

Merger

and restructuring of municipal boundaries throughout the province, and he said he shared the province's concern in the light of possible areas of duplication of administration,

services and equipment.

He suggested the next time councils meet together, they include their respective roads superintendents to determine whether some equipment

might be shared between the two, at a saving to both.

Cramahe Coun. George Blyth said, "Bigger is not necessarily better." He said that a "bureaucratic nightmare," currently exists at the county and school board levels of government and predicted that Northumberland residents will see in 1992, another county hefty levy increase similar to last year's 28 per cent hike.

(The following night, Tuesday, March 31, it was revealed that the county will ask for a 15-per-cent levy increase, with an overall budget increase of 56 per cent.)

However, Blyth added that he was in favor of investigating "where we overlap.

"I'm not against amalgamation, but the key is working together," said Blyth.

Cramahe Deputy-Reeve Stu Oliver pointed out that a "growth study" currently in the works at the county "will tell quite a bit," when its results are published.

The township reeve said he believed it was "not realistic to expect monstrous growth" for Colborne or Cramahe.

Galt said that the Colborne-Cramahe area is "very awkward" because of the "demographic split" that occurs in the region. "People in the west end of Cramahe look west, people in the east look east, people in the north look north."

He added that the Bell

Canada division that occurs in Cramahe results in the municipality having three different telephone area codes and he called the area a "demographic headwater," for three different regions — Toronto, Peterborough and Belleville.

"I could easily see Cramahe being pulled right apart," he warned.

Cramahe Coun. Jim Williams indicated he was not opposed to dialogue between the village and the township, but he stressed he was "interested in exploring areas of co-operation rather than emphasizing amalgamation as an objective."

But Colborne Coun. Tim Post said, "Growth and evolution are inevitable." He cautioned councillors not to be too complacent over the provincial government's promise that it will not force amalgamations on small urban and rural municipalities.

Post compared the situation to "income tax (which) was supposed to be a temporary measure during World War I.

"I think we should progress and discuss everything. All areas should be open for discussion, I hope, in future meetings."

Colborne Coun. Jane Boreham agreed. "We are adults. I am confident that these councils can work together."

Colborne Deputy-Reeve Ted Pedlar put in a note of caution. "Policing is a key issue. The province has not said what it will do, and we could be in a danger spot."

There is speculation that municipalities with a population of over 5,000 will be expected to form and equip their own municipal police forces, to relieve the financially-strapped OPP. With their combined populations, Colborne and Cramahe could easily tip the scales on the heavy side of 5,000, if not now, then soon, and they would then be forced to provide expensive police services.

The municipalities have resolved that this first joint meeting, which was distinguished by a level of civility and co-operation that has not characterized Colborne and Cramahe's relations in the past, was a step in the right direction.

Leaving aside (for now) discussion of political amalgamation, the councils have resolved to meet on June 30 to look at areas of mutual concern and co-operation.

Building inspector for Colborne and Cramahe, Joe Bonura, as well as the fire chief of Colborne and the roads superintendents of both, will be invited to the meeting, which is scheduled to take place in Castleton.