

BROCK'S BANTER: Getting Restless

By Brock Weir

Sometimes you have one of those days where you're sitting at the desk screaming internally at something that has happened in the office. It might be a miscommunication. Perhaps it is a higher up asking for the impossible or, if not asking, telling you that the impossible is about to come down.

More often than not, however, there is nothing you can do about it because that higher up is just that and it is essentially their job to delegate ? and dictate ? downward.

Chances are, if these situations drag on for long enough, the underlings will eventually demand satisfaction, if not change. This can manifest itself in many forms, but I think by this point we can all recognize when someone is inching closer and closer to the edge of blowing their stack.

Here in Aurora, there seems to be an appetite for change in the air, but I'm just not entirely sure what hunger pangs our local lawmakers are looking to satisfy. Nevertheless, the tummy rumbles are getting louder and louder.

Sometimes these increasingly loud rumblings have led politicians to the closest buffet, not exactly sure what they want to gorge themselves on, but content they'll know it when they see it.

This has been seen many times over the last several years when it comes to Aurora's relationship with the Region of York.

Increasingly, there seems to be a significant sense of dissatisfaction, if not disconnect, with this area's upper tier of government, and this dissatisfaction has bubbled to the surface in many concrete ways.

These include motions from our Member of Provincial Parliament, a former member of the last term of Council, picking up the torch advocating for an elected Regional Chair, incumbent Councillors crafting similar motions to throw support behind the Provincial motion, and calls for better all-round communication between both tiers of government.

Thus far, however, all this fuss has been all for naught.

The sabres, to borrow a phrase from our MPP, have been rattled.

Discussion has been had around the Regional table.

Elected members of the Region went in circles enough to dig themselves a moat in the middle of the Chamber, and delayed a final decision.

Well, that delay is up this Thursday and Regional Councillors are lacing up to take another kick at the can.

In the meantime, however, this delay has done nothing to quell discussions or stem the dissatisfaction.

Take, for instance, the last handful of Council and General Committee meetings in Aurora where the Town's relationship with the Region of York has been put under the microscope by a few of our elected officials.

One example happened just a couple of weeks ago where Councillor Sandra Humfries pushed to have Aurora's motion on Ontario Municipal Board reform placed on this week's Regional Council agenda for discussion and endorsement.

Just last week, the Regional Report, the regular sizzle reel of goings-on up in Newmarket, an item which barely raises a lash let alone an eyebrow, generated significant discussion on whether or not its contents had enough information on decisions that impacted Aurora and how that communication mechanism could be improved.

The conclusion boiled down to this: there is always room for improvement, but what one man or woman's definition of an issue important to Aurora (and Aurorans) can be different from another. And, in the end, Aurora only has one voice at the table.

To this end, I agree with Mayor Dawe that the Region currently has bigger fish to fry than discussing whether or not the Chair of the Regional Municipality of York should be elected.

If I were a betting man, I would have no hesitation putting a bit of dough on a prediction the Region will simply delay making a decision on this once again, waiting down the clock until the Province of Ontario picks up its socks and makes the decision on the Region's behalf. That seems like an inevitability and a convenient way for those lawmakers more local to avoid making a tough decision.

Personally, while I like the idea of an elected chair, someone at the helm of the Region directly accountable to the electorate, that is not one of my top priorities. After all, like a mayor in the current setup we have, he or she is simply one vote of nine, or seven, or whatever the specific composition of each respective municipality.

Sure, they have the gravitas to represent the Region at a wider level ? and their paycheque is nothing to sneeze at ? but I have yet to see a practical model offered on how such a person can be elected across a swath of land containing nine distinct municipalities, each with their own issues and priorities.

It can be done, of course, but is the interest level there from members of the public to make it all worthwhile? For political junkies, I believe that answer is a resounding yes. For the public at large? Time will tell.

More pressing, in my opinion, is significant reform in how we are represented at the table. I am not talking specifically about Aurora, but those municipalities in our area that have just one representative around the table.

Having one representative at the Regional level ? in Aurora's case, the Mayor ? might be a convenient way to lay all the blame at the doorstep of one individual, but it is not necessarily ideal if you're looking for reform. Changing the structure of the Region to allow Aurora ? along with King, Whitchurch-Stouffville, East Gwillimbury, and so forth ? another seat at the table will ensure we're well represented by population, our collective voice will be louder, and, if you happen to be advocating for or against a Regional issue, you double your chance of finding a sympathetic ear to your cause.

So, to the Region of Council, if you drag your heels once again on whether or not to elect your Chair, the decision will be made for you. You will have abdicated your responsibility to, if not be masters of your own domain, speak out on how you want you domain to be shaped.

And that's fine.

Save your energy for the real debate next month on your governance model. Local politicians are getting restless and all eyes are sure to be upon you.