

Local

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reason to hope governance change will be for the better

We should be optimistic that Niagara governance will change for the better this time.

We came close last term with the leadership of Mayor (Walter) Sendzik when city council asked Niagara Region to reduce St. Catharines politicians from 19 to 13 by replacing six regional councillors with six of 12 city ward councillors doing both city and region jobs. We won support at regional council and Queen's Park, but city council changed its mind at the last vote, by one vote.

We thought that change had balance.

That change would have improved the co-operation and communication between city and region, which would quickly lead to more effective municipal service delivery and government and reduce the number of politicians.

We were close.

I am optimistic that the challenge of change for more effective service and local government will be met by the new councils of Niagara; I am certain the challenge will be met by this provincial government this time.

We can be optimistic that the 12 mayors' commitment to working together and the province's call for public advice will produce change for the better for Niagara.

Bruce Timms

Former regional councillor, St. Catharines

Congratulations on national newspaper award

Congratulations to Grant LaFleche for being nominated for a National Newspaper Award. The article "All the Chair's Men" must have taken a lot of time and energy putting it together with all the checks and balances that had to be done to release the story.

I hope Grant continues the fine work that brought him to this point in his career. As this story still stands open, until reports are released it may include a second nomination or award.

Thanks to Grant for doing this for the people of Niagara, otherwise the politicians and their compatriots would have kept the public in the dark again.

John Hunt

Niagara Falls

Re: to c inc W mer acc arcl up t M ativ par cou mer in n B mus mer The are tory the and gen dar sigr mo guibui FAI the and ing can sigr S mee ren ed c St. (whi ran boa and acc roo sibi is a res gio inc De Th pr be of H St

Opinion

The Standard

NEIL OLIVER
PUBLISHER

FREDRIC KAREN
SVP EDITORIAL

ANGUS SCOTT
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

THE STANDARD 55 KING ST., SUITE 600, ST. CATHARINES, ONT., L2R 3H8

THE STANDARD'S VIEW

Decision on Niagara's future must be balanced

If Premier Doug Ford intended to tip his hand at all this week about possibly reorganizing governance in Niagara, he did so in only the slightest way.

He said Niagara has too many politicians, but didn't want to comment further.

"I was in Niagara region and I spoke to so many business owners that were frustrated," he told reporters during a stop in Cambridge. "Would you believe Niagara region, they have 500,000 people, they have 118 politicians. Toronto has 25 with 2.8 million."

Too many politicians — that was easy. Actually, Niagara has about 126, but who's counting?

You won't save much money by cutting politicians' jobs, though. The more difficult task lies ahead.

Niagara and several other regions around Ontario are in the midst of being studied, with everything from amalgamations, eliminating some municipalities outright, and cutting down on elected officials all being looked at as a means of saving money and streamlining governance.

The timeline is tight — Ford only announced the studies in January, and wants a report back in a few months.

If, as he says, there are too many pols in Niagara, does that mean we need fewer municipalities? Instead of 12 (plus the Region itself), maybe we have three plus the Region? Or no Region? Maybe just one big city called Niagara?

Presumably, fewer municipalities means fewer municipal staff. That's where the real savings start to happen. But that must be balanced against the continued need for good government, albeit less government.

If business owners are frustrated now dealing with red tape and too many government offices to visit, think how upset they'll be if too-deep staff cuts have the unintended effect of themselves being the cause of delay and frustration. Smaller government — yes, please. But not too small.

"Our goal is to make sure that our government runs efficiently," said Ford. "And too many politicians is not a good thing. Too many politicians actually hurts the communities."

It's not encouraging that the premier seems to dwell on the idea of eliminating politicians. If that's all he's after — basically, a headhunting trophy — then not much will be achieved by this process.

Hopefully, he was purposely narrowing his scope for now so as not to step on Clark's toes as the study continues in Niagara and at numerous other regions around Ontario.

This has all been talked about for years, by various governments that held power at Queen's Park. Ford is the first to figure out that if you just go ahead and do it, it will actually get done. We've called for any new plan for Niagara to be cut-to-fit.

In Kitchener and Waterloo, which are also being studied, without using a map it's virtually impossible to tell where one municipality stops and the other starts. Niagara, though, remains a collection of small- and medium-sized cities and towns each separated by lots of open space. That's changing, but still evident.

Niagara West MPP Sam Oosterhoff put out a call this week to solicit comments from Niagara residents on what changes, if any, they would like to see (www.ontario.ca/page/consultation-regional-government-review.)

That is a positive step, as are the meetings the region's mayors have already held on the same subject. Public meetings should be held, too. The government in Toronto needs to hear as many Niagara voices as possible before any changes are made.

Niagara Region is nearly 50 years old. Whatever decision is made about reshaping its future, has to be done well. Well enough to last another 50 years.

Togo

Canada

TONY BURM

Once again on Ethiopia the horrific lines Flight ular poign

Not only tims Canada Africa for was a rem ago — du of the 198 tries wer dy.

The g was evi though tween A ital, and remark list. The more th

Many tional private flying i Enviro

Give develo part o was p many dian, West

Th cover Afr rar wh far ou

w e

TIMBERLITE PERGOLAS

add beauty to your outdoor space. Bring sun, shade, shelter together! Turn your dream to reality.

