

Town updates purchasing bylaw, CAO can now source contracts up to \$500,000 without Council approval

Amount up from previous \$50,000 limit, but less than originally-proposed increase to \$1 million

By **ZACHARY ROMAN**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Caledon has updated its purchasing bylaw and it now gives the Town's chief administrative officer more authority.

At Caledon Council's February 4 General cCmmittee meeting, Robert Cummings, Caledon's Chief Financial Officer, brought forward a report recommending changes to the town's purchasing bylaw.

?Town needs for goods and services has increased significantly as the Town has grown and additional infrastructure and services from the Region of Peel are downloaded to municipalities,? said Cummings in report. ?Staff require changes to the Purchasing Bylaw in order to manage business needs in a timely manner. Staff will continue to provide Council with a biannual purchasing memorandum listing all procurements awarded over \$100,000 in value.?

Of the proposed changes to the purchasing bylaw, one generated the most discussion and debate among Councillors: an update to the policy for non-standard procurements for single and sole-source contracts between \$100,000.01 and \$1 million that would give the town's chief administrative officer (CAO) the authority to approve them.

In the old purchasing bylaw, Town staff would not be able to approve any such contract above \$50,000 without bringing it to Council for its approval first.

Cummings said the purchasing bylaw change would bring Caledon in line with other municipalities of its size and allow purchasing processes to be sped up when necessary.

Ward 4 Councillor Nick de Boer said that as Council meets frequently he doesn't see why a contract of up to \$1 million would need to be sped up to the extent that it couldn't come to council for approval.

Ward 1 Councillor Lynn Kiernan said Council has a duty to protect the financial interests of residents, and that reviewing and deciding whether to approve contracts is a part of that.

?We should all be uncomfortable with a delegated authority to a million dollars to a single individual that doesn't come before Council, I believe that means we are not meeting our objectives as Councillors,? said Kiernan.

Ward 2 Councillor Dave Sheen said Cummings' staff report on the purchasing bylaw was quite short, and that Council and the public would have benefited from a more detailed report.

?You're asking us today to approve going from a \$50,000 ceiling to a \$1 million ceiling, that seems like a really huge jump without a more comprehensive staff report,? said Sheen.

Regional Councillor Mario Russo said he was fine with the proposed changes.

?The fact is, we've essentially approved that purchase at the onset of the year (through the budget), how it then gets purchased, we rely on our staff to do that,? said Russo. ?It's not used very frequently and there is a duty to report back to us on why it was.?

Regional Councillor Christina Early said \$1 million is a large number, considering Council meets several times a month and could easily review contracts in a timely manner.

Mayor Annette Groves said she has full confidence in Town staff to be responsible with taxpayer money when it comes to purchasing.

?A million dollars is a big amount but I do have confidence in staff that they're not going to go and spend it unnecessarily,? said Groves. ?Staff has demonstrated they are frugal and responsible with taxpayers' dollars.?

Regional Councillor Mario Russo suggested an amendment to the bylaw which would make the limit \$500,000 instead of \$1 million.

Councillor Lynn Kiernan suggested further lowering the limit to \$250,000 through another amendment.

Kiernan's amendment was defeated; Councillors Early and Sheen were the only Councillors to support her.

The vote then went back to Russo's amendment, which passed by a vote of five to four. Groves, Ward 3 Councillor Doug Maskell, Ward 5 Councillor Tony Rosa, and Ward 6 Councillor Cosimo Napoli supported Russo's amendment.

The main motion to approve updates to the purchasing bylaw then passed by the same five to four vote.