

Abstracts

SLACK, E.: "A Preliminary Assessment of the New City of Toronto". The new City of Toronto came into being on January 1, 1998, replacing the former metropolitan level of government and six constituent lower-tier municipalities with a single-tier city. This paper provides a preliminary assessment of the creation of the new City of Toronto, focussing on the financial aspects. It reviews the history leading up to the creation of the new City, summarises its finances, and provides an initial analysis of the impact. The paper evaluates the reasons for restructuring and concludes that it is unlikely that this type of restructuring will result in cost savings nor will it solve many of the problems currently faced by the new City of Toronto such as increasing poverty, deteriorating infrastructure and financial instability. Nevertheless, there may still have been valid reasons to amalgamate. These include a stronger presence for economic development, fairer sharing of the tax base, equalising up of local services so that everyone can enjoy a similar level of services and a stronger voice for Toronto across the province and the country.

POLE, D.: "Amalgamation Perspectives".. The 1999 HRM Citizen Survey is used to study citizen responses to a municipal amalgamation that created the Halifax Regional Municipality. The analysis provides HRM citizens' assessment of the amalgamation and suggests factors that explain that assessment as measured in a derived variable called 'amalgamation perspectives'.

The explanatory framework includes variables that characterise the individual citizen, citizen perceptions of the impact of amalgamation on municipal services and citizen assessments of performance in governance. The simplest model uses just three variables -- views on governance, perceptions of rural space in HRM and an assessment of a particular service area -- to explain citizens' amalgamation perspective. Favourable assessments on these three dimensions are associated with favourable assessments of the HRM amalgamation.

VOJNOVIC, I.: "Municipal Consolidation, Regional Planning and Fiscal Accountability: The Recent Experience in Two Maritime Provinces". Advocates of consolidation have claimed that in urban regions characterised by inter-jurisdictional externalities, enlarging municipal boundaries and incorporating all the relevant economic agents is an initiative that will ensure fiscal accountability. However, there are potential problems of merging and harmonising tax structures when there are different service standards and service levels between merging municipalities. This issue is particularly apparent when urban and rural areas amalgamate. Unless differences in service levels and service standards are considered in the design of the tax structure, inequities and inefficiencies might in fact be exacerbated after such mergers, and not reduced, as advocates of amalgamation claim.

BISH, R.: "Evolutionary Alternatives for Metropolitan Areas: The Capital Region of British Columbia". There are differing views and policies on the assignment of functions to different local governments and whether or not the provincial government should make that assignment. This study describes the evolution of "who does what" in British Columbia where municipalities are created and reorganised through citizen initiative, and where the division of responsibility between municipalities and the regional government is made by the municipalities themselves. The analysis shows that in the Capital Region, with a population of 335,000, the 88 elected municipal officials in 12 municipalities cost less than one-half of one percent of local government expenditures and that they have utilised alternative service delivery, including assignment of major capital facilities to the regional government to organise the production of services on an appropriate scale. This case study illustrates that local citizens and officials have organised the production of local services in the Capital Region in patterns that appear to be efficient while maintaining very high elected official/citizen ratios in distinct small municipalities.

FISCHLER, R. and J.M. WOLFE: "Regional Restructuring in Montréal: An Historical Analysis". In this paper, we present an historical overview of efforts to endow Montréal and its region with some form of metropolitan government. Such efforts started in the 1920s and led to the creation of regional bodies in the 1970s. A truly metropolitan structure has been on the drafting boards during the final years of the century. We look at the variety of issues, economic, political, environmental and linguistic, that have shaped the debate over the years and focus on the role of deficit-reduction and government downloading in the current round of municipal restructuring.

QUESNEL, L.: "Municipal Reorganization in Quebec". Over the last thirty years, many experts and commission reports have looked at urban problems in Québec. The latest in this category is the report of the National commission on local finances and taxation (the Bedard Report) which was released in 1999. This report is different from the preceding ones because the essential part of its recommendations are about to be implemented. We examine the report of the commission and the reorganization plan that was proposed by the Québec Government in the first months of 2000. To analyze the determinants of this policy process, we draw from Kingdon's (1995) theoretical framework. Our case study leads to the conclusion that 1) the political stream has caused serious difficulty for achieving the decision agenda; 2) the problem stream and the policy stream have nonetheless rejoined, hence creating conditions favorable to the passing of the municipal reform from the governmental to the decision agenda.

SANCTON, A.: "Amalgamations, Service Realignment and Property Taxes: Did the Harris Government Have a Plan for Ontario's Municipalities?" The aim of this paper is to show that the changes sponsored by the Harris government in Ontario relating to municipal affairs were not congruent with the content of its original electoral platform, *The Common Sense Revolution* or with various other pre-election pronouncements. Prior to coming to office in 1996 the party

was against forced municipal amalgamations; had no announced plan for re-arranging school-board and municipal finances; and was (in Toronto at least) opposed to market-value assessment. In office, however, it implemented each of these policies. Nevertheless, the Harris conservatives did act with respect to Ontario municipalities on the basis of coherent political objectives.

MCDAVID, J.: "Alternative Service Delivery in Canadian Local Governments: The Costs of Producing Solid Waste Management Services". The Local Government Institute at the University of Victoria conducted three complementary surveys of residential solid waste collectors, residential recycling collectors and landfills across Canada. The findings from the residential solid waste collection survey support a key hypothesis from the polycentric theory of urban governance: private producers tend to be more efficient than public producers.

In contrast, results from the residential recycling survey indicate that the unit costs of public and private producers are very similar. Although private contractor involvement in landfill operations is associated with lower costs per ton, the relationship is not statistically significant. Findings from the three surveys can be combined to compare the costs of recycling to conventional collection and landfilling. Even if 50 % diversion of solid waste is assumed (the usual provincial objective in Canada), recycling is more expensive than conventional collection and landfilling. Recycling rarely pays for itself and our commitment to reducing landfilled solid waste has increased the taxpayer costs of solid waste management for Canadian local governments.