

Region rejects move to get Province to decide on council

By Bill Rea

The future composition of Peel Regional council is still up in the air after the April 13 meeting.

Brampton Councillor Grant Gibson had put forth a motion to lay the whole matter before the Province. Since that represented a change from council's previous position, the motion needed a two-thirds majority to pass and all 12 Mississauga reps voted against it.

This came after three separate motions appeared on the meeting's agenda, and were, in turn, withdrawn before they came to a vote. They each dealt with the notion of weighted ballots, with the idea being to keep Mississauga representatives occupying 12 seats at the council table, but with each person from the city getting something more than one vote.

Regional councillors last year narrowly approved a model that would see the body grow from 24 to 32 members. There would be four additional councillors from Brampton and another four for Mississauga, with Caledon keeping its five reps.

A triple majority is required to change the composition of council. That would include the approval of a majority of the municipal councils in Peel representing at least a majority of the registered electors (voters) in the region. That means the City of Mississauga would have the necessary numbers to be able to veto any proposed change. Councillors from Mississauga have already made it clear that's what they planned to do.

A formal public meeting would be required to let the model approved last year proceed. Councillors last month voted not to hold such a meeting. Several Mississauga reps argued it would be a waste of time.

There were also several councillors last month who commented that weighted votes might solve the problem.

Brampton Councillor Elaine Moore had a motion on last Thursday's agenda (seconded by Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson) calling on staff to report to a future council meeting with information about weighted ballots.

Although Moore said the discussions last month indicated there was an 'appetite' for weighted votes, she announced she was going to withdraw it, commenting that she didn't think a solution was going to be found at the Regional council table.

'This is a mess that was created by the Province of Ontario,' she said, adding it's up to the Province to make it right.

'We need to bring some closure to the issue of governance,' she remarked. 'We all know the issue of governance has been a distraction.'

Moore also pointed out the issue has since been discussed at some length at both Brampton and Mississauga councils. She also said committees consisting of the three mayors and the Regional chair has three times tried to come up with recommendations to deal with the issue, and has been unsuccessful.

'We keep doing the same thing over and over again, expecting a different outcome,' she remarked.

She also quoted fellow Brampton Councillor Gael Miles, who had observed at City council that 'Brampton and Caledon have been too Canadian.'

'We have never forgotten that Mississauga came to this Region kicking and screaming back in 1974,' Moore observed, adding Brampton and Caledon councillors have been looking for windows of opportunity through which to move forward. 'While we're looking for that window, the City of Mississauga continues to look for the door.'

She added the Mississauga councillors believe the 'live next door to two very noisy brats.'

'I believe Brampton and Caledon really have been the adults in the conversation,' Moore remarked. 'We haven't thrown temper tantrums. We've waited patiently for 43 years.'

'Our council was just insulted,' Mississauga Councillor Pat Saito fired back. 'I take great offence to the councillor from Brampton referring that you and Caledon were the adults here as this has gone through.'

Saito also told Moore she had been ready to support her motion, but 'you've pretty well thrown down the gauntlet today, and I think our council has to respond in kind.'

Brampton Councillor Michael Palleschi had a motion of his own on the agenda that he quickly withdrew as well.

It called for Brampton to get four more seats, bringing their total to 11. It also called for a weighting component that would see Mississauga keep half the votes at the table. It also called on council to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs to accept the model by the end of May, to have the required public meeting and that staff bring recommendations to council on an implementing bylaw by Oct. 27. His motion also called on the three municipal councils in Peel to give their consent to the bylaw by Dec. 1.

Palleschi stressed the importance of setting timelines on this matter.

He also expressed his belief that all the councillors agree Brampton is under represented.

'We all know rep by pop doesn't work,' he remarked. 'It's effective representation by population (that) works.'

Mississauga Councillor Jim Tovey had a motion on the agenda calling for a report from staff on the feasibility of giving Brampton four more councillors, keeping Caledon at the current five and keeping Mississauga at its current 12, but with each of those 12 getting one and one-third votes at the table.

Tovey withdrew that motion without comment.

"We've tried our best, and we can't come to consensus," Gibson remarked as he put forth his motion to send the matter to the Province. "Ultimately, that's where it would have gone anyway."

Caledon Councillor Annette Groves seconded the motion.

"This is something that the Province needs to deal with," she observed.

Groves added the Province dealt with legislation requiring the election of the Regional Chair at large without consultation, pointing out they are already making decisions for the Region.

Brampton Councillor John Sprovieri expressed the hope that council would go along with it "for the best of the Region."