sure what these powers entailed and when our Council unanimously approved the Strong Mayor Powers I think I speak for many citizens that we assumed the details had been competently vetted by all Council members and there was unanimous consent that they were useful to have in certain situations and not particularly dangerous to democracy and the rule of the majority.
- It is now obvious to me and many other citizens that we should have paid more attention to what was being offered to our Mayor and why. The coverage at the time seemed to centre on the Provincial desire to speed up the building of homes in cities and towns.
- It is now also obvious that this Council has experienced these Powers in action for seven months and that the majority of Council now has grave doubts as to the efficacy, effectiveness and use of some Powers. Three Councilors have brought a motion today to Council titled "Improving Local Democracy by Strengthening City Decision-Making" with support from a fourth Councilor, thus a majority.

- The details of the Powers that can be delegated back to Council by the Mayor are in the Motion. The request is simple: Restore these powers to the Council as a whole in order to preserve total Council consideration of matters that should be under its jurisdiction, not concentrated in one person only, the Mayor of Burlington. A dangerous precedent has been set in the broadness of the Strong Mayor Powers in a municipality. Some of the Powers can be delegated by the Mayor back to the Council and Mayors in some of the other municipalities with these Powers have already done so, fearing the same over-step of democracy that can lead to dark places now and darker places in the future. With democracy in many places and levels in Canada and the world under siege, this is the time to take a stand for democracy in our City and within our Province and country. It is not the time to strengthen autocracy.
- Our Council is at a fracture point, early in the second year of a four year term of office. This fracture cannot be allowed to become a total break. It must be repaired carefully so that citizens can have confidence in our representatives going forward, and it must be done today.
- I am here to show there is indeed citizen support for this motion and implore our elected representatives to debate this issue today and pass this motion unanimously. Once passed, I ask our Mayor to graciously agree to the restoration of the rights to Council for this term of office. Anything short of that will only lead to a breakdown of faith in our Council by the citizens of Burlington. Thank you.