

Chat Transcript

00:38:24 **Melissa B. (she/her):** I see that we were advocating for a 'made in Waterloo Region' solution as far back (at least) as that 1999 article ;)

00:42:37 - **Rob Deutschmann:** Even earlier than that.

00:42:52 **Kari Williams:** Hello zac. Nice seeing your face finally. years ago we worked together on a few research projects through laurier.

00:44:21 - **Rob Deutschmann:** Hello Kari

00:54:59 - **Zachary Spicer:** Hi Kari!

01:00:34 - **Kari Williams:** @Rob Deutschmann hello!!

00:49:15 **peteranthonieglin:** 1. If, in democratic societies, the people are the ultimate source of the state's authority, they are at the same time its ultimate enemy. They are, at best, to be "managed."

00:56:50 **Zachary Spicer:** Ha!

00:56:50 **Melissa B. (she/her):** 😊

00:56:56 **Brooklin Wallis:** +2

00:57:04 **Paige Desmond- The Record:** Bah!

00:57:23 - **Rob Deutschmann:** A new classic

00:59:39 **peteranthonieglin:** 1. If, in democratic societies, the people are the ultimate source of the state's authority, they are at the same time its ultimate enemy. They are, at best, to be "managed."
2. Globalization (neoliberalism, free trade, restructuring of local government ...) extends the effective rule of the corporate capitalist sector.
3. Who is pushing the amalgamation agenda, and who or what stands to benefit from larger "local" governments? Is it the people, or is it capitalist corporations?

01:02:16 **Melissa B. (she/her):** Interesting findings on voter turnout/impact, given the first townhall dug into that issue specifically.

01:02:51 **Andrew Reeves:** 👍

01:03:11 **Louisa Smith (she/her):** 👍

01:03:16 **Craig Sloss (he/him):** 👍

01:06:50 **Rob Deutschmann:** I thought the same thing

01:07:26 **Melissa B. (she/her):** Very informative!

01:07:34 **Jason Hammond:** 👍

01:07:39 **Louisa Smith (she/her):** 👍

01:12:11 **Phil Marfisi:** Thank you!

01:07:52 **Jorg Broschek:** Excellent Phil!

01:12:01 **Phil Marfisi:** Thank you, Jorg! :)






- 01:09:12 **Ayo Owodunni:** What is the appetite of residents in our region for this?
 01:09:16 **Ayo Owodunni:** Just curious
- 01:09:28 **Andrew Reeves:** Better two tier models might be interesting to discuss more at some point as well, eg regional council be composed of all regional councillors to simplify the voting process, etc
- 01:11:12 **Andrew Reeves:** Local councillors are who citizens like myself turn to about issues, but they often have little power over most things except for very minor concerns/issues, leaving citizens confused, feeling a lack of agency.
- 01:11:01 **Paul Nijjar:** What are the actual problems that lack of amalgamation is causing?
 01:11:38 **Melissa B. (she/her):** 👍
- 01:11:45 **Jason Hammond:** I think we can make the residents' experience more seamless through collaboration among the municipalities, and find any relevant cost savings, without taking on the cost and workload of an amalgamation transformation.
- 01:11:58 **Kathryn and Ken Seiling:** To Andrews point - the entire history of regional reform was premised on refining the two tier system which ,as I said, was not successful
 01:12:11 **Andrew Reeves:** 👍
- 01:14:49 **Brooklin Wallis:** Larger elections are also more expensive, limiting the ease of entry for diverse voices to be heard
- 01:15:03 **Jason Hammond:** 👍
 01:15:12 **iPhone-DNPF22K70F01:** 👍
 01:15:13 **iPhone-DNPF22K70F01:** (Removed 👍)
 01:15:17 **Rob Deutschmann:** Good point Brooklin
 01:15:21 **Craig Sloss (he/him):** 👍
 01:16:25 **Louisa Smith (she/her):** 👍
 01:16:06 **Bob Jonkman:** 👍
- 01:15:32 **Melissa B. (she/her):** I think Waste Management and GRT are both great examples of 'amalgamating' services without amalgamating the government as a whole.
- 01:15:46 **Phil Marfisi:** 👍
 01:15:50 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** 👍
 01:15:59 **Jason Hammond:** 👍
 01:16:01 **Matt Rodrigues:** 👍
 01:16:05 **Craig Sloss (he/him):** 👍
 01:16:15 **Louisa Smith (she/her):** 👍
 01:16:51 **Brooklin Wallis:** 👍
 01:18:44 **Kari Williams:** 👍

- 01:24:25 **Andrew Reeves:** 👍
- 01:19:00 **Jason Hammond:** The non-profits and charities that do a lot of the heavy lifting also have their own appropriate scales of service, so it helps to have a variety of government partners that match their scale well.
- 01:19:48 **Melissa B. (she/her):** 👍
- 01:19:39 **Paul Nijjar:** Even things that are not officially amalgamated have been moving closer together. eg All four libraries allow members from anywhere in the region. I do not see why this is a problem.
- 01:20:09 **Melissa B. (she/her):** ❤️
- 01:23:22 **Andrew Reeves:** ❤️
- 01:21:54 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** Our social service sector is tired of dealing with 8 different governments and 60 political office holders to bring their services online.
- 01:22:06 **Andrew Reeves:** 👍
- 01:22:10 **Louisa Smith (she/her):** 👍
- 01:24:17 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** Our labyrinth of local governments is chasing away or hindering home building, investments, and social service delivery
- 01:25:30 **Marie Bridel:** 👍
- 01:25:48 **Melissa B. (she/her):** I have heard this, but I'd like to understand it better. Any resources that dive into this issue at all?
- 01:24:23 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** Time to change
- 01:24:47 **Paul Nijjar:** What is this social service agency?
- 01:26:04 **Jason Hammond:** It can help innovators to try new approaches when one municipality can take a small risk and lead their peers, letting new enterprises and social services climb the ladder of increasing coverage.
- 01:26:08 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** Waterloo Region lost out on 1400 jobs – representing nearly as many families who rely on those jobs – because when Schneider's Meats had to decide about where to grow its business, we couldn't compete fast enough against Hamilton. Hamilton could go faster and be a better economic development partner because they are one single-tier city.
- 01:31:42 **Rob Deutschmann:** Interesting observation. The Region did develop the Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation after that to start working together as one entity instead of each muni having their own development office
- 01:33:05 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** But businesses still Need to jump through hoops to bring in new business
- 01:34:38 **Rob Deutschmann:** AAA credit rating as well.
- 02:17:17 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** All bandaid solutions
- 02:18:34 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** Are we doing good? What industries








- and businesses are we missing because of the bureaucracy of multi tier
- 02:18:46 **Peggy Nickels:** What empirical evidence do pro-amalgamationists have to support amalgamation?
- 01:26:17 **Brian Maloney:** I think that thinking for the whole is the reason why we elect politicians, to hopefully see above small personal interest - things change, cities grow, and I think that where you see cities being inflexible in the world, you see failing cities.
- 01:27:15 **Brooklin Wallis:** I wonder how amalgamation actually helps this, yes currently we have a bunch of people to talk to from different municipalities, but as a 1 tier would the # of people actually change, or would they all just be in one place?
- 01:29:12 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** When looking for non-profit or business support, the option of dealing with one department/manger who is now dealing with a bigger portfolio scares me just as much as managing several relationships. I honestly don't know what is better. The research showing it's not actually more efficient to amalgamate makes me wary.
- 01:30:13 **Melissa B. (she/her):** ❤️
- 01:30:26 **Rob Deutschmann:** Good point to consider Alex
- 01:31:00 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** It won't save money but it will absolutely make things more efficient- ask Hamilton
- 01:32:50 **Melissa B. (she/her):** Maybe, I'm not remembering correctly, but I thought Zac (Hamilton area) mentioned some studies that said we actually don't see the efficiencies most hope for.
- 01:35:11 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** Chatted with a Hamilton resident who was very involved in theirs and they said yes to efficiencies and more economical dev
- 01:32:43 **Brian Maloney:** I don't think that populism and amalgamation are linked, nor is it reasonable to say that a "de-amalgamated" government is inherently more noble or responsible than an amalgamated one.
- 01:33:08 **Rob Deutschmann:** True that. Depends on the people.
- 01:33:13 **Bob Jonkman:** I worked at the City of Toronto before, during, and after amalgamation. After amalgamation very little got done in Toronto's council Where before all councillors in the individual cities could agree on matters in their city, after amalgamation the councillors who weren't representing an area of a former city would vote against items that would benefit that former city, no matter how beneficial. But that was multi-city to one-tier amalgamation, different from what we have in Waterloo Region. Small government is good government.
- 01:36:40 **Melissa B. (she/her):** I tend to agree on your last point, Bob, about smaller government as a positive.
- 01:42:53 **Andrew Reeves:** I personally want my representatives to have

some connection to the higher level tier, to have some more agency.

- 01:58:19 **Bob Jonkman:** 👍
- 01:45:46 **Melissa B. (she/her):** @Bob Jonkman Same!
- 01:41:09 **Bob Jonkman:** Just to be clear, that doesn't mean I'm in favour of few representatives, but to have those representatives better deal with local issues.
- 01:41:29 **Andrew Reeves:** 👍
- 01:45:35 **Melissa B. (she/her):** ❤️
- 01:34:21 **Paul Nijjar:** Yet the region is doing pretty well economically (tech sector, manufacturing) despite being multi-tier.
- 01:35:09 **Brooklin Wallis:** "fewer politicians" is a clever way to describe "less representation" as a good thing hahaha
- 01:35:17 **Andrew Reeves:** 👍
- 01:35:21 **Melissa B. (she/her):** 👍
- 01:35:34 **Andrew Reeves:** Less people to buy off, yeah
- 01:35:43 **Craig Sloss (he/him):** 👍
- 01:39:39 **Bob Jonkman:** 👍
- 01:35:35 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** Financial efficiency is also efficiency. So if something is not cheaper (financially efficient), it loses out on one element of efficiency. If it makes decisions faster (bureaucratically efficient) then it gains that - but who gains? The people who can afford connections to a now shrunken group with more power?
- 01:36:20 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** Hamilton has how many councillors? Not 66!
- 01:37:22 **Matt Rodrigues:** From a cost perspective, most council positions in the region are part-time pay. Something else to consider as well
- 01:38:28 **Melissa B. (she/her):** Perhaps a discussion for an upcoming WR Town Hall! :)
- 01:37:20 **Jason Hammond:** After Toronto amalgamated, not only did they have to spend a tremendous effort combining seven Official Plans, they had to invent the four Community Councils to localize decision-making on parking, BIAs, board appointments, etc. Oops!
- 01:38:08 **Bob Jonkman:** 👍
- 01:38:50 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** Community councils make a ton of sense - people resonate with their neighbourhood not their city
- 01:39:49 **Jason Hammond:** 👍
- 01:39:06 **Brian Maloney:** The United States is also plagued by deeply unequal suburban enclaves as well, so there are actual limits to the benefits of smaller and local democracy.
- 01:39:13 **Andrew Reeves:** 👍
- 01:39:33 **Craig Sloss (he/him):** 👍

- 01:39:36 **Melissa B. (she/her):** I have to admit, the process of combining 7 local governments into one (building codes, bylaws, policies, staff, etc) feels...very intimidating!
- 01:40:03 **Andrew Reeves:** 
- 01:39:49 **Andrew Reeves:** The US is in decline now tho, so that might be worth noting for us looking forward, not just looking backward
- 01:39:55 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** Intimidating indeed
- 01:40:27 **Paul Nijjar:** add 
- 01:40:28 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** Why are we giving US examples?
- 01:40:29 **Brian Maloney:** I also don't think anyone can look at the municipal governance of the Bay Area and consider it a model of serving their citizens.
- 01:40:45 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** 
- 01:40:45 **Andrew Reeves:** 
- 01:40:49 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** Good point, Brian...
- 01:42:30 **Brooklin Wallis:** 
- 01:41:35 **Brian Maloney:** And is currently a true dispute with the State government, who is now mandating their city planning after decades of failure.
- 01:41:09 **Paul Nijjar:** Also they have horrible problems with homelessness and housing affordability too.
- 01:41:32 **Paul Nijjar:** (Mind, I do not know if amalgamated cities solve homelessness either..)
- 01:42:40 **Paul Nijjar:** One theme that comes up repeatedly is that different levels of government point fingers at each other. We are thinking amalgamation will solve this because the area municipalities can't point fingers at the region and vice versa, but we will all continue to point fingers to and from the province. That part won't change.
- 01:43:15 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** We don't need eight times as many governments and four times as many politicians for our community.
- 01:53:26 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** If you ask most NFPs - they are stretched and going to multiple councils (8!) is cumbersome when they should be focusing on real social issues
- 01:56:19 **Brian Maloney:** Would it be reasonable to say that an amalgamated government would give bureaucrats and administrators more independence and authority to work independently? Instead of having to consult 20+ politicians on every decision?
- 01:57:26 **Rob Deutschmann:** It will always be a team effort. The number of politicians will depend on what sort of entity we would end up with, if there was change

- 01:43:23 **Paul Nijjar:** Was amalgamating Cambridge the right move?
- 01:44:17 **Kevin Thomason:** Currently, we have made it clear that our rural townships will keep a rural focus and our local farms are thriving as the most profitable in Canada earning more per acre than others and being one of the largest components of our regional economy. Under amalgamation how do we protect these rural lands when rural Councillors are so easily outvoted by far more numerous urban Councillors? The pressures of growth, developers and development is intense and so far we have avoided the land speculation seen in most of the province because of the expectation set that our four townships will remain rural.
- 01:44:40 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** Great questions, Kevin.
- 01:50:43 **Bob Jonkman:** Thanx! The rural residents may be fewer in number than the urban residents, but should have equal (proportional!) representation in the region. Currently, I don't think we achieve that by having the rural mayors also be the regional councillor. I'd like to see those roles split. Yes, more politicians...
- 01:53:04 **Brian Maloney:** ❤️
- 01:52:27 **Patrick:** 👍
- 01:44:25 **Brooklin Wallis:** I fear that looking at American, French, and English cities that are thriving under the frame of "look at how good their governance is" ignores the real reason these cities are power houses... Exploitation of citizens, colonization, slavery, and hundreds of evil actions have funneled wealth to these places
- 01:45:15 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** ❤️
- 01:45:34 **Andrew Reeves:** ❤️
- 01:45:41 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** Yes Brooklin!
- 01:45:03 **Andrew Reeves:** Excellent point. And continuing economic imperialism through financial systems
- 01:45:49 **Paul Nijjar:** I agree that this is unaesthetic. My question is how harmful it is. I hear your criticism about addressing multiple councils, but is that sufficient?
- 01:46:07 **Brian Maloney:** The point is that extremely local small scale democracy allowed many people to form unusual rich enclaves in many big American cities, so there is some value in a bigger government overruling selfish interest at times.
- 01:46:10 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** I live in Cambridge - time to bring the cities Together
- 01:48:19 **Patrick:** 👍
- 01:51:27 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** 👍
- 02:02:37 **Marie Bridel:** 👍
- 01:47:14 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** I agree Brian - but also worry that bigger government makes access to that government tougher.

- 01:49:13 **Andrew Reeves:** Having some modified system, where local municipalities retain some autonomy under a larger amalgamated/federated regional system might help remedy this
- 01:47:42 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** For folks with fewer resources.
- 01:48:18 **Brian Maloney:** 100%, there's a balance and I can't define it. I just think that it's a misdirection, more democracy is not always better. It's why we have big, monolithic governments - to do big, monolithic things sometimes.
- 01:48:53 **peteranthonyeglin:** In my 3-point question above, point 1 is not my desired proposition. It's meant as a description of how things actually are in the sort of capitalist-liberal democracy that we've had for the last 350 years. I just want to make that clear.
- 01:49:25 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** Yes. Mr Erb!
- 01:50:06 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** I don't know how folks are reacting to comments and wish I could, because I'd give Brian's comment a thumbs up, as well as Andrew's :) Not sure where I sit on this spectrum yet but I really appreciate this thoughtful conversation
- 01:50:18 **Andrew Reeves:** 
- 01:50:24 **Jason Hammond:** 
- 01:50:26 **Melissa B. (she/her):** 
- 01:51:23 **Rose Greensides (she/her):** 
- 01:53:04 **Brian Maloney:** 
- 01:45:03 **Andrew Reeves:** Excellent point. And continuing economic imperialism through financial systems
- 01:51:26 **Brooklin Wallis:** Only 26 councillors, due to a use of the notwithstanding clause, against the will of the citizens of the city...
- 01:52:06 **Melissa B. (she/her):** Yes, we should not be holding up Toronto council's current make-up as an example to follow.
- 01:52:44 **Bob Jonkman:** 
- 01:54:36 **Brooklin Wallis:** 
- 01:54:18 **Bob Jonkman:** When Toronto amalgamation first happened in 1999 there were 29 wards with two councillors each. So each ward could have a representative on each side of an issue, far better representation for the citizens in that ward.
- 01:52:24 **Rob Deutschmann:** Thanks for all the great comments.
- 01:54:56 **Melissa B. (she/her):** I agree that is a real problem. I think that speaks to a

bigger issue of how we expect our social services to essentially 'beg' local councils for funding and that needs to be addressed. I don't see that alone as a strong reason to amalgamate.

- 01:56:02 **Patrick:** The cost savings seems important.
- 01:57:22 **Bob Jonkman:** Good, fast, cheap: If government is to be good, it can be neither fast nor cheap.
- 01:58:03 **Andrew Reeves:** I find myself and others I know are much more likely to talk to our councillor because of how locally rooted they are. 9000 per politician seems pretty good to me. I think the either/or of keeping very local representation and some kind of further amalgamation is a false question. I think we can be more creative in how we amalgamate our local political systems if we want to amalgamate our services.
- 01:58:29 **Melissa B. (she/her):** 👍
- 02:00:47 **Andrew Reeves:** And to integrate a previous thought: some autonomy could be maintained for the municipalities and townships to deal with certain issues/neighborhood disputes, etc
- 02:02:52 **Brian Maloney:** I'm a big fan of amalgamation, but I 100% believe that it's important to specifically design a system in which the townships are not steamrolled
- 02:03:02 **Andrew Reeves:** ❤️
- 02:03:54 **Brian Maloney:** But I think it's interesting that many township citizens would think they're steamrolled now, with all our governments still in place and not amalgamated.
- 01:58:40 **Patrick:** I noticed a new bi-directional bike lane on Margaret in Kitchener connected to downtown does not have safe protected intersection because the bi-directional bike lane crosses a regional road which requires collaboration. That's a failure to save construction costs by doing one project instead of multiple projects.
- 02:00:28 **Patrick:** Also to make safe protected bike infrastructure more easily.
- 02:01:04 **Andrew Reeves:** 👍
- 02:02:01 **Brooklin Wallis:** 👍
- 02:09:49 **Marie Bridel:** 👍
- 02:01:14 **peteranthonyeglin:** 66 politicians is not too many decision-makers but far too few. Communities at the neighbourhood level should be meeting in assemblies to decide how their communities are to function. Workplaces should be organized in the same way. Then we might be able to talk meaningfully about "democracy" - rule by the (common) people - including in its most important settings, where people work. Of course, that would also mean that those who work in a workplace should also collectively own it. People then become their own politicians. I remind you that our current forms of government have brought us to the brink of global climate/environmental/social Armageddon.
- 02:01:33 **Bob Jonkman:** 👍

- 02:02:06 **Andrew Reeves:** 👍
- 02:02:09 **Brooklin Wallis:** 👍
- 02:01:19 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** Agreed, Andrew. We've done it for other sectors, it could apply to how NPs and other community orgs access funding as well, where mandates cross boundaries.
- 02:04:47 **Phil Marfisi:** There's some other great post-secondary institutions locally too ;D
- 02:05:23 **Paige Desmond- The Record:** That was epic!
- 02:05:41 **Brian Maloney:** Such clear self-interest and corruption in the name of the Erb empire, heh
- 02:05:43 **Bob Jonkman:** LOL on Erbsville! But naming an amalgamated municipality is one of the least worries.
- 02:10:00 **Patrick:** 👍
- 02:06:31 **Jason Hammond:** It may be the healthiest approach to recognise that boundaries have to be somewhere, and will never be perfect. We only need the resident to be put at the centre. If my library book is stamped Wilmot, or my doctor recommends a specialist in Cambridge, or my GO bus is dispatched out of Aberfoyle, it mostly matters that it meets the need. I like to see the work handled by the most local tier of government who can succeed.
- 02:07:35 **Bob Jonkman:** 👍
- 02:07:45 **Melissa B. (she/her):** 👍
- 02:08:58 **Brian Maloney:** 👍
- 02:09:43 **Patrick:** 👍
- 02:06:53 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** I remember organizing a bicycle ride along the countryside line and all the different people we had to talk to so that could happen :)
- 02:07:36 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** It was the Hold the (Countryside) Line bicycle ride :)
- 02:08:25 **Bob Jonkman:** Need another one of those (Countryside Bike Ride)
- 02:09:50 **Patrick:** 👍
- 02:08:41 **Jason Hammond:** 👍
- 02:09:51 **Patrick:** 👍
- 02:10:16 **Andrew Reeves:** I'm not allowed to unmute
- 02:13:24 **Phil Marfisi:** Zac has done some research on community councils, Rob, he might be worth asking this too!
- 02:15:01 **Andrew Reeves:** Thanks!
- 02:16:54 **Peggy Nickels:** Thanks for that question!
- 02:18:30 **Paul Nijjar:** But in elections people seem to care a LOT more about their local councillors than regional council.

02:19:11 **Andrew Reeves:** 👍

02:19:11 **Melissa B. (she/her):** I really appreciate that many people want to make our governance systems easier to understand! For me, amalgamation seems like an extreme way to address those issues. I think, if we want to make it a priority, we can do a better job of that without amalgamation.

02:19:19 **Brooklin Wallis:** 👍

02:19:44 **Brian Maloney:** 👍

02:19:35 **Bob Jonkman:** Can we get a transcript of the chat?

02:19:45 **Alex Szaflarska (she/her):** Thank you everyone - and thank you to the organizers :) Have a great evening!

02:19:45 **Marion Roes:** Thank you!

02:19:53 **Troy Glover:** Thanks, everyone. Fascinating dialogue.

02:19:59 **Zachary Spicer:** Thanks everyone

02:19:59 **Patrick:** Thank you everyone!

02:20:01 **Brooklin Wallis:** Thanks everyone!!

02:20:07 **Johann's iPhone:** Thanks

02:20:14 **Kari Williams:** Thanks. This has been informative.