

## Caledon will become an independent municipality by 2025

By Zachary Roman

Caledon, Brampton, and Mississauga will no longer form the Region of Peel. At a press conference held on May 18, Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Steve Clark announced Premier Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative government was tabling legislation to dissolve the Region of Peel. The move came just days after Ford said he was "always for an independent Mississauga" at a press conference held there. The legislation that's dissolving Peel is called the Hazel McCallion Act, a nod to the late Mississauga mayor McCallion's long-held desire to have Mississauga be an independent city. Ford has said even before he was elected, he promised McCallion he'd make Mississauga independent. Peel will be officially dissolved on January 1, 2025, and a five-person transition board is going to be appointed by the government to handle the transition. The board would make recommendations on actions our government can take to help the transition proceed smoothly and it would provide a wide range of advice," said Clark. Clark said the move to dissolve Peel will help its three municipalities grow, specifically when it comes to building homes. He said the dissolution will be done fairly and ensure stability for Peel's residents. "Our objective" is to ensure these municipalities have the tools that they need to support future population and housing growth in the years to come, to reduce duplication, to lower the cost of government, and speed up the delivery of high-quality services to the taxpayers of these three communities," said Clark. At the press conference, Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown and Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie could each be seen making faces as the other was talking. Prior to the press conference, Brown had said Brampton residents' tax dollars have built well over \$1 billion in infrastructure in Mississauga and that his city needs to be made whole. At the press conference, Brown said Ford assured him Brampton would be made whole. Brown said if Brampton wasn't, it would be catastrophic as economic development and housing growth would grind to a halt and property taxes would increase. Crombie said it was a historic day for Mississauga and that McCallion would be looking down and smiling to hear the news that Peel was dissolving. Crombie said she only asked for fairness and equity in the dissolution process and that Mississauga's growth was paid for by Mississauga residents. She also said she received a firm commitment her city would be made whole from Ford. Crombie said she's confident the provincial government will appoint people to the transition board that will have no conflicts of interest and not be biased. Reporters asked how Brown and Crombie could work together in the dissolution process if there was already friction at the press conference. Crombie said she believed they'd be able to work things out professionally and cordially, while Brown said he would not be afraid to fully stand up for the residents of Brampton should anything go awry. It wasn't until this point in the press conference that Caledon Mayor Annette Groves was able to speak, calling Caledon the "child" in the Region of Peel "divorce." She said she was confident Caledon and its residents would be taken care of and that she was "sure" the province did not come to the decision to dissolve Peel lightly. "I have every confidence in your transition board" that this will all be worked out," said Groves. The dissolution of the Region came as a surprise to Groves. "It's not a move that we wanted" but at the end of the day, we're here with this decision today and we have to work with it and do the best we can," said Groves. She said she won't have any issue making sure that Caledon residents will be served well as the Region dissolves. Groves noted the Region of Peel has always served Caledon well, and that Caledon Council's formal position has always been in support of maintaining the Region of Peel. Caledon is expected to take a lot of growth in undeveloped areas, and Groves said it's key that Caledon receives support for the infrastructure needed to grow in these areas. Clark said Groves' points were well taken. He indicated his government wants to give the mayors of the newly-independent Caledon, Mississauga, and Brampton strong mayor powers like the ones afforded to Toronto and Ottawa's mayors. Crombie was asked at the press conference about rumours she'd be running for leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario. She said she was approached by people across Ontario to give it consideration but that she was solely focused on "this incredible day and historic announcement." Since the press conference, Crombie has formed an "exploratory committee," the first step in running to become leader of the Ontario Liberals. The Town of Caledon put out a media release on May 18 about the dissolution of the Region of Peel. In the release, Groves was quoted as saying the following: "Caledon is a special place, and the Town's residents have made it clear that they want Caledon to retain its unique identity," said Groves. "As one of the fastest growing municipalities in the Province, Caledon needs partners at the table to ensure we hit our growth targets when it comes to infrastructure and community service. We will work with the Province to ensure a fair transition for our town that protects our financial security and makes sure residents continue to receive the high levels of service that they need and have come to expect. We understand that this will be an involved

process and we look forward to working productively to reach an outcome that is fair, equitable and respects the current and future capabilities of a growing Caledon.?