

Council unanimously backs Ward-based voting system after strong public support

Discussion stemmed from debate on how to elect Regional Councillors

By Riley Murphy

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Following the recent public survey regarding methods to elect Regional Councillors, municipal leaders and residents revisited the motion on May 6 at Council's General Committee meeting.

In the report, there were three options for residents.

Option One was that the Town of Caledon exercises its authority under the Regional Municipality of Peel Act, 2005, to change the method of electing its Regional Council representatives from voting based on Ward vote to an At-Large vote.

Option Two, the Town of Caledon formally requests that the Region of Peel address the selection method under section 218 of the Municipal Act, 2001.

Option Three would maintain the status quo of continuing the current tri-ward based model.

Multiple delegates advocated for Option Three in the proposed plan, to continue with the current ward-based voting system of electing Regional Councillors.

William Snell, a resident from Ward One, was the first to speak on the matter and urged Councillors to maintain the current framework.

Snell quoted the idiom, 'if it ain't broke don't fix it.'

'The primary and overwhelming reason to maintain the current framework is it ensures at least some democratic representation at Peel Council for the rural areas of Caledon. It prevents the further degradation of the local democratic process,' said Snell.

Snell stated that the third option allowed Councillors with a strong grasp of local rural issues to knowledgeably represent these issues effectively at Peel Council.

Alan Axworthy was the next delegate, who also urged the Council to vote in favour of Option Three.

'The public consultation and engagement process has clearly shown a very strong desire to retain the existing Tri-Ward model in order to ensure that Caledon's rural areas continue to be represented in the region,' said Axworthy.

Axworthy spoke on the ward boundary review conducted in 2021 regarding preserving rural representation.

'Watson and Associates, who are experts in electoral and ward boundary reviews, provided their perspectives and guidance on ward-based versus at-large Regional representation. They pointed to the benefits of a ward-based model as keeping the two most populated urban areas of Bolton and Mayfield West in separate Regional wards while still maintaining a large rural presence in each regional ward grouping.'

The next delegate was Rayissa Palmer, a Ward One resident from Terracotta.

Palmer, a property owner in her area since 2009, stressed how distinct rural Caledon is with precious farmland and agricultural treasures.

"We consist of farm families that have been here since before and after the War of 1812 and also many people like me who move from Toronto or from other cities to rural Caledon to live a different life. We are an incredibly special community that doesn't exist in many places in Ontario," said Palmer.

"While we will be growing in the next decade, the essence of our community needs to be preserved and nurtured."

Palmer urged Council to vote for Option Three to maintain representation.

"Be on the right side of history, not the wrong side of this vote," urged Palmer. "Do not support the change to an at-large vote for Regional Councilors."

The final delegate was Sherry Brioschi, who spoke on four different items on the agenda.

Regarding methods to elect Regional Councillors, Brioschi also urged Council to move forward with option three.

In the 2026 Municipal Election Voting Methods Survey, 92.5 per cent of the voters favoured the option of Regional Councillors elected through a ward-based system.

59 per cent of those who participated in the survey resided in Ward One.

The motion to move forward with Option Three was unanimously carried, and was met with a round of applause from those attending the meeting.