

Notion of Motion: **Governance Structure for York Region and Municipalities**

Move by: **Regional Councillor Jim Jones**

Seconded by: **Regional Councillor Nirmala Armstrong**

Mr. Mayor, and Members of Council

Background

This Council, for the first time in a long time, is debating the Governance of the Region of York in which Markham is the largest of the three southern municipalities, the other two being the City of Vaughan and the Town of Richmond Hill. In total, we represent about 75% of the residential population and even a higher percentage of the employment. Since the creation of York Region more than 45 years ago, there have been no amendments to its structure or municipal make-up.

To remind us, the County of York once included both York Region and the present City of Toronto. In 1953, the Regional Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto was formed consisting of the City of Toronto, the Towns of New Toronto, Mimico, Weston and Leaside; the Villages of Long Branch, Swansea and Forest Hill, and the Townships of Etobicoke, York, North York, East York and Scarborough.

The Metropolitan Toronto Council initially consisted of 12 Councillors from Toronto including the Mayor and one representative, which was either the mayor or deputy mayor or reeve or deputy reeve from each of the surrounding municipalities. Metropolitan Toronto also had planning authority over the surrounding townships including Vaughan, Markham and Pickering that were not represented on Council.

The Robarts Commission studied Metro Toronto in the 60s, resulting in the 1967 amalgamation of seven small Towns and Villages being merged into neighboring Municipalities. Long Branch, New Toronto and Mimico were absorbed into Etobicoke, Weston into York, Leaside into East York, and Swansea and Forest Hill into Toronto leaving Toronto and its Five Boroughs.

In 1998, the Boroughs were amalgamated into the City of Toronto.

In 1971, the Region of York was formed from 14 Townships and 11 Police Villages into the nine Municipalities of York Region we have today.

The first corporate offices for York Region were the former offices of the Toronto and York Roads Commission that had been the County offices from 1953 to 1971. Prior to that, the County seat was in Toronto from 1792 to 1953. I mention this because there is the mistaken belief that historically Newmarket has always been the County seat.

I believe it is the time to revisit the governance structure of York Region. You can see from the history that there was not a lot of thought given to the boundaries of York Region. They were leftover from the former County of York minus the lands from Steeles Avenue to Lake Ontario. This is the only Region in the GTA that is not lake based. Perhaps in hindsight the City of Pickering should have been included in York Region. Knowing what we know today, would we accept the historical boundaries laid out by Lord Simcoe centuries ago?

This brings me to the central issues of this discussion.

There are many similarities between the City of Markham, the City of Vaughan and The Town of Richmond Hill. However, they share few similarities with the six northern municipalities: Aurora, Newmarket, King, Whitchurch Stouffville, East Gwillimbury and Georgina.

This is borne out by the reality that the six northern municipalities have formed a committee or association called the Northern Six to assist them in creating a larger population to tender services, such as waste removal and the purchasing of other goods and services.

Feasibility Study

It is time to do a Feasibility Study to examine rationalizing the boundaries and structure of York Region. Certainly the three southern municipalities are no longer rural or suburban. We are totally urban with all of the benefits and challenges of urban cities.

Rather than adding more Councillors at the Regional level, it is time to consider studying the representation and structure of the Region and its constituent municipalities.

I propose the following for the consideration of Markham Council and input from both Richmond Hill and Vaughan Councils.

Whereas the Region of York was formed in January 1971, more than 45 years ago from the former County of York; and

Whereas the number and boundaries of municipalities need to be studied to determine the best ways to deliver services to residents and businesses; and

Whereas watershed planning is important to the balance of our Great Lakes, we should recognize the topography of lands in the Oak Ridges Moraine as a real boundary between Lake Ontario Watershed and Lake Huron Watershed; and

Whereas the northern boundary between the City of Markham and the Town of Whitchurch Stouffville, and the northern boundary between the City of Vaughan and the Town of King is not close to the top of the Oak Ridge Moraine, but is the logical urban boundary; and

Whereas the northern boundary of Richmond Hill is where it should be from a watershed planning perspective; and

Whereas the Lake Ontario Based York Durham Sewer and the Lake Ontario Water System extend through the Oak Ridges Moraine to service Aurora, Newmarket and East Gwillimbury in the Lake Huron Watershed; and

Whereas it is time to review all services within York Region including regional government boundaries, municipal boundaries, number of municipalities, representation, school boards and the delivery of services; and

Now therefore, be it resolved that a meeting of the staff and Councils of the City of Markham, the City of Vaughan and the Town of Richmond Hill be convened, hosted by Markham Mayor Scarpitti, to discuss these issues; and

Further a task force be created made up of Mayors, Regional Councillors and Senior Staff from the three southern municipalities to study these issues.

Use the Oak Ridges Moraine as the boundary rather than roads, thus bringing a large portion of Whitchurch Stouffville into the City of Markham, and a large portion of the Town of King into the City of Vaughan. Richmond Hill's northern boundary is already the crest of the Oak Ridges Moraine; and

Further that a meeting of the three southern municipalities be held with the MPPs from York Region and the Minister of Municipal Affairs to determine how Provincial funding can be made.

That the CAOs and or City Managers of the City of Markham, the City of Vaughan and the Town of Richmond Hill be requested to draft a terms of reference for a FEASIBILITY STUDY to examine what should be included in any re-organization report: and

If approved, the report should outline the steps to be taken, a proposed budget and a time-line for implementation, recognizing that time is of the essence due to the pending elections in 2018.