

The structure, rationale of regional government

Written By MARK PAVILONS

Will a system of government that has served Ontarians for more than 40 years come to an end?

The provincial government is reviewing the structure of regional government and this could impact how we do business in Peel Region.

On Jan. 15, the provincial government announced a review of regional governments to ensure they are working efficiently and effectively to provide vital services. The review specifically looks to improve on governance, decision-making and service delivery at the municipal level.

Our two-tier (municipal, regional) system has an interesting history in Ontario.

The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, the province's first regional municipality, was created in 1954. It was the only region until the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton came to be in 1969. In the early 1970s, then Premier Bill Davis created several more, including Peel and York.

The regional system in Ontario replaced County governments, some of which were in place since 1849.

A group of smaller municipalities is grouped under a regional administration. Regional governments are geographically larger and pool funds (tax base) to administer costly region-wide services such as policing, transit, garbage collection, social services, planning and roads.

Regional municipalities were formed in highly populated areas where it was considered more efficient to provide certain services, such as water, emergency services, and waste management over an area encompassing more than one local municipality.

The Mike Harris government dissolved four regional municipalities into amalgamated single-tier cities. In 1998, the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto became the City of Toronto, and in 2001, the cities of Ottawa, Hamilton and Greater Sudbury came to be.

The Province also split the Haldimand-Norfolk into two separate single-tier municipalities, which became Haldimand County and Norfolk County.

The Region of Peel Council consists of 25 members. This includes the Regional chair, mayors of Brampton, Caledon, and Mississauga, and council members representing wards from each city or town.

Peel has the second highest municipal population in the province, at 1.38 million (2016 census).