

Caledon's councillors walk out of meeting

By Bill Rea

When faced with the imminent loss of authority over land use planning near Bolton, Caledon's representatives on Peel Regional council did about the only thing they could do last Thursday ? They walked out.

Mississauga Councillor Carolyn Parrish put forth a motion calling on the Town to pick up all its costs related to land use matters going to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), as well as costs for infrastructure related to the Bolton Residential Expansion Study (BRES) and that Regional staff and solicitors take part in facilitation.

The preamble of the motion stated Caledon was refusing to take part in facilitation, and that anticipated OMB hearings could cost the Region hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Town council late last month voted not to take part in Provincial facilitation regarding the Bolton employment land expansion. They cited concerns that the facilitation process would not be open and transparent.

Regional council in April passed a motion supporting facilitation, with some conditions. One of them was that the Town agree to participate.

Thursday's motion also stated the Town had refused to comply with the April motion.

Thursday's discussion got heated and passionate, with Mayor Allan Thompson symbolically tearing up a copy of Parrish's motion. Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie called for the vote on the motion to be taken, and that's when the Caledon contingent walked from the room.

Procedures at Regional council state there must be at least one representative from each of the three municipalities present for there to be quorum. With the five Caledon reps walking out, quorum was lost.

Regional Chair Frank Dale called a 30-minute recess, but none of the Caledon councillors returned during that period, so he had to adjourn the meeting.

Parrish had cited the April motion, which three of the five Caledon representative supported. All five took part in the Town council meeting, where it was decided not to go along with facilitation. Thompson told her the matter had been discussed at length at the Caledon meeting, and Parrish told him she had listened to the audio of that debate.

?It's three and a half hours I'll never get back in my life,? she remarked.

She and Thompson got into a heated exchange.

That morning's Toronto Star contained a story stating that Thompson had sold land to a developer adjacent to a site proposed for development (he asserted in the story there had been no conflict of interests), and Parrish asked if he sold land before or after Town council voted not to take part in facilitation.

?That is low,? a visibly angry Thompson retorted. ?That is really low.?

?I don't think that the politics that are being practised in Caledon right now are of a particularly high level,? Parrish replied.

?You're on the public record,? Thompson shot back.

?I'll be dead before my farm ever gets developed,? he said later in the meeting.

?I wish you a very long life,? Parrish replied.

Mississauga Councillor Nando Iannicca expressed dismay over Parrish's remarks, calling Thompson an ?honourable gentleman? and a ?first-class individual.?

Parrish also argued the motion she had put forth was a new one, that discussed who pays for the subsequent actions and how to assign lawyers.

Brampton Councillor Elaine Moore called the motion a punitive action against Caledon, adding if this is what council had in mind all along, that should have been clear in the April motion.

?I see it as somewhat vindictive,? she said.

Thompson charged the motion ran counter to ?the matrix of the Region of Peel,? adding it could represent the end of how Regional government operates.

?What's the real intent here?? he asked. ?I really don't think it's about Caledon at all.?

Caledon Councillor Annette Groves thought Moore put it well, commenting this is not the way Regional government is supposed to operate.

She commented planning in Peel has always been done from the bottom-up. She also said the Caledon community spoke and gave their councillors a mandate to go forward. She said that's just what the Caledon reps were doing and she asked the rest of council to respect that.

Iannicca said this is a case of cultures colliding, adding if they were in the "city of Peel," rather than the Region, they wouldn't be having the discussion at all.

"It's the model we've been given," he remarked.

"We're not able to get the divorce ourselves, and I think at the end of the day, it's only the Province that's able to sort this out,"

Iannicca added.

Mississauga Councillor George Carlson commented it was a surveying mistake years ago that caused Caledon to be included in Peel County. He agreed Parrish's motion was tough, but he likened it to a cry for help and a signal that things are not working. he added he was forced to support the motion, "with no great enthusiasm."

"This is about not wanting Caledon part of Peel Region any more," Councillor Barb Shaughnessy commented during the 30-minute period when the Caledon councillors were out of the chamber.

"They don't like us," Thompson added. "That's for sure."

Parrish commented that she was confident her motion would have passed, had the vote been taken.

"That's why they left," she remarked.

"No one is saying a facilitator is going to come in and change the world," she added.