

Peel councillors sticking to their position on Regional composition

By Bill Rea

Mississauga councillors made another try recently to cut Caledon's representation at Peel Region, but it didn't get very far.

The composition on Regional council had been addressed in June, with support for a model that would see the body grow from 24 to 32 members, but Mississauga was not prepared to support that expansion. Representatives from the City are still favouring a 24-member model, with Mississauga keeping its 12 representatives, Brampton's numbers increasing from seven to nine, and Caledon dropping from five to three.

Mississauga City councillors earlier this month unanimously passed a motion rejecting the option Regional council supported in June "as unrealistic, expensive and undemocratic." It would see Brampton and Mississauga get four more seats at the Region while Caledon maintained its five.

Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie raised the issue at last week's Regional council meeting, urging her colleagues from Brampton to support their position, which is moving us a little bit closer to representation by population.

Crombie also said there was some urgency to this. She said the matter has to be resolved by the end of this year in order for the new numbers to be effective for the for the 2018 municipal elections, although there were conflicting opinions expressed as to what the actual deadlines are. Mississauga Councillor Carolyn Parrish said things would have to be in place by Dec. 31, 2017, and Regional Clerk Kathryn Lockyer confirmed that. She also said the Municipal Act sets out a step-by-step process that must be completed.

Crombie stressed supporting the Mississauga position will indicate compromise, cooperation and collaboration.

"It's a step forward," she declared. "I think it's a great step."

She also told the Brampton councillors that by cooperating with Mississauga, they could get the matter reopened and have things in place that day.

Crombie also pointed out a triple majority is required to approved changes to the composition of Regional council. That includes the support of local councils representing at least half of the voters in the Region, and that gives Mississauga veto power over any proposal put forth. The mayor said her City would veto the model Regional council supported in June.

"We made a decision here," Brampton Councillor Grant Gibson declared.

Brampton Councillor Gael Miles said this topic has been discussed for some time, adding she's hoping the Province will intervene and settle the issue.

None of Caledon's representatives at the Region took part in the discussion.