
Metropolitan Governance in Canada: Observations from Toronto and Vancouver

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Outline of Presentation

- Rationales for municipal restructuring
- Models of metropolitan governance
- Case studies of Toronto and Vancouver
- Final observations on metropolitan governance

Rationales for Municipal Restructuring

- Achieve cost savings
 - Curb urban sprawl
 - Redistribute wealth across municipalities
 - Eliminate inter-municipal conflict
 - Compete in the new global economy
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Governance Models

- One-tier government model (consolidated local governments)
- Two-tier government model
- Voluntary cooperation (including special purpose districts)
- Role of senior governments

Toronto

- 1954: two-tier government (metropolitan tier plus 13 lower-tier municipalities)
- 1967: number of municipalities reduced from 13 to 6 through amalgamations
- 1988: direct election to metropolitan government
- 1998: amalgamation of metropolitan level of government and lower-tier municipalities with a single-tier city (with community councils)
- 1999: Greater Toronto Services Board (GTSB) until 2001
- 2000s: increased provincial role in regional planning
- 2006: Greater Toronto Transportation Authority created (now Metrolinx)

Vancouver

- Regional beginnings in the 1900s with the creation of special purpose boards/districts for sewerage and drainage, water, hospitals, and planning
- Regional district system (two-tier, voluntary) for entire province created between 1965 and 1967
- Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), now Metro Vancouver, created in 1965
- Operating under Metro Vancouver: Greater Vancouver Water District, Greater Vancouver Sewerage and Drainage District, and GVRD; GVRD owns Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation
- Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (Translink) created in 1998

Observations on Metropolitan Governance

1. Governance models evolve over time as circumstances change
 - ❑ Toronto went from one-tier (fragmented) to two-tier to one-tier (consolidated)
2. Consolidated one-tier model has advantages:
 - ❑ Coordination of service delivery
 - ❑ Redistribution among rich and poor areas
 - ❑ More influence with national policy leaders
 - ❑ More uniform action for urban problems that cross municipal boundaries

But

Observations on Metropolitan Governance

3. Consolidation does not necessarily reduce costs:
 - ❑ Harmonization of service levels
 - ❑ Harmonization of wages and salaries

4. Citizen access needs to be built into consolidated government model:
 - ❑ Larger city reduces opportunities for citizen involvement
 - ❑ Community councils or boards increase access but also increase costs

Observations on Metropolitan Governance

5. Consolidated cities do not necessarily cover the entire metropolitan region:
 - ❑ Amalgamated City of Toronto is too big and too small
 - ❑ Provincial initiatives or inter-municipal cooperation needed to address regional issues

But ...

6. Provincial (“top down”) planning or service delivery raises questions about local responsiveness and accountability to local residents
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Observations on Metropolitan Governance

7. Voluntary cooperation works where regional government is not possible

- ❑ Can achieve economies of scale and address externalities (e.g. water/sewerage in Metro Vancouver)
- ❑ Preserves local autonomy
- ❑ Could be step to more formal governance model

But...

8. Voluntary cooperation has problems

- ❑ Lacks a regional perspective
- ❑ Limited accountability
- ❑ Limited cost sharing across the region