

Council looks at improving their chambers? sound system

By Nick Fernandes

New advancements in audio-visual technology can lead to the better functioning of government, at least according to a presentation given to Caledon council recently.

It was by the Town's Office of Purchasing and Risk Management, which put forth a report on several technologies and equipment that they propose should be installed in the council chambers.

There are indeed deficiencies in the current chamber set-up according to members of council. Mostly regarding the microphones and their sound pickup capability.

'A lot of the time you can't hear this guy because he's soft spoken,' Councilor Allan Thompson said of Councillor Richard Whitehead, who sits directly to his left in the chambers. 'We should have a range to adjust for voices.'

The proposed upgrade package not only includes improvements to microphones, but a number of other additions intended to streamline council proceedings.

These include visual recognition for councillors who wish to speak, priority and next-in-line buttons, and an electronic timer and flat panel displays, which combined would help the chairperson and observers keep better track of who's speaking, who is next to speak, and for how long.

Though enhanced microphones and acoustics are something the council voice approval for, some of the other proposed upgrades they were less confident about.

'In Regional council, we have a lot of bells and whistles there,' said Councillor Richard Paterak. 'We don't use them much, whenever someone says 'Let's use them,' they get voted down.'

He also suggested the use of clip-on microphones for delegations to make things more convenient and give a more natural sound.

This proposal was opposed by Mayor Marolyn Morrison, who said she would 'absolutely refuse' to have normal delegations use clip-on mics, because of the possibility they might not always face the council when they're supposed to be addressing them.

'I don't think we need the creme de la creme,' the Mayor said.

Though some ideas, such as better sound and speaker recognition were well received, council was not receptive to the projected \$450,000 cost for the full suite of upgrades. Especially since the capability for the current microphones to be extended was discovered during the session.