

# Politicians differ about which level of government should be abolished

By **BRAD REAUME**  
The Champion

Single tier municipal government is coming, it is just a matter of time, according to Burlington regional Councillor Ralph Scholtens.

Milton Mayor Gord Krantz agrees, however he would remove the upper tier regional layer of government, while Mr. Scholtens sees the local level being eliminated.

Provincial policy announcements on municipal reform in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) will be made in the next few weeks, according to Al Leach, minister of municipal affairs.

Mr. Scholtens, the sole proponent of a single level of government for all of Halton Region, said he has not heard anything from the provincial government which would rule out an upper level single tier arrangement.

"Hamilton Wentworth is considering a single tier after it was brought forward as the choice of a citizens' committee," said

Mr. Scholtens. "They came to the same conclusion I did. It does so many things that the province has indicated it wants."

Mr. Scholtens called the single tier option inevitable, but one that will not be embraced until municipal reserve funds dry up and small town politicians are given no choice.

"Municipal reserves are still too large," said Mr. Scholtens. "When there is no more money, then amalgamations will occur."

Mr. Krantz said there is no place for an upper level single tier government in Milton "for at least the next 20 years." He reiterated Milton's position on municipal reform, that bigger is not necessarily better.

"The bigger is better mentality is gone," said Mayor Krantz. "Ask the average person and I think they would agree."

Oakville Councillor Keith Bird favours larger government structures.

"The regional system will prevail," Mr. Bird said. "At the end of the day the focus will shift to larger coordinating bodies."

"There should be one department for all municipal facilities," he said.

"We have to look at what we have to do and then look at all the rules and regulations that are impediments to getting there."

Mr. Scholtens said if restructuring is truly what is wanted, the idea of reorganizing the current hodge-podge of local and regional government services should please supporters of restructuring.

Mr. Scholtens questioned if government should be involved in providing recreation services, or if it should simply coordinate private services.

"If we eliminated 40 per cent of the bureaucracy then taxes would have to go down," he said.

Mr. Krantz said that with the removal of regional government the province would likely look to amalgamations of small municipalities to achieve its cost cutting targets.

He suggested a municipality consisting of rural parts of Burlington, Oakville and perhaps Halton Hills might be viable. It would maintain the small town connection residents of those areas want and it would be large enough to be efficient with tax dollars.



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