



## THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WEST LINCOLN

### PUBLIC CONSULTATION MINUTES

#### Public Consultation Regarding Municipal Governance

March 25, 2026, 5:00 p.m.

Township Administration Building

318 Canborough Street, Smithville, Ontario

#### Council:

Mayor Cheryl Ganann  
Councillor Shelley Bradaric  
Councillor Mike Rehner  
Councillor William Reilly  
Councillor Jason Trombetta (attended virtually)  
Councillor Joann Chechalk  
Councillor Greg Maychak

#### Staff:

Justin Paylove, Manager, Legislative Services/Clerk  
Truper McBride, CAO  
Jessica Dyson, Director, Legal and Legislative Services  
Tim Hofsink, Fire Chief  
Zoli Rakonjac, Deputy Fire Chief  
Sarah Trzok, Administrative Assistant, Fire Services  
Barb Hutchinson, Coordinator, Legislative Services/Deputy Clerk  
Tim Carr, Enforcement Officer  
Kevin Geoghegan, IT Help Desk Analyst

#### Attendees:

Dorothy Henderson  
Pat Nelson  
John P. Smith  
Kathy Whybourne  
Shawn Lampman  
Bann Nuven  
Klaas Zeldenrust  
Beverley Johnson  
Vince Emanuele  
Katherine Breddy  
Albert Witteveen, Regional Councillor  
John Ganann

**1. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT**

The Township of West Lincoln, being part of Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. This land is steeped in the rich history of the First Nations such as the Hatiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. There are many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today. The Township of West Lincoln, as part of the Regional Municipality of Niagara, stands with all Indigenous people, past and present, in promoting the wise stewardship of the lands on which we live.

**2. DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND/OR CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

There were no disclosure of pecuniary interest and/or conflict of interest

**3. MAYOR'S REMARKS**

The Mayor gave a brief explanation in regard to the Public Consultation meeting and an overview of the Regional Governance conversation.

**4. PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

Dorothy Henderson, resident

Dorothy Henderson read from a prepared statement attached as Schedule "A", explaining that she does not believe the amalgamation should be forced and that it will not be a benefit to the Township.

Kathy Whybourne, resident

Kathy Whybourne, noted that she was not in favour of forced amalgamation as she believes West Lincoln will be left out and not get the services or support that is needed. She also noted that she believes the Region is a waste, they only build for the present and not for the future of growth.

Shawn Lampman, resident

Shawn Lampman, read from a prepared statement attached as Schedule "B" noting that he is not in favour of amalgamation and one city models, he also gave a brief explanation on his thoughts on how amalgamating would not make the issues better for Niagara.

Beverley Johnson, resident

Beverly Johnson, had a question if the Niagara Region was part of the new project for the Legion Villa and she also commented what would happen if there was no longer a Niagara Region. She also commented that she does not agree with the amalgamation.

Beverley Johnson, resident

Beverly Johnson, commented that she does not agree with the forced amalgamation.

John Smith, resident

John Smith, expressed that he was from Hamilton and was never offered what West Lincoln offers and explained he does not agree with amalgamation.

Katharine Breddy, resident

Katharine Breddy, expressed that we will lose the community connection if we were to amalgamate and therefore does not support amalgamation.

Kathy Whybourne, resident

Kathy Whybourne, noted that amalgamation historically resulted in increased taxes, and noted she does not support amalgamation.

John Ganann, resident

John Ganann read from a prepared statement attached as Schedule "C" and expressed he is against forced amalgamation.

Vince Emanuele, resident

Vince Emanuele expressed he was not in favour of amalgamation

Emily Fowl, resident

Emily Fowl expressed that she is against amalgamation.

Mayor Ganann,

Mayor Ganann noted her appreciation for those who came out to the meeting and noted another will occur in the future.

## **5. ADJOURNMENT**

The Mayor to declare this meeting adjourned at the hour of 6:25 p.m.

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JUSTIN PAYLOVE, MANAGER,  
LEGISLATIVE SERVICES/CLERK

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MAYOR CHERYL GANANN

## Amalgamation Niagara

Township of West Lincoln Special Council Meeting March 25, 2026

I didn't know much about amalgamation in Ontario so I did some research prior to the meeting tonight.

It is well documented that the Progressive Conservative Party has long championed amalgamation.

A report from the Frazer Institute May 26, 2015 concluded that their analysis suggests that amalgamation did not result in cost saving or lower taxes and that there was no tangible benefit to amalgamation.

## History of Amalgamation in Ontario

The Progressive Conservative government was elected in 1995 with 880 municipalities by 2000 it was reduced to 444 municipalities,

15 years after amalgamation the conventional wisdom is that it was done in a haphazard way and was forced on municipalities.

Progressive Conservatives came to power with an election document "The Common Sense Revolution" which included various pledges such as legal aid reform, cutting taxes, reducing government waste with vague mention of municipal restructuring.

The Progressive Conservative argument was:

- Too much government federal, provincial, municipal and school board
- Need to avoid overlap and duplication

Progressive Conservatives said:

"We will sit down with the municipalities to discuss ways of reducing entanglement and bureaucracy with an eye to eliminating waste and duplication as well as unfair downloading by the province" (1996)

## **Bill 26 The Savings and Restructuring Act**

This gave municipalities the option of voluntary amalgamation. Few municipalities did so.

In 1996 the Progressive Conservatives announced amalgamation of Toronto municipalities.

Chatham and constituent municipalities of Kent County were amalgamated by provincially appointed commissioner Peter Meyboom. 21 municipalities had been considering restructuring but were unable to reach agreement.

In Feb. 1997 Peter Megboom held 5 days of meetings in Chatham and Kent. Each municipality had 1 hour to provide recommendations.

At the end of the meetings Peter Meyboom presented the draft to local councils providing 2 options.

1. A streamlined two-tier county system
2. 2. Unicity model which called for complete amalgamation of all lower tier municipalities and dissolution of county government.

Of the 22 municipalities 21 rejected total amalgamation. Despite the clear choice by affected municipalities Mayboom selected the unicity model and it became legislated.

Chatham Kent became the horrible example that no one wanted. This sent a clear message to the rest of the province to choose voluntary amalgamation or there would be consequences.

(Downey and Williams 1998 as cited in Frazer Institute 2015)

### **1999 Fewer Municipal Politicians Act**

This amalgamated Hamilton Wentworth, Ottawa Carlton, Sudbury, Haldimand, Norfolk.

Despite local rejection to amalgamation Progressive Conservative politicians touted the following:

- Substantial cost and tax saving would result

These promises were not based on hard economic data or other quantitative analysis or data.

Research asserts that it is unlikely that Ontario amalgamation of any substantial size during 1999-2001 achieved cost savings and may have increased costs. (Found 242 as cited in Frazer Institute 2015)

There is considerable evidence that the provincial government believed that municipal restructuring would result in cost saving. (Scanton, 2000, Ibbitson 1997, as in Frazer Institute 2015)

Residents in Haldimand saw property tax increase by 53.3% and in Norfolk by 29.5%. The

Frazer report found that these intended benefits of amalgamation never materialized.

I'm not suggesting that this will happen in West Lincoln but because it has occurred elsewhere it could happen here.

Even in the face of stiff opposition in Dundas Ontario where local residents made clear their opposition their voices were not heard. Another case study of the City of Kawartha Lakes showed how local objections went unacknowledged by government. The community organized a successful de-amalgamation referendum the government dismissed the result and went ahead with their single tier model legislated by the special appointed advisor.

This could happen in Niagara despite local objection to a model put forward by a special appointed advisor. Niagara municipalities have been exposed to this by the former advisor Mr. Gale.

The Frazer report stated that in Ontario's largest cities it has been established that the promised tax savings and efficiency gains were never achieved. For the first time we can conclude that these intended benefits were not realized in rural Ontario as well.

### **What's to Fear about Amalgamation**

Municipal amalgamation should be seen as an opportunity to achieve economic prosperity, increase in quality of life, growth and development and greater opportunities for all within the municipality. (West Lincoln Strategic Plan)

Amalgamation is seen as a threat to municipalities. The fear is loss of uniqueness and character, increase costs, and the silencing of the political voice of the residents.

The following research outlines the threat to local communities:

- Amalgamation took control over local issues and shifted them up to the supercity
- Overruling of local issues as there are different priorities for urban, suburban and rural communities
- Local communities lose control over their own destiny  
(Saravanamotto, Neil, McKenny, Catherine, fix yourcity.subtract.com)

Treat to the democratic process:

- Amalgamation depresses voter turnout rates
- Decreases the number of candidates in local elections
- Negatively affects the level of attachment of residents

Taveres, Antonio, Municipal Amalgamation and Effect: A Review of Literature Dec.2018, *Miscellanea Geographica* 22(1)

- Amalgamation negatively affects social norms to vote in local and national elections
- Reduction in the power of the individual vote
- Results in distance from elected politicians
- An increase in jurisdiction size decreases voter turnout

**(Is small Beautiful? Transitional and Structural effects of Municipal Amalgamation on voter turnout in Local and National elections *Electoral Studies* Volume 70, April 2021, 102284)**

That these findings are robust across countries suggest that these results are unavoidable outcomes of amalgamation.

### **Conclusions:**

The discussions about amalgamation in Niagara are not new. Despite Premier Ford's assertion that amalgamation in Niagara will be decided by Niagara I find it difficult to believe. The history of amalgamation in Ontario which is well documented states that if the Progressive Conservative Government wants to force amalgamation they can and will regardless of the opposition of the people.

There is ample evidence from research that suggests the following:

- There is no tangible benefit to amalgamation for larger or smaller municipalities despite the government's claims of cost saving
- Amalgamation poses a real threat to the democratic process
- Forced amalgamation poses a threat to the maintenance of the unique character of each municipality.

If you look at the municipalities of Niagara you will see how distinctly unique each are. NOTL and West Lincoln present very different qualities and needs. It would be absurd to even think they could be aligned.

I do not believe based on the research that there is any benefit in amalgamation and frankly I do not understand this government's inability /unwillingness to recognize this.

I do not trust Premier Ford's assertion that amalgamation is in the hands of Niagara. I believe that if this Progressive Conservative Government wants amalgamation they will impose the model they want!

**Possible solutions:**

- In an attempt avoid imposed amalgamation developing a model other than the one city or four city models that would attempt to combine municipalities with common characteristics while maintaining the integrity of the municipality might satisfy the government
- Continue to investigate Intermunicipal co-operation agreements that would look at reducing costs and sharing resources

**Sources:**

<http://www.frazerinstitute.org>. Mijan, Lydia and Spicer Zacary, Municipal Amalgamation in Ontario. May 26,2015 Frazer Institute

<http://www.IMFG.org>. IMFG Perspectives, Spicer, Zacary, Too Big Yet Still too Small: The Mixed Legacy of the Montreal and Toronto Amalgamations

<http://www.unbc.ca> Impacts of Municipal Reform on Small Municipalities in Canada

Electoral Studies. Is Small Beautiful. Transitional and Structural effects of Municipal Amalgamation on voter turnout at Local and National levels Volume 70 April 2021 102284

Substack.com fixyourcity. Saravanamotto,Neil, McKenny, Catherine, Municipal Amalgamation didn't really work. There are three responses.

Taveres, Antonio, Municipal Amalgamation and the Effect, Review of Literature Dec.18 2018  
Miscellanea Geographica 22(1)



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My name is Shawn Lampman. I am currently on med-leave from my position at the DSBN as an Educational Assistant while I wait for spine surgery, and I have lived in West Lincoln for my entire 25 years of life.

~~While I regret the reason for being here,~~ I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding Niagara Region's governance and potential amalgamation. In case I run out of time, I want to clearly state for the record that I am opposed to amalgamation under both the four city and one city models, I am opposed to the shrinking of regional and municipal council, and I am against a weighted vote at the regional level.

The main metric cited for investigating amalgamation is the region's annual tax increase of 6.3 percent this year. However, ~~when you look more closely,~~ 4.4 percent of that increase is dedicated to the Niagara Regional Police budget. That increase is provincially regulated, meaning governance reform or amalgamation would not change it. Removing the police budget from the calculation leaves an increase of roughly 1.9 percent. A tax increase of that size is generally considered low. In fact, the average residential tax increase across Canada is often estimated between 5 and 10 percent. Compared to that national trend, a 1.9 percent increase to cover inflation and service costs is quite reasonable.

Amalgamation would ~~likely~~ make the issue worse, not better. In previous municipal amalgamations across Ontario, property taxes rose, in some cases by as much as 50 percent. Historical research also shows that rural and suburban communities see taxes increase to match the higher service standards of nearby urban centres, even when those services are not extended to them. For example, under a one city model, West Lincoln residents could be paying higher taxes for "regional" public transportation, despite having no bus routes, train lines, or bike lanes added to our municipality. Burdening rural residents with the cost of urban services without actually providing those services is not cost savings by any metric.

~~Ontario's history with amalgamations shows that municipal councils become less connected to residents after consolidation.~~ While amalgamation is often intended to increase efficiency, the evidence suggests that larger municipal governments struggle to address the specific needs of smaller communities that have been absorbed. Residents in smaller municipalities like West Lincoln would likely end up paying higher

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taxes while having less influence over the decisions that shape our communities. That does not create stronger governance. It creates governance that is ~~further~~ removed from the people it is meant to serve.

Another argument alongside the amalgamation one is reducing the number of councillors to save money. I am firmly against cutting the size of council. Our councillors are paid around 30,000 dollars annually, while councillors in cities like Hamilton or Toronto earn ~~between 125 and 150~~ thousand dollars. Reducing the number of councillors here would not produce meaningful savings, ~~but~~ it would reduce representation, especially for West Lincoln.

*\* Reducing council would shift burden to make hiring additional people necessary.*

The next issue I wish to discuss is the weighted-vote at the regional level. Under the proposed weighted voting model for ~~Niagara~~ Regional Council, the balance of power would shift ~~dramatically~~ toward the region's largest cities. The ~~estimated~~ weights based on population would allocate 9 votes to St. Catharines, 6 to Niagara Falls, and 4 to Welland. Together, those three municipalities would control 19 out of the 32 total votes. In practice, that means representatives from ~~just~~ three cities could pass measures affecting the entire region without support from any of the other nine municipalities, including smaller communities such as West Lincoln, Pelham, or Wainfleet. Regional councils exist to balance urban and rural interests across all member municipalities, but a heavily weighted system concentrates decision-making power in a few large population centres. Over time, this could erode trust in regional governance and leave many communities feeling that decisions about regional services, infrastructure, and planning are being made without meaningful input from the municipalities most affected.

Niagara's strength has always been the diversity of its communities. Municipalities have distinct priorities and identities. Local councils understand their communities in ways a centralized body cannot replicate, and that local knowledge is essential when making decisions that affect residents' daily lives.

For these reasons, I strongly believe that amalgamation would move Niagara Region in the wrong direction. The financial argument for amalgamation simply does not hold up under scrutiny, and the democratic argument is even weaker. What we would gain in theoretical "efficiency" we would lose in local accountability, representation, and accessibility.

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#### Toronto Amalgamation (1998)

- Studies found that Toronto's municipal spending increased by \$750 million within the first few years after amalgamation.
- Rather than reducing costs, operating budgets expanded as services were standardized across the new megacity.

#### Hamilton Amalgamation (2001)

- 15 years after amalgamation, there was no meaningful cost savings or prolonged reduction in property taxes.
- Many policies adopted after Hamilton's amalgamation, such as area-rated transit taxation, show that blending jurisdictions does not automatically create equitable or efficient tax systems.

#### Fraser Institute Study (2001)

- Found that municipal spending in Toronto increased 13% in the first three years after amalgamation.

#### IMFG Paper – University of Toronto (2015)

- Concluded that amalgamation rarely produces long-term cost savings and often results in higher administrative and wage costs.

#### Ontario Municipal Experience (general trend)

- Several Ontario amalgamations saw property taxes rise 20–50% in suburban or rural areas after service levels were equalized.

#### KPMG Review of Toronto Amalgamation

- Predicted \$300 million in savings from amalgamation.
- Later reviews found those savings never fully materialized.

#### Public Sector Wage Equalization

- After amalgamation, employee wages often increase because lower-paid municipal staff are brought up to the highest wage scale across the merged municipalities.

#### Average Councillor Representation

Before amalgamation:

- Smaller municipalities often had 1 councillor per 3,000–6,000 residents

After amalgamation:

- Representation can drop to 1 councillor per 20,000–60,000 residents

Example:

- Toronto now has 1 councillor per roughly 115,000 residents

↳ municipal employee compensation +52.8%  
↳ property tax increase +50%  
↳ long-term municipal debt increased +11%

Dear Mayor and Council:

This letter is to advise you that I am **opposed** to amalgamation into a one tier government or a four city model in Niagara. I see no benefits nor savings in money. As seen in other municipalities such as Hamilton, costs have actually increased for residents.

However, I do think that a review is in order for departments in the Niagara Region including the Police and Water/Waste Water delivery. I feel that the Policing budget should be on a user pay system where the ones who are needing the most policing should pay the most, not on the "property assessment method presently used". Water and Waste Water should be set up so that those municipalities should be paying for the upgrades required to separate the storm water and waste water systems (I know of one municipality that was given extra money and frittered away their money on recreation and so required a bigger waste water treatment plant).

On the question of the number of Councillors in the Region, I feel that the numbers should be fairer, where each local municipality gets a mayor and one regional councillor but gives the three larger municipalities one extra councillor. This would reduce the regional representatives to 27.

John Ganann  
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