

Doubts whether Mississauga's independence move will work

By Bill Rea

Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie might want her municipality out of Peel Region, but most local observers don't think it will get very far.

'I think if Hazel (McCallion) couldn't do it, Bonnie can't do it,' Caledon Councillor Jennifer Innis observed.

It was reported last week that Crombie had announced it was time for Mississauga to go it alone as a single-tier municipality, without having to deal with the regional component. Mississauga councillor voted to undertake a study to look into the matter.

'We are currently undertaking a review of the governance of the Region of Peel and I think it is important that council and the residents of Mississauga understand what Regional governance means for them and whether a change would mean a better deal for Mississauga,' Crombie said in a statement issued last week. 'An independent study will provide us with clarity and all of the facts needed to make an informed decision about our place in the Region of Peel.'

Crombie also pointed out Mississauga is the third largest city in Ontario.

'We think it is critically important that we control our own destiny and that we are able to make decisions that are in the best interests of Mississauga residents,' she said.

The Region has been involved in a facilitation process aimed at addressing Regional government, including seat allocation, the method of selecting a Regional Chair, etc.

Mayor Allan Thompson was not pleased with the actions from Mississauga.

'It's disappointing because we all agreed to facilitation,' he commented.

He also warned Crombie could find herself dealing with results she wasn't counting on, pointing out if there's enough of a push on the Provincial government, they could call for the creation of a City of Peel.

'Be careful what you ask for,' Thompson warned.

Councillor Barb Shaughnessy commented there was a lengthy discussing at the last Regional council meeting with councillors expressing the desire to be involved in the process. The facilitation has been set up by a task force consisting of the three mayors, Regional Chair Frank Dale, the four CAOs and the Regional Clerk. Shaughnessy said she wanted to be involved in the process. 'I like first-hand information, not second-hand,' she remarked.

Shaughnessy said she attended a meeting that afternoon which lasted about two hours. At the meeting, she said lawyers said the process is expected to last another 60 days, and for that time, people were asked not to do anything that would disrupt the process, like lobbying. She also said everyone in the room agreed with that, including Crombie.

'Everybody in the room was supposed to act in good faith,' she remarked last week. 'I saw no good faith in what she did yesterday.'

'I wasn't happy,' she added.

Shaughnessy also didn't think it will work with Mississauga going on its own. There is still a lot of growth to come to Brampton, and she said it will become bigger than Mississauga.

She also stressed the importance of having vision for 20 years in the future, and she wondered how municipalities can plan for the future if things are being disrupted.

'Why would people want to come here and invest in something that is not stable?' she wondered.

'It's very premature,' Innis commented. 'We've all entered this facilitation in good faith.'

Councillor Johanna Downey was not as upset as some of her colleagues, commenting that if Mississauga wants to ask questions and have a fulsome discussion, that's fine.

'Now's the time to ask the questions,' she said.

'Right now, I think it's unnecessary,' Councillor Annette Groves commented. 'There is a process underway to deal with the governance issue.'

She also pointed out the Region has served all three municipalities well for more than 40 years.

'If it's not broken, you don't need to fix it, and I don't think the Region's broken,' she declared.

'It would be a huge departure in the whole concept of Regional government,' Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones observed.

She added if the Province goes along with this, there could be consequences.

'To me, if you're going to allow that, you also have to get rid of Regional government,' she added.

Brampton Mayor Linda Jeffrey was not very pleased with last week's developments either.

'The City of Brampton recently entered into a formal facilitation process to address the future size and allocation of seats at the

Region of Peel with the goal of developing options and recommendations with our partners for a report back to Regional council in June 2016," she said in a statement issued last Thursday. "I entered this process in good faith believing that the Mayors and their CAOs would work together to find a fair and equitable solution regarding representation that addresses the growing needs of each of our respective municipalities."

Jeffrey said the position taken by Crombie "appears to be contradictory to the spirit of this facilitation process."

"We all recognize that there will inevitably be different perspectives and interests at stake, but initiating a costly facilitation process while at the same time seeking to leave the Region is not only disingenuous, but a frivolous use of Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga taxpayers' money," she added.