

# AMALGAMATING HALTON MUNICIPALITIES NOT 'IN BEST INTEREST OF HALTON HILLS,' MAYOR SAYS

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Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette said a provincial review of regional governments could result in an amalgamation of Halton's four municipalities but said it would have to provide "tremendous savings" in order for it to make sense.

"If there's a way we can find efficiencies, that's fine," Bonnette said. "My concern is, is bigger going to be better? I'm not sure it's in the best interest of Halton Hills."

The Ontario government announced Tuesday afternoon that it is moving forward with a review of regional governments to ensure they are "working efficiently and effectively."

The review will cover eight regional municipalities in Ontario, including

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Halton Region and its four municipalities.

"Our government is committed to improving the way regional government works and we will be looking at ways to make better use of taxpayers' dollars and make it easier for residents and businesses to access important municipal services," said Steve Clark, minister of municipal affairs and housing.

While there was no mention of amalgamation in the government's announcement, Premier Doug Ford moved swiftly to reduce the size of Toronto city council from 47 members to 25 after he was elected.

Burlington MPP Jane McKenna said the idea that the provincial review would lead to amalgamation was speculative, but Oakville Mayor Rob Burton said it is a possibility.

"I have been told that all options are on the table," he said, "including turning the split-level municipal government regions into single-tier large cities like the City of Halton, the City of Durham, the City of Peel, the City of York, the City of Waterloo, that kind of thing."

"Once they start a review, you don't know how it's going to end up," Bonnette said. "Obviously it's a

concern, but I think all four municipalities are well run. Halton Hills has a history of being financially responsible."

Milton Mayor Gord Krantz said Halton is an unlikely candidate for amalgamation, calling it one of the best examples of a community with a functioning regional government structure.

"I know how well and how efficient Halton operates and that includes the four municipalities," he said. "But there are other regions that I know of that aren't."

Krantz said when the provincial government was elected in June there was some mention of the possibility of amalgamation or restructuring of some regions. He noted that while Halton was never singled out, Niagara was.



Alexandra Heck

Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette says a provincial review of regional government could result in amalgamation of Halton's four municipalities, something he says he's not sure is "in the best interest of Halton Hills."

When asked how likely it was that the provincial review could result in some kind of amalgamation, Oakville Progressive Conservative MPP Stephen Crawford said, "Ontario's system of regional government has been in place for almost 50 years. We started (the review) with some thoughtful conversations at the AMO (Association of Municipalities Ontario) conference and want to ensure our growing commu-

nities are well supported by the most appropriate and effective forms of local government. This means we will be looking at all the areas that are currently working and see if there are other areas that can be improved on."

Burton takes issue with the idea of amalgamation for Halton.

"I feel I have a duty to point out that all these

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