

## Niagara Amalgamation – Discussion Notes September 2023

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*The following are a few topics for discussion, and further research:*

- **The Cost to Amalgamate:** the bureaucrats will underestimate the cost to physically amalgamate. The voters of the 6 municipalities that were amalgamated into the City of Toronto were told it would cost \$220 Million and, in the end, it cost \$275 Million.
- **The Savings over Time:** the bureaucrats will overestimate the savings. Again, the voters in Toronto were told the savings would be \$300 million per year. After 10 years it was reported that the 6 municipalities whose budget before amalgamation was \$3.5 billion grew to \$9.38 billion, an increase of 70%.
- **A Solution to Social Problems:** the bureaucrats will tell you that the savings created by the amalgamation will go towards solving homelessness, addiction, crime, poverty, and mental health issues. Toronto's homelessness, crime, addition and mental health issues have gotten worse, and no solution is in sight.
- **There will be Savings in Staff:** the bureaucrats will tell you there will be operational savings in the number of staff required to deliver services. If Toronto's amalgamation can once again serve as an example, in 10 years Toronto staff grew from 45,860 employees to 50,601. The "wage bill" for Toronto increased, there was no savings.
- **Governance will improve;** the bureaucrats will tell you that 16 councilors with staff representing a population of 480,000 ( 30,000 per councilor ) is the best for everyone, and fairer. Niagara-on-the-Lake would have one councilor, one voice at the table, just one vote out of 16.

Twenty-four years after Toronto's amalgamation, civic engagement and democratic participation have declined. When voters no longer sense their involvement matters in governance of a city, the city ends up being run by a few full-time politicians who will mostly follow the direction of the bureaucrats who are not elected and have their own agendas, not those of the voters.

- **A Cautionary Note:** in 1997 there was a referendum held on whether to consider amalgamation. The citizens of all 6 municipalities voted 76% against. But regardless of the voter's democratic choice, Harris Provincial Government went ahead with their "common sense" agenda and implemented amalgamation.