



PRESENTATION TO THE SPECIAL ADVISORS: REGIONAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW

Peel Region Council Chamber, Brampton

May 8, 2019 @ 1:00 pm

A. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Port Credit Association (TOPCA) is the City-affiliated residents' association for the Port Credit District, located in Mississauga's Ward 1. TOPCA is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization in its 13th year. We rely on Membership support to continue our activities which include advocacy and community projects.

We contacted our Ward 1 Councillor Stephen Dasko when the Motion to request Independence from the Region of Peel was first put on the Mississauga Council (GC) Agenda for March 20, 2019. We were relieved that he advocated for the "in principle" amendment to ensure the public could be consulted before Mississauga made its final submission to the Regional Government Review.

Subsequently we contacted Regional Chair Nando Iannicca with the intent to invite him to speak at a potential TOPCA Town Hall meeting and discuss the Review; of course, he couldn't accept. But as a result of the discussion, we gained a better understanding of the role and authority of the Regional Chair under the legislation, which is key to understanding our regional structure.

We met with Mississauga-Lakeshore MPP Rudy Cuzzetto at the end of March, to better understand the Regional Review process and how local residents could best participate. We learned that the Review was initiated based on requests from some other regions in the province, and that it was decided to include all regions, including Peel. This Review is not all about us.

Our MPP advised that the decision for Mississauga's future structure will be made based on credible, demonstrable financial efficiencies, saving taxpayer money while maintaining or achieving excellent service delivery and effective governance.

For our part, we have listened and compiled recent **citizen comments**, in order to suggest items to the Special Advisors for consideration during the Review.

B. ESSENTIAL ISSUES OF THE REVIEW

We know the Advisors want to hear our views on the way our elected municipal representatives make their decisions and represent our community. They also want our thoughts and observations on the efficiency, effectiveness and cost of the various municipal services that our municipality provides.

We will address the three areas which were highlighted in the invitation to meet with the Special Advisors, to the extent that we have knowledge.

B-1. Regional Governance

It is widely assumed that there are three (3) likely outcomes of the Review:

- **Status quo** as Peel Region, most likely with governance and financial reforms to improve efficiency and maintain balance.
- **Amalgamation** of Mississauga with one or both of the other lower-tier municipalities, Brampton and Caledon, into the "City of Peel".
- **Dissolution** of Peel Region, with Mississauga becoming a single-tier city. Decisions would also have to be made regarding the appropriate future municipal structure(s) of Brampton and Caledon.

To this list we would add a fourth option:

- **Surprise us.** There may well be better way to structure the municipalities, possibly something very different, based on observations, trends and conclusions of the province-wide Review.

We have some local experience with regional entities of many kinds.

a) Port Credit, now 185 years old, amalgamated with Mississauga in 1974, along with Streetsville. In fact we were annexed. Them's fighting words. It is still talked about. But Port Credit's identity remains strong, perhaps stronger than ever.

b) Our citizen experience in Mississauga is peppered with initialisms such as: GGH, GTA, GTAA, and GTHA which all reflect a broader context that won't be going away. The initials just might get longer.

- c) Metrolinx provides another regional layer, and is about to start building the Hurontario LRT which will connect Mississauga and Brampton in perpetuity.
- d) The Credit River connects all three municipalities in Peel Region. Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) is yet another Region-wide authority, extending beyond Peel.
- e) Alectra Utilities is one of the largest municipally-owned electricity utilities in Canada, serving approximately one million homes and businesses in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) area including Mississauga. On the Alectra news feed, Mississaugans receive information about power outages in Vaughan, for instance.

"Merger efficiencies achieved over time will result in lower costs to customers, improved customer service, better system reliability and more robust emergency response capabilities in storms and inclement weather" -- alectrautilities.com

This scope goes well beyond the regional governance model we presently have in Peel, and speaks to the efficiencies and cost savings the municipalities themselves are already implementing by going farther beyond their political borders for service.

Our final municipal structure should provide clarity to residents about the roles of the City and the Region if that is retained, as well as any contracted utility or management boards. **Clearer separation of roles** between the tiers could be considered for certain areas, e.g. transportation, environment, or planning, in aid of this goal.

B-2. Decision-Making

We believe citizen engagement is a key component of municipal decision-making, and indeed for provincial decision-making, as we see in this Peel forum today.

- a) One example of providing citizen input to Regional decision-making was having TOPCA reps sitting on the Region's Community Liaison Committee during the visioning, design and Environmental Assessment process for the lakefill mega-project called the Lakeview Waterfront Connection, a 64-acre conservation area on the Lake Ontario waterfront, now named after the late Ward 1 Councillor Jim Tovey.

We saw professional staff decisions taken in a methodical and bold way, supported by citizens, to accomplish what might have otherwise seemed impossible. Peel Council voted to enable the waterfront project to proceed, recognizing the Regional stake in the plan and cost savings derived from using clean fill from another...

Regional mega-project: the Hanlan Water Project, the largest and most extensive watermain initiative the Region of Peel has ever designed and constructed.

We note that citizens in the Lakeview District have had to make sacrifices, with a decade of community disruption ahead to attain the brilliant results in the making.

b) We have over 100 acres of land under re-development in the tiny planning district of Port Credit and we are familiar with the Region's role in the approval cycle for development applications. As citizens closely engaged in the public component of land use planning and development, we appreciate the additional oversight, resources and perspective the Region can bring to the unusual processes involved.

Yes, the timeframe to reach the planning decision may be a little slower than some developers might like, but as we'll mention below, it sounds like the province will be doing something about that anyway (Bill 108).

c) Often at Mississauga Council, we hear the phrase: "Oh, That's up at the Region" as if Peel is a separate entity entirely, when in fact our Mississauga Councillors make up fully half of the sitting politicians on the Peel Council. Many Mississauga citizens are not aware of even that. Region-level decisions can seem remote.

Our final municipal structure should clearly define the decision-making authority of the City and the Region if that is retained. Perhaps the election of **separate Regional Councillors** could be considered, in aid of this goal, to better promote the Region's services on a local level and discuss the policy decisions.

B-3. Service Delivery

We see the Region of Peel as a service integration for **economy of scale**, **efficiency** and **proficiency**. Services need to be provided to the citizens no matter what the municipal structure. This just happens to be ours.

a) The specific services under the Region are seen as the life or death ones, including paramedic services, public health programs, long-term care and services for seniors, child care support, garbage collection and recycling, water and wastewater treatment, financial help, housing and shelters.

Also included is Regional road maintenance. Installation of bike lanes (2017) on Dixie Road south of the QEW, is much appreciated by South Mississauga cyclists.

b) The Region's *Community for Life* plan promotes the liveable elements we need as the Region's municipalities grow, intensify and the residents age, ideally in place.

c) Many in Peel Region require services, or will, although it may not be obvious, and we must take care not to disrupt or jeopardize their provision. Sensitivity is required when advocating for reallocation or rescoping of human / social services.

d) Poverty in Mississauga is real (1 in 7 live in poverty) and while the problem may be hidden to some, it is there, with increased food bank clients, need for transit fare discounts and long waits for subsidized housing -- *Mississauga's Vital Signs 2018*

e) We note and appreciate parallel citizen infrastructure which has evolved to support and advocate closely with the Regional service delivery format, for instance: the Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG). See: ppag.wordpress.com

f) The high level of citizen satisfaction cited by both Mississauga and the Region in their separate annual surveys shows that while residents may not be aware of who delivers what services, they are being delivered, and generally well.

Stellar example: We have learned through this Review that ~30,000 resident calls a year to the City of Mississauga's 3-1-1 service are re-directed to the Region's 2-1-1 service, based on the nature of their enquiries. This is excellent customer service and demonstrates the seamless coordination within our two-tier system.

g) We know the City and Regional CAOs collaborate closely to be as efficient as possible. Janice Baker and David Schwark made a joint presentation to us a few years ago, affirming their two jurisdictions are committed to minimizing duplication.

Now, surprisingly, there is "too much duplication and waste" -- *Executive Summary: Mississauga's Position on the Future of Regional Government* (April 2019).

We suggest exploring regionalization of the **Mississauga Fire Dept** and **MiWay** (Mississauga Transit) in any reconfiguration of the Peel Regional model, should that be retained. These two services will cost **36%** of the 2019 City Budget: **13%** for Fire & EMS, and **23%** for MiWay -- Source: mississauga.ca/budget

This would be comparable to Peel Police and Peel Paramedics. Operating costs for MiWay will likely increase once the 18km Hurontario LRT line opens in 2022.

NOTE: Up-shifting of wage levels results when staff from different municipalities merge. Mississauga is using this argument against Amalgamation, citing higher staffing costs. Could merging of *selected* services balance costs vs. efficiencies?

C. PROCESS ISSUES

Perhaps due to the suddenness and relatively short duration of this Regional Government Review, there have been some serious public process issues which are distracting from authentic consideration of the options for Regional Review.

C-1. Order of Operation

Without any prior consultation, our City Council's decision to endorse Independence from Peel was a surprise to citizens, who had not heard much about it since Mayor Hazel McCallion tried for this in 2003-2005. Much has changed since then.

a) The following clause in the Council Motion, first approved in principle at GC on March 20, 2019, has been challenged:

“WHEREAS the City of Mississauga Council **and residents** have long held the view that Mississauga can operate as a single-tier municipality, independent of regional government;”

b) The City's Town Hall meeting in the Council Chamber followed on April 8, 2019. We note that when the need for a Town Hall meeting was discussed at Council, it was stated clearly that it would not make any difference to Council's support for Independence.

c) Along with other community groups, the TOPCA Executive was invited by e-mail to speak in support of Independence at the City's Town Hall meeting, but we did not feel we had enough information at that time, and certainly not a mandate from our membership to take any position.

What concerns us is that the City's Town Hall should **not** have been designed as a Public Relations and media event to claim public support for Independence from Peel, but rather to inform, explain Council's position and answer questions.

d) The Wards 1&2 Town Hall meeting on May 1, 2019 reflected a more balanced range of the points of view and issues, and more of a discussion took place without the feeling people were being counted, although it was again of concern that the Independence Motion had already passed and would be submitted to the Review.

e) Many residents have complained that there was no Regional representation or advocacy at either Town Hall meeting to balance the arguments.

C-2. Making the Case

a) We don't believe a referendum is needed or even possible here. Practically, there is no single, clear proposal to be asked and answered Yes or No. This is a complex situation with several scenarios for resolution, affecting 1.3 million people.

b) Without widespread public understanding of the financial facts and governance issues, we don't believe any survey can possibly represent an informed consensus.

Dissatisfaction has been expressed with the City's Forum Research phone survey conducted March 25-27, 2019 which only serves to illustrate this point. It extrapolates support for Independence from a pool of respondents where only 38% were even aware of the Regional Review in the first place.

c) We don't think the City needs to seek or prove popular support for Independence or any other option. The case for cost-effective and efficient municipal governance needs to be made to the Special Advisors, with a stated set of realistic assumptions.

d) We expect the Special Advisors to Steve Clark, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, will make recommendations after an evidence-based evaluation and broad operational survey of all the Regions.

C-3. Independent Financial Analysis

a) The Mississauga Mayor, Council and CAO do not accept the conclusions of the Deloitte report which was commissioned early in 2019 by the Peel Regional Chair and management to assess the financial impacts of Amalgamation, Dissolution and Status Quo with Efficiencies, in preparation for meetings with the Special Advisors.

b) Mississauga's Business Case (April 2019) focuses on the Independence option.

c) A new independent financial analysis and Report commissioned by Regional Council in April 2019 is not expected to be completed until after the May 21, 2019 deadline for public comment to the provincial Review.

Like the Deloitte report, the new analysis will model the main options, but with a shared set of assumptions between all the municipalities, not yet made public.

When this final Financial Report comes in, expect another wave of public comment.

TAXING CONCERN: We note that the City's higher annual **property tax increases** have been able to shelter behind the Region's lower property tax increases for several years, to create a blended increase closer to the annual calculated cost of living increase. We know there is concern among Mississauga seniors on fixed incomes especially, that single-tier property taxes would be more than they could afford, and we'll be looking for that analysis in the new Report.

C-4. The Postcard

- a)** Early this May, the City mailed residents a Postcard to "evaluate resident support for the City's preferred option to be an independent city" as it says right on the card, although no measure is possible for how many cards are actually mailed (postage-paid and pre-addressed) to the Ontario Premier, and by who. Only one option -- Mississauga's Independence from Peel -- appears on the card.
- b)** It is unclear what it means if someone does not mail in their card. To say residents do not have to send it in is unhelpful in achieving the stated purpose of the postcard, and residents in this case feel their voice has no way of being heard.
- c)** Residents can of course write a note on the tear-off return portion if they disagree with the City's pre-printed support for Independence, if they think to do so. We don't know if each folded and glued return piece will be opened, or comments read and tallied, by the Premier's staff. In any event, this is not statistically sound.

D. EMOTIONAL ELEMENTS

The future of our City is of course an emotional issue, although we believe the decision should be based on thorough analysis and structural synergies. Three emotional phrases are being used in support of Mississauga's Independence.

D-1. City Identity

- a)** In future, many municipal services in Mississauga may be contracted out to specialist Management Boards or Rate-based Utilities, to oversee delivery to area municipalities. Alternatively, Peel Region and existing Boards (e.g. Peel Police Services Board) may continue to assume those responsibilities. Either way, the service delivery mode should be incidental to the recipient, if done right.

b) We don't see any impact on the Mississauga identity, which is often seen as being a "Community of Communities". Identity is more about having a sense of place and community. Mississauga itself being an amalgamation, we know the residents' identification with the original ancient villages are still very strong, e.g. Clarkson, Port Credit, Cooksville, Streetsville, Malton, Erindale, etc. Thirteen village names encircle the ceiling of the Council Chamber to reflect the City's heritage.

c) We did not specifically consider the impact on Mississauga identity in the event of an Amalgamation to create the "City of Peel" but we believe that community-based allegiance would continue.

D-2. Pride and Respect

a) Other cities probably don't know or care about our specific governance structure, but they will note how we conduct ourselves as a city.

b) Size alone won't ensure: "Mississauga will be treated with the respect and authority it deserves as the 3rd largest city in Ontario and 6th largest in Canada, independent of another level of government" -- *Top 10 Reasons Mississauga should be Independent from the Region of Peel* (#10 on the City resource sheet)

c) Hamilton, cited by Mississauga as an example of a single-tier city in Ontario, is itself an amalgamation. Many have heard of "Raise the Hammer," a non-partisan citizen collective with the goal of making Hamilton the great city they know it can be. Good process earns respect. Citizen consultation creates civic pride in outcomes that are achieved collaboratively and taken as a model for other cities.

D-3. Control our Destiny

a) That ship has sailed. It has never been more apparent that cities and towns in Ontario are creatures of the province. For instance, and very significantly, with the *More Homes, More Choice* bill (Bill 108), the hard-won Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) reforms of 2017 will now revert to the former Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) rules, again greatly challenging the City's Official Plan for land use and development. Mississauga is a city that the OMB built; now here we go again.

b) Pending changes to the Provincial Growth Plan may dictate intensification, or lack of density, in places where Mississauga's Official Plan doesn't align. Both the Regional and City Official Plans will have to be amended in response.

c) We still have the Mississauga Strategic Plan which eloquently expresses our City's long-desired Vision. This Plan defines the city's priorities, processes, and short- and long-term plans as well as budget and resource allocations. We would love to see it implemented. At the time of the massive public consultation for the Strategic Plan (2009), there was no thought that the Region would hold us back.

E. OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR THE REVIEW

E-1. We're quite sure there won't be another Regional Government Review for quite some time. The structures that are kept, or put in place now, need to be robust enough to support the work of future Councils. The final governance model for Mississauga must be sustainable and self-evident for future generations, and not based on participants, personalities or special interests in the current Review.

E-2. Everything has been moving quickly since the last provincial election in June 2018. It appears the province is moving towards a simplified and broader service delivery model organized by regions. That being the case, future configuration of Peel might well need to functionally align. Provincial bureaucracy needs to be able to find us, and have a straightforward, predictable mechanism to provide funding.

E-3. We hope for a structured solution that isn't radically different from other Ontario municipalities in the Review. We don't want Mississauga to be an outlier or exception to any new regionally-based system, for instance, but to easily meet the standard for service delivery, at a size that works -- we can't yet know what that is.

E-4. The Special Advisors have benefit of seeing regional trends and considering the public (not just political) interest on a wide scale across the province. We urge them to ensure our City has the best service delivery model for a diverse population, incorporating efficiencies and economies, yes, but also incenting local excellence and fostering flexibility and compassion.

E-5. It sounds cliché, but we don't want any of our fellow citizens falling through the cracks during any transition, or "tweaking" of the current model. We want everyone to get the services they need. We want all citizens to thrive. Financial efficiencies and governance restructurings should not at any stage compromise the vulnerable.

E-6. We know some Mississauga Councillors are staying open-minded about the Review. The facts will lead where they will, and that is the best approach, we think. If Independence for Mississauga doesn't make sense once all the facts are in, there can be further thought and discussion.

E-7. Corollary: If Independence for Mississauga is judged to make sense, and not harm our northern neighbours, we believe citizens will get on board without need for prompting and welcome the adventure.

E-8. Mississauga Council candidates didn't campaign on this matter because the Review was only announced in January 2019. But Council must deal with it now, and citizens should pay attention. The Peel forum today has given us breathing space and a chance to inventory the issues, and prepare for the pending analysis.

E-9. While this Review has been unexpected and time-consuming, it is clear from the issues and conflicts laid bare during the process that this **needed to be done**. We are excited about seeing an amiable way forward that will provide clarity and harmony between adjacent municipalities, and between Council(s) and citizens.

E-10. Then, we'd like to get back to the big challenges still facing our City: affordable housing, relieving poverty and homelessness, safe transportation and mobility, environmental stewardship and building a healthy, liveable city.

To quote the new Ontario licence plate, let's get on with ensuring Mississauga remains "A Place to Grow".

Presented by:

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On behalf of the TOPCA Executive
Mary Simpson, President