



Municipal Election Democracy at Risk in Caledon

April 11, 2025

Here we go again. The Town of Caledon is messing around with our democracy.

At the March 4 General Committee meeting of Council, the Clerk tabled his report of findings from the 2022 municipal election. It contained a recommendation to consider changing the way our Regional Councillors are elected - that is, to elect them by general vote instead of by wards. In the U.S., they call this gerrymandering (changing electoral boundaries for political purposes). In Caledon, we call it Option 1: Regional Councillors elected by general vote, which is also known as “at-large” representation. *Not a big deal, says our Mayor.*

It **IS** a big deal. Eliminating ward boundaries for election of our Regional Councillors with no public consultation is a slap in the face to all Caledon residents. Democracy Caledon is grateful to Councillors deBoer, Early, Kiernan and Sheen, who were dogged in their efforts to bring this issue to the public, and to Committee Chair, Councillor Maskell, who cast the deciding vote in favour of seeking public input. It must be noted that the Mayor and Councillors Russo, Rosa and Napoli all voted AGAINST the motion to take this matter out to the public.

We have an opportunity to advocate for Caledon so let's make a splash! Ask your friends, neighbours and family to come out and show their interest and concern to Council. Below, we explain why this is really important. First, here are the public meeting details:

What: The Town is asking for public input on how our Regional Councillors will be elected

When: Tuesday, April 15, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.- Public Meeting

Where: Council Chambers of Town Hall, 6311 Old Church Road, Caledon East

To request in-person or remote delegation, email agenda@caledon.ca.

There's an on-line survey at www.haveyoursaycaledon.ca/votingsurvey. The deadline is April 27, 2025.

Why: Your electoral representation is a fundamental feature of democracy!

Please read on for context on an “at-large” (general vote) versus the ward system of voting for Regional Councillors.

“At-large” representation means that election of Regional Councillors is by ALL of Caledon, both urban and rural parts of the Town. Since the largest population of voters is in urban areas (especially Bolton, which currently has almost half of Caledon’s population), there is a great risk that the rural voice in Caledon will be silenced.

Caledon is one of the most diverse municipalities in southern Ontario - in both its population and its geography. The challenge for Caledon’s municipal elections is to ensure there is effective representation of both the urban AND rural voices. The primary concern with at-large election of Regional Councillors is that candidates would focus their efforts in the highly populated urban areas, depriving the rural population, comprised of villages, hamlets, rural homes and farms, of being fully represented. One particularly concerning and quite possible result could be that both Regional Councillors are from Bolton, leaving all the rest of Caledon without Regional Councillor representation.

With Caledon’s population poised to grow massively in the next 25 years, primarily in the southern, increasingly urban part of the Town, making sure there is effective electoral representation across all of Caledon is more important than ever.

There was a comprehensive Ward Boundary Review in 2020-21, led by consulting firm Watson & Associates, experts in electoral and ward boundary reviews, which included a robust public engagement process. At the Review’s conclusion, Caledon Council specifically chose to retain Regional Councillor election based on wards and not by general (at-large) vote. Currently, Caledon’s two Regional Councillors are elected by ward - Christina Early represents Wards 1, 2 & 3 and Mario Russo represents Wards 4, 5 & 6.

Why is at-large voting being raised again when Council voted against it for Regional Councillors in 2021?

The most equitable way to ensure that all residents - rural, urban and all communities with different interests and points of view - are represented fairly is by ward voting for Regional Councillors. This is both the conclusion of Watson and Associates AND Democracy Caledon’s position.

If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. Keep ward elections for our Regional Councillors!

Contact us any time at info@democracycaledon.org