

Additional Regional representation takes next step

By Brock Weir

Aurora's bid to have one more voice at the Regional Council table took one step forward last week.

The late motion from Aurora Council to ask the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to consider additional representation for Aurora was approved by Regional Council by 2/3 majority on Thursday and, as a result, will come up for a more detailed debate in June.

The motion, made by Mayor Geoffrey Dawe last week and brought forward a week early for debate by Councillors, followed similar motions made earlier this month by King Township, East Gwillimbury, and Whitchurch-Stouffville. Their concerns are identical and clear – one more voice in time for the 2014 election.

“As some of you know, this has been on Regional Council for quite a while, for the better part of the year,” he said. “King, East Gwillimbury and Whitchurch-Stouffville have all passed Council resolutions unanimously to ask the Region to approach the ministry to examine the situation in terms of Regional representation.”

Council ultimately passed the resolution, sending it onto the Region, but it was not without some reservations from those at Town Hall. Councillor Paul Pirri, for instance, said he liked the motion but had his doubts such a move could be “realistically” implemented in time for 2014.

“I am happy to support it, but it is much more likely something like this takes place for the 2018 term of Council,” he said.

Councillor Evelyn Buck also expressed some degree of caution, stating the last time any municipalities in the Northern Six – Aurora, King, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Newmarket, East Gwillimbury, and Georgina – went cap in hand to the province to ask for further Regional representation, the Region did get extra members, but only benefiting the southern tier of the region.

“Since the Region was created, our representation has not changed,” she said. “On the other hand, the Regional Council has expanded substantially with all the extra members from the south end. As long as they keep getting more we're at a greater disadvantage every time.”

If Aurora and the other two municipalities have any shot of another member, Councillor Michael Thompson argued it is beneficial to present a united front.

“The best way of approaching it is to tackle it together [but as] we have seen with our requests with the Federal Election boundaries and Canada Post, the message doesn't always get heard,” he said. “Hopefully we will have better luck next time.”

One York Region municipality which did have considerably better luck was the City of Vaughan. Regional Council voted to recommend to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, that they gain an extra seat at the Regional table.

“It's about fair representation at Regional Council,” said Vaughan Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua. “I think we have been underrepresented for a while and this issue will allow us to bring fairness to Council and the City of Vaughan.”

While Regional Council passed the motion unanimously, Georgina Mayor Rob Grossi ventured that this principle of “fairness” should be extended to others.

“If the good mayor from Vaughan is talking about fairness then I am sure he would be willing to add an amendment that it would be conditional on elected representatives be added to the other four municipalities that only have one,” he said. “Fairness means that Aurora, East Gwillimbury, King and Whitchurch-Stouffville should have an additional member.”