

Communication : C 4

Committee of the Whole (Working Session)

May 3, 2023

Agenda Items 1 and 2

From: IRENE FORD [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, May 02, 2023 11:33 AM
To: Clerks@vaughan.ca; Council@vaughan.ca
Cc: Christopher Raynor <christopher raynor@york.ca>; Wayne Emmerson <wayne emmerson@york.ca>; Minister (MMAH) <minister mah@ontario.ca>
Subject: [External] May 3 Working Session

Clerks and Vaughan Council,

Please find my comments below on the 2 agenda items.

To be clear the authority to add another local councillor, to decide how we elect local and regional councillors is within the authority of Vaughan Council.

No new local councillor has been added since the 70's, how we elect our regional council members has not been reaffirmed by any Vaughan Council in over 50 years yet three Council members have been added at the regional level. Representation in Vaughan is no longer fairly balanced because Vaughan Council has increased regional representation three times in the absence of understanding and responding the impacts upon local representation.

Vaughan Council can't add another regional council member but they can decide how they are elected - at-large or by ward/area. It would appear the appropriate place to understand the roles and responsibilities of Regional Councillors, how they are accountable to Vaughan residents is at Vaughan Council. There is no mechanism at York Region council to review council composition to understand if we have fair and equitable representation that also contemplates difference in the responsibilities of our 'local and regional council members' vs. local council members.

- 1 [D RECT ON FOR WARD BOUNDARY AND COUNCIL COMPOSITION REVIEW 2023](#)
- 2 [2023 VAUGHAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN](#)

Ward Boundary Review And Council Composition Review

Suggested items for inclusion and direction to staff to guide the study on a council composition and ward boundary review

- a council composition review to enhance fair and equal representation of
 - Vaughan Council (lower tier) that includes all voting Council members - local and regional
 - York Region Council (upper tier) that includes all voting Vaughan Regional Council members - regional councillors & Mayor and representation of their distinct and different responsibilities from lower tier Council members
- contemplates and reviews for the first time since the 70's how local and regional councillors are elected by ward or at-large and specifically if Regional Councillors should be elected at large or by ward/area to enhance fair and equal representation and
- how provincial legislation has and/or may change to affect municipal representation of lower and upper tier municipalities as per Bill 23 (which removes regional planning responsibilities at a future date), Bill 39 which gave strong mayor powers to Regional Chairs, could give Strong Mayor powers to Vaughan in the future and how the impending provincial regional government review could impact local representation.

Background

When I learned of the ward boundary review in the midst of the pandemic late 2020 I was surprised and frustrated. The review was structured to be futile, regional representation was excluded (even though a new regional councillor was being added). It was a costly exercise solely focused on moving ward boundary lines on a map as per Council direction. Vaughan has not had a new local/ward councillor added since 1970, but as of the last election we've had 3 Regional Councillors added. I argued that Vaughan doesn't have fair or equal representation because local issues are underrepresented due to the imbalance of having 5 Council members represent the City as a whole and York Region (4 Regional Councillors + Mayor) vs. only 1 local Councillor who represents each of our five wards. When I compared York Region representation by municipality based on 2020 population what I found was that Vaughan is the most locally underrepresented municipality in York Region yet has the highest regional representation.

It took me 5 months to get a straight answer from the Clerk on a two part question:

- 1) Do any by-laws have to be updated to confirm the addition of a new Regional Councillor and what by-law approved/authorizes how we elect Regional Councillor members - elected at-large or by ward?
- 2) Who has the authority to decide how we elect our Councillors and add a new local Councillor?

It turns out our by-law for how we elect our councillors has not been updated since the 70's and the authority to decide if Vaughan's Council members can be elected at-large or by ward is within the authority of Vaughan Council. It is also within the authority of Vaughan Council to add new local councillors.

In the end it was never clearly articulated in Council chambers that the authority to change Council composition and how our Council members are elected at-large/by ward is within the authority of Vaughan Council, that it hasn't been reaffirmed by any Vaughan Council in over fifty years in any updated by-law or otherwise. I think it's important that the public and Council supports a study with this understanding front and center. My efforts did not change much other than perhaps documenting Vaughan residents frustration with Regional representation; who call themselves local and regional councillors b/c they vote at both the local council (Vaughan) and regional council (York Region).

Media [story](#) and [letter written](#) for background.

I did not, nor do I necessarily want a 6th local Councillor, what I would like is better representation from our regional council members. I fundamentally believe that Vaughan residents would have more fair and equal representatives if our Regional Councillors were elected by ward/area and accountable to that part of the City. At present it's like we have 1 Mayor, 4 Mini-Mayors and 5 local Councillors.

Since this time provincial [Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act](#) and [Bill 39, Better Municipal Government Act](#) have added additional uncertainty surrounding Mayoral and regional representation. Bill 23 proposes to remove Regional Planning responsibilities. Of the multitude of undemocratic things about Bill 23 the timing with the municipal election and permitting Vaughan to elect a new Regional Councillor when the province clearly knew that the roles and responsibilities of Regional Council members really takes the cake. On top of this Bill 39 appointed Regional Chairs, intends to give strong mayor (chair) powers to these same provincially appointed regional Chairs and announced the province's intention to conduct a second review of regional governments. On the lines of undemocratic representation the Province released Bill 39 the day before York Region's inaugural meeting in which they were to vote in a new Chair. Minister Clark sent a letter basically saying this legislation will be applied retroactively if you don't vote for the Chair of my choosing; Wayne Emmerson. An article by the [G&M](#) as well as [York Region News](#). This is the second time the province intervened to ensure that Wayne Emerson would get the job, in 2018 we were supposed to publicly elect the Chair but the province change the legislation at the 11th house, Emmerson wasn't going to run but then changed his mind when the role reverted back to being appointed (voted-in) by York Region publicly elected Council.

I will be honest and say that I am concerned that Vaughan will undertake this study and the province will change the legislation, again, and it will all be for naught. Nonetheless, I still think staff should proceed to conduct the study in a more wholesome way than in the past.

Item 2 Vaughan Transportation Master Plan

The below diagram is for the Vaughan Transportation Master Plan. It appears there will be a 30 day public review period so I plan to formulate more comments. I see far too much road widening and not nearly enough focus on functional, accessible transit. Of course Highway 413 is there and even though Vaughan Council passed a motion not supporting the highway, staff still have to include this because it is a provincial project being planned. The Vaughan-Caledon Go Line as well as the Concord Go Station appear to be responses to land use decision made by MZO's by Minister Clark and less about responsible transportation planning, based on where people live and need transit right now. Needless to say it's disappointing to see this prioritized when so much else should come first.

Thanks,
Irene

