

Submitted by Bob Bader

Regulations to Assign a Weighted Voting Framework to Niagara Region

A further immediate threat to democratic governance in the Niagara Region was posted to the Ontario Regulatory Registry last week; the Province of Ontario's newly released "Weighted Voting Framework for Niagara" (Proposal 55235) which is currently open for public comment until November 5, 2026. Log in today <https://www.regulatoryregistry.gov.on.ca/proposal/55235> and make your voice heard. We need hundreds and thousands of objections to be heard.

This proposal arrives in the wake of a broader, troubling reorganization by Premier Ford's government having abandoned elected Regional Councillors and an elected Regional Chair in favour of the 12 mayors of our municipalities forming the regional governing body, overseen by a Regional Chair appointed directly by the Province—a position now equipped with "Strong Chair (Mayor)" powers to direct regional governance.

Under this new structure, the Province's proposed weighted voting plan is even more alarming. By dividing population by 20,000 to determine voting power, the two largest urban municipalities with the Chairman's vote will be able to outvote the other ten municipalities combined and control the functions and priorities of the Region.

While Niagara-on-the-Lake has a permanent residential population of roughly 19,000 through its world-class wine industry, agriculture, Shaw Festival theatres and historic character attracts global tourism and serves as a primary economic engine and tax revenue generator for the entire Niagara Region. A framework that calculates political representation strictly by residential headcount entirely ignores each municipality's financial and commercial contributions to the regional tax pool. It is fundamentally undemocratic to expect the smaller municipalities to be shut out of regional decision making by an arbitrary assigning of votes by dividing population by 20,000. If this is the hard and fast method at least increase the divider to 40,000 to allow for less disenfranchisement in smaller municipalities.

As a much better system to avoid pitting municipalities against one another, the province should abandon this straight population-weighted model. Instead, Ontario should implement a Double Majority Framework for critical regional decisions. Under a double majority system, each mayor would receive one equal vote for standard business, but major regional or legacy financial decisions would require support from at least 6 of the 12

local municipalities AND those supporting municipalities must represent at least 50% of Niagara's total population. This balanced approach respects population equity for larger cities while ensuring historically and economically distinct communities like Niagara-on-the-Lake retain a meaningful voice.

Given the diverse nature of the twelve municipalities comprising the Region of Niagara vesting control of the Region in the hands of even three of the largest population centres would serve to disenfranchise the remaining three-quarters of the Region.

Please feel free to cut and paste from this or make your own objections known, even if its simple rejection of weighted voting! Again the Ontario Regulatory Registry is at <https://www.regulatoryregistry.gov.on.ca/proposal/55235> and please feel free to forward this to anyone else in Niagara Region to encourage a massive objection to this assault on our democracy.