



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
**John Taylor**

April 3, 2019

Local Government Policy Branch  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Attn: Michael Fenn & Ken Seiling  
777 Bay Street, 13<sup>th</sup> floor  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2E5

Dear Messer's Fenn and Seiling;

On behalf of the Council of the Town of Newmarket I would like to formally provide comments to your panel examining regional and local governance in the GTA and in Southern Ontario. I feel your work and likely resulting legislation has the potential to considerably affect the nature of local democracy and the provision of services and I hope our input will be carefully considered.

First, let me state unequivocally that boundary adjustments or adjustments to the numbers of elected officials should not be pursued for the purposes of reducing costs. There is little to no evidence that amalgamation or reductions in the numbers of elected officials will impact costs in a significant manner. Even the Fraser Institute found no basis for cost savings through amalgamation: "studies on Ontario's larger cities found no cost savings to amalgamation, and indeed, our research on smaller municipalities came to similar conclusions". They went on to say: "while it's commendable that the government is reviewing municipal service delivery, let's hope it will heed the lessons of the last amalgamation experiment and proceed with caution to ensure the best possible outcome and provide true cost-savings and better local governance".

If the panel and the Government continues to pursue local and Regional Government in search of savings I would strongly suggest they explore the N-6 model which is an ongoing formalized effort to find efficiencies, savings and improved services in a partnership of the northern six municipalities of York Region. This model will demonstrate various partnerships with all or some of the northern six municipalities when it comes to service delivery or procurement including waste management, IT, audit services, professional development and even fire services (Newmarket and Aurora). The Mayors and CAO's meet regularly to monitor the ongoing efforts and to explore a list of future potential options for partnerships and savings.

I would like to stress that if any municipal or regional entity is created it must be financially viable and should be studied as to whether that entity could sustain itself in the long term. The lack of a thorough financial analysis could have significant impact on local taxpayers and on service delivery.

I would like to close by stating that we are often cited as the level of government 'closest to the people'. This statement has significant meaning for local democracy and democracy at large. As mayor, I can assure you that the 90,000 residents who call Newmarket home greatly value being able to call their Mayor or Councillor or being able to come to a Council meeting and share their passion and concerns directly with us. As each year passes it seems people have less and less faith in, or connection to, government. Local government remains a level of government that is very connected to the people and local government provides some reassurance that people can be heard and that people can impact decision making. Amalgamations and fewer elected officials may sound good on paper but it may lead to a weakening of local democracy and local government – the level that is closest to the people.

Finally, my advice would be to require local government, be it lower or upper tier or single tier demonstrate they have undertaken the appropriate work to ensure that efficiencies and partnerships beyond their boundaries are being explored and implemented. That is where the real savings exist and then leave municipal governments free to do what they do best which is deliver direct and accountable services to the people of their communities and to be close at hand to hear directly from the people if it is not being done efficiently or properly. That is how democracy is meant to work.

Yours truly,

John Taylor  
Mayor

Copy: Christine Elliott, MPP Newmarket Aurora  
Deputy Premier of Ontario and Minister of Health & Long Term Care