

Coronation Park

RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

April 18, 2019

Local Government Policy Branch
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street, 13th floor
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5
via e-mail: regionalgovreview@ontario.ca

Reference: Regional Government Review

Dear Minister Clark,

The following points outline our considerable concerns regarding possible municipal amalgamation and its effects on those who live, work and own businesses in the communities under review. Our comments reflect considered opinion that the *bigger is better* amalgamation concept carries serious drawbacks.

Representation:

- Constituents require ready access to local representatives who understand local issues and have a vested interest in ensuring they are resolved to the satisfaction of the taxpayer and the community. Maintaining lower-tier, fair representation, ensures municipal structure and governance that is much closer to the people and better informed. Large councils are more complex, less accountable and less easily monitored by voters.

Delivery of Services

- Amalgamation brings enormous and unneeded transition costs. For example, the number and kinds of collective agreements, rates of pay, hours of work, service levels, etc. all represent disparity that would require extensive and expensive restructuring. In the end, the result is a public union body that will have even greater power than it does now. Transition costs like those cited above will far outweigh amalgamation savings targets.

Financial Burdens

- Under amalgamation, distribution of assets and liabilities, financial allocation of funds for infrastructure, etc. becomes a political decision by a new council. As such, one or two former municipalities can end up carrying greater debt or subsidizing those municipalities in lesser positions financially.

Brevity of Review

- Undertaking major change to government at any level requires a measured approach. It must involve sufficient time, resources and expertise to undertake collection and analysis of information. Subsequent development of possible solutions accompanied with projections of needed resource allocations and the weighing of benefits versus loss must ensue. The current process is unrealistic and does not reflect these considerations.
- Meaningful public engagement on this serious issue is lacking. As the taxpayers who will be expected to pay the price and accept the high level of risk associated with amalgamation, it is unacceptable.

Suggestions for Improvement

No one will suggest that improvement to our municipalities is not needed. It is already an established and ongoing focus for lower and upper tier bodies.

Many problems with local government arise more from insufficient funding and defects in the funding process rather than from endemic structural problems. It is imperative to maintain a sense of place approach and a bottom-up method in addressing the needs for smoother, faster service approvals and progress through bureaucracy. Municipal professionals need resources and access to methods of creating change and improvement within their respective organizations that focus on doing more with what they have. This represents improved administration efficiencies, not improved democracy.

In closing, two vital fundamentals must be upheld

- municipalities must have the power to effect change at the local level.
- the people of Ontario, as taxpayers, must have the ability to accept or reject any proposed structural changes to municipal governments.

Sincerely,

**Coronation Park Residents Association
Oakville, ON**

**Pamela Knight, President
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