

Caledon's Regional Councillors surprised by dissolution of Peel

Christina Early and

Mario Russo want to set Caledon up for success

By Zachary Roman

When the Region of Peel dissolves, so too will the role of Regional Councillor in Caledon.

At a press conference held on May 18, Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Steve Clark announced the Region of Peel would be dissolved effective January 1, 2025.

This in turn means Caledon residents will no longer elect Regional Councillors during the Town's next municipal election. The Citizen spoke with Regional Councillor Wards 1, 2 and 3, Christina Early; and Regional Councillor, Wards 4, 5 and 6, Mario Russo, about the coming change.

Early said she'd heard rumours in the days leading up to May 18 that Peel would be dissolved, but the January 1, 2025 dissolution date came as a complete shock to her.

"I'm not even certain how doable that is, because there is certainly a lot of logistics around this type of separation," said Early, adding she found it odd the Province would dissolve Peel in the middle of a municipal term of office.

Russo said he found the announcement Peel would be dissolved to be a surprise. He said there's a lack of information on what next steps are as of yet. Like Early, he said the Province's target date was "extremely ambitious."

With key services like paramedics, water, waste management, and social services currently under the Region of Peel's direction, there's lots for Caledon, Brampton, and Mississauga to figure out as they go their separate ways.

There will be a lot of complexity in making sure public services continue seamlessly as the Region is dissolved, said Russo, adding that the burden of the transition should in no way be on the back of the taxpayer.

Early and Russo both shared concern for Region of Peel employees, who are facing uncertainty right now.

"There's a lot of unanswered questions," said Early. With that comes the need for a lot of discussions, said Early, such as a conversation about the affordability of standing alone. She said Council has yet to discuss its position but there's an appetite for an independent Caledon, and the Town is ready to advocate for its residents' and businesses' best interests.

Russo said while Caledon paid the smallest amount into the Region due to its size, it did still pay, and that it deserves to benefit from its contributions as it grows in the coming years.

"We (Council) have the responsibility to be very clear on what our asks are for various infrastructure projects," said Russo. "Our job now is to obtain information and advocate for our residents."

Early said she believes the decision to dissolve the Region of Peel was a more recent one, noting the Province had only recently appointed auditors to look at Caledon, Brampton, and Mississauga's finances "one step in a process exploring a possible dissolution."

"I don't think this was a planned event, I think this came relatively quick," said Early, noting seeing the Region of Peel go is saddening for Caledon.

She explained Caledon Council's formal position has always been in support of the Region, and Council always found it to be a functional body that worked very well.

Early said the Town's goal as a corporation is to ensure its residents and businesses live in the best municipality possible.

?I want to keep this community whole and I'm going to do whatever I can and work really hard with my colleagues to have some really constructive conversations,? said Early.