

Council hears case for five reps at Region

By Bill Rea

Not that they needed a reminder, but Caledon councillors Tuesday were given one as to why it's so important for the town to have five representatives at the Peel Regional council table.

Caledon's former CAO Patrick Moyle headed a delegation before council Tuesday, stressing the importance of the Town being well represented at the table when things like growth plans and the GTA West Corridor are being discussed. He also attempted to counter arguments that have been put forth that Brampton and Mississauga have been carrying Caledon for years.

Moyle, whose resume includes being interim City manager in Burlington and CAO for Halton Region, as well as being a Caledon resident since 1990, was asked to look into the matter after Regional council, earlier this year, created a task force to look into various issues, including the composition of council.

"I think I have a pretty good sense of the sector," he commented, adding he was approached by Mayor Allan Thompson and current CAO Doug Barnes "to assist in that never-ending trip to the dentist known as Peel governance," as there has been lots of talk along these lines over the years.

It was brought up again by the last Regional council when then Brampton mayor Susan Fennell called for more representation for her city, while Mississauga called for a broader discussion. The result was the creation of the task force to look into terms of reference of a review of the governance of Peel, options for the election of the Regional Chair and the composition of council. Moyle stressed the real issues are power and money, as he reminded councillors this could have a very serious impact on the quality of life in Caledon.

He said the average taxpayer is only vaguely aware of what the Region is or what it does, including paying for all of Peel's considerable public housing stock (more than 20,000 units), plus social assistance, planning for growth and population allocation. "It, therefore, goes without saying that Caledon needs to be heard, needs to be at the table" when decisions are made about the future of the community.

Regarding money, Moyle pointed most people don't realize that only about 42 per cent of their tax dollars go to the Town. Peel, which is the second biggest municipal government in Ontario, has a budget of about \$2.4 billion, and about \$2 billion of that goes to operations, and the Region gets about 36 per cent of Caledon residents' property taxes. Those operations go to fund some 48 ambulances, 78,000 publically funded child care spaces and the water and waste water services. He also said Peel is very efficient at providing these services.

He commented on a myth that was started years ago that Caledon is subsidized by Brampton and Mississauga. Although he didn't mention her name, Moyle indicated the myth was promoted by former Mississauga mayor Hazel McCallion.

He also said there are big-city expenses that the Region covers for Brampton and Mississauga that Caledon doesn't use, but helps pay for.

Moyle also pointed to the growth that is moving north, and will eventually put pressures on Caledon, adding to the need for the town to be properly represented.

Much of the land in Caledon is protected by Provincial planning documents, covering the Niagara Escarpment, Oak Ridges Moraine and the Greenbelt. But there is also a substantial white belt in Caledon and Peel is going to be making many of the decisions on how it's developed.

"This is a big deal," Moyle declared.

There are many who believe in the concept of representation by population.

"If only it were that simple," Moyle said.

He cited federal legislation from 1872, in which Sir John A. Macdonald found some parts of the country needed more representation than others.

"While the principle of population was considered in a very great extent, other considerations were also held to have weight: So that different interests, classes and localities should be fairly represented, and that the principle of number should not be the only one," he quoted Macdonald as saying, adding courts and bodies like the Ontario Municipal Board have been upholding that for some 150 years.

Moyle also pointed out when the Feds adjust representation in the House of Commons, they don't take seats from Prince Edward Island.

Justice George Adams was asked by the Province to look into the issue in 2004, and he concluded it wouldn't be appropriate to respond to concerns about Brampton's representation by reducing Caledon's. He agreed the number of Brampton Regional

councillors should be increased from seven to 12, but not at the expense of Caledon.

The Province didn't completely accept Adams' recommendations, opting instead to give Brampton and Mississauga two more councillors each.

Comparing representation in other regions, Moyle said Peel is noticeably low, with an average of roughly one Regional councillor per 52,000 population (based on 2011 figures), compared to York Region with one per 50,000, Durham with one per 21,000, Niagara with one per 14,000 and Halton with one per 24,000.

Moyle also pointed out Mississauga has been calling for one representative for Caledon. "That one person would have to be very, very healthy," he observed, noting all three municipalities have to be represented for there to be quorum.

"You need effective, strong representation on Regional council," he said.

"Here we go again," Councillor Annette Groves remarked, wondering why the Region is going through all this again. She also pointed out Adams recognized the importance of representation as the municipalities look to a 2041 planning horizon. She added Caledon creates a balance at the Regional council table that wouldn't be there if there's only one representative.

Councillor Nick deBoer said he had always understood the Region was created to work on orderly development, and the bulk of that development is about to come to Caledon.

Moyle said there have been many reports and discussions over the years recognizing growth management issues. He added the Province "got it right" in 1974 when the Region was formed.

He also told Councillor Rob Mezzapelli of his experiences in Burlington, when it only had nine councillors. He said that was much too small, with councillors constantly working and personalities sometimes getting involved. "Weird decisions got made," he recalled.

"This is another cost of democracy," he said. "If you want efficiency, you can have a dictator."

Mezzapelli asked if there was any evidence that Caledon's representation was a detriment to Brampton or Mississauga.

Moyle said there was no evidence on one municipality deliberately frustrating the decision making at the Region.

"In fact, quite the contrary," he said, commenting Caledon has always shown itself to be a cooperative member at the Region.

Councillor Johanna Downey wondered if there would be any value in Caledon seeking more representation at the Region. Moyle said it could be part of the strategy going forward.