Breaking the Bargain? Growth, Development and the Future of City-County Separation

[Draft]

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Abstract: City-County separation is a method of municipal organization predicated on the notion that urban and rural are distinct. In many North American and UK jurisdictions, when an urban area of a country was classified as a city it was politically separated. Urban growth was directed toward the separated city, while the county could remain rural. This arrangement constituted a bargain between urban and rural communities. Today, many county municipalities around separated cities are growing and developing. Through three case studies in the province of Ontario, this paper examines whether this growth constitutes an infringement on this original arrangement between separated cities and counties. Overall, the paper finds that growth and development around separated cities is threatening the city-county separation. In some cases, however, the province has expanded the usable life of city-county separation by allowing separated cities to annex adjoining urban territory.

Introduction

Designing institutions for both urban and rural areas has traditionally presented a challenge to policy makers. The two areas have been historically been seen as distinct, with not only different approaches to public policy, but also different economies, values and ways of life (Sweet 1999; Clarke 1955). The traditional structural response on the part of provincial and state governments has been to separate rural and urban areas (Bain 1967). This concept of institutional

uniqueness has its roots in the English municipal system, whereby certain urban areas were elevated above town and county governments, thereby providing these administrations with increased governance capacity to address unique urban policy issues, such as poverty, public health and transportation – issues that were generally not encountered in rural communities (Pinchbeck 1940; Archer 2000; Innes and Rogers 2000).

This separation was seen as mutually beneficial: urban areas would not be bogged down in the more narrowly focused politics of rural life, while rural areas would have no institutional connection to the cities that many of their residents viewed as sites of crime, corruption and vice (Magnusson 1983). Both urban and rural officials largely appreciated this governance arrangement. With both areas free from the intrusion of the other, there was an implicit bargain established, whereby the rural areas of a county would direct growth towards the separated city (Wilson and Game 1988). Therefore, rural areas could remain rural and urban areas could remain urban.

Over time, however, many provincial and state governments began to abandon the institution of city-county separation in favour of regional institutions that linked urban and rural areas through common institutions (Fyfe 1975; Jacek 1985). In Ontario, the province halted city-county separation after the inception of regional government in the 1960s and 1970s. The growth and development that was occurring around urban areas was creating a need for regional institutions to provide for service continuity and regional planning (Merewhether and Stephens 1972). Common institutions provided more flexibility for service delivery, while helping to control growth and provide for regional planning.

Despite the creation of a number of regional governments, many counties in Ontario still exist with separated cities. This paper systematically studies these areas and the future of city-

county separation, using three separated cities in the province of Ontario, Canada as case studies. Many of the same conditions that necessitated the creation of regional government in the 1960s and 1970s – increased suburbanization and the spread of growth outward from urban areas - now exist around many separated cities across the province. This paper considers the question of whether this type of growth is changing the original intention of city-county separation: urban areas remain urban, rural areas remain rural. In other words, is growth in the rural areas around separated cities breaking the bargain established more than a century ago between urban and rural municipalities? Is suburbanization threatening the continued usefulness of city-county separation? Should new institutions be put in place?

This paper relies on 68 primary interviews with municipal politicians and staff conducted in 2012 in three Ontario separated cities: London, Guelph and Barrie.[1] In the following section, I detail the history of city-county separation in Great Britain, the United States and Canada and provide more information on the underlying logic of the system. Next, I examine the growth in the counties around the three case studies and the structural responses that each municipality has taken. The final section concludes the study.

City-County Separation

City-county separation has its roots in the early English municipal system (Pinchbeck 1940; Archer 2000). Cities were thought to be unique and required a complete separation from their rural peripheries. While the country was still largely rooted in agrarian and subsistence living, urban areas grew at a rapid pace and took on new significance as centres of industry, commerce and innovation (Wilson and Game 1988). As cities became the economic drivers of

[1] In compliance with the research ethics approval for this project, the names of those interviewed have been withheld, but the position of respondents may be noted. An interview listing is included as Appendix A.

nations, the creation of local government capable of managing and promoting this growth became paramount (Merewhether and Stephens 1972). It became clear that the demands inherently connected with increased density—poverty, housing, and the creation of advanced infrastructure—required a government with a broader functional scope. In theory, a separate urban government could address distinct urban opportunities and problems (Magnusson 1983).

Consequently, the separation of urban and rural municipalities was seen as mutually beneficial. Since both areas had different cultures and economies, the inclusion of each in a common political structure was neither desirable nor practical. Rural inhabitants viewed urban areas with suspicion due to the fluidity and relative anonymity of urban life, which challenged the ordered nature of rural living (Sweet 1999, 223). Sweet summarizes this sentiment, stating that, "the dirt, the filth and physical corruption of urban streets were repeatedly employed as a metaphor for the immorality and spiritual corruption which urban living engendered among its inhabitants" (Sweet 1999, 223). Rural residents were considered to be harder working and honest, taking simple pleasure in their agrarian lifestyle, and rarely deviating into vice. Political Scientist David Siegel suggests that many rural residents believed that "urban dwellers were tainted in ways that people living in idyllic rural settings close to the soil were not" (1997, 134). While some urban and rural areas may have been physically linked, there was nevertheless a pervasive belief that political separation could prevent urban life from tainting the supposed idyll of rural living.

Many of these notions were instilled into rural inhabitants through literature. Historian Rosemary Sweet argues that these views originally stemmed from the representation of cities as centres of evil and vice in biblical texts, namely in the Old Testament's depiction of Sodom and

Gomorrah or Babylon (1999, 223). These notions also found their way into popularized poetry from the period, such as book four of William Cowper's, "The Task":

> The town has ting'd the country; and the stain
> Appears a spot upon a vestal's robe,
> The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs
> Down into scenes still rural; but alas,
> Scenes rarely grac'd with rural manners now! (553-7)[2]

Consequently, these types of views manifested themselves in structural distinctions. Rural inhabitants believed that the establishment of common political institutions would only encourage the spread of these values and vices to rural areas. Thus, early municipal structures favoured a political separation between the two areas.

The institutional practice of city-county separation evolved slowly. As early as the Middle Ages English boroughs were exempt from the power of local courts and administrations, setting them on a different plane than their more rural counterparts (Merewether and Stephens 1972). In the early English municipal system, some urban areas of importance were granted Royal Charters and formally distinguished from the more rural shires and counties (Innes and Rogers 2000). Although this practice would not receive official codification until the creation of the 1835 and 1888 versions of the *Municipal Corporations Act*, the beliefs behind urban-rural separation in Great Britain laid the basis for a more organized system of city-county separation to emerge in the American and Canadian colonies (Sheppard 1977).

While city-county separation was practiced in a number of areas across the American colonies, it primarily took root in Virginia. As Bain (1967) argues, city-county separation evolved as a practice in Virginia through continued devolution of state power to growing urban regions, a general acceptance of usage and eventual judicial endorsement. In 1722, Williamsburg

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[2] Originally quoted from Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town, 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture.* London, Longman, 1999.

was granted a city charter, which established the municipality in a different category from other towns in the colony (Bain 1967, 9). The new city was provided with many of the service responsibilities generally completed by the colony's counties, effectively establishing the city as a county itself, although the city's charter made no specific mention of it being independent from the surrounding county (Bain 1967, 9). Virginia's first constitution in 1776 made the provision that the municipalities of Williamsburg and Norfolk were to have separate legislative districts and should have representation in the General Assembly (Bain 1967, 38). Alexandria and Winchester were incorporated as towns with similar powers as Norfolk and Williamsburg in 1779, followed closely by the incorporation of Fredericksburg as a town and Richmond as a city in 1782 (Bain 1967, 13).

In each case, these municipal corporations were being raised above other municipal entities in responsibility, service scope and electoral representation, in line with the English tradition (Sheppard 1977). This practice spread from Virginia over time. In the United States, several jurisdictions, such as Baltimore (1851) and St. Louis (1876), were separated from their counties, while several other jurisdictions, such as San Francisco (1856), Denver (1902), New Orleans (1813), Philadelphia (1854), Baton Rouge (1949) and Nashville (1962) became coterminous with their counties (Bain 1967, 34).

Early Canadian policy-makers were also influenced by the concept of rural and urban distinctiveness and eventually adopted this institutional practice when founding Ontario's municipal system. While spending time in Great Britain during the introduction of the 1835 *Municipal Corporations Act*, Robert Baldwin appears to have met and conversed with Joseph Hume, one of the leaders of the British movement to reform municipal governance (Baldwin and Baldwin 1969, 148). When Baldwin returned to British North America, he carried with him the

same zeal for reform as his British counterparts and fought to wrest more authority from the Crown and provide more complete municipal institutions across the province (Ross 1949; Higgins 1986). This fight culminated with the passage of the 1849 *Municipal Corporations Act*, also more colloquially referred to as the Baldwin Act (Wilson 1933)

Under the stipulations contained in the Baldwin Act, urban areas in Ontario were politically separated from their surrounding counties as soon as they became incorporated as cities. According to the Act, whenever any incorporated town reached a population of fifteen thousand through census returns, the Governor of the Province could, through an order in council, declare the town a "city" (Province of Upper Canada, 1849 [64]). Although these cities became politically and judicially independent, they nevertheless remained geographically attached to their former counties. This system lasted for more than a century, until provincial officials began an institutional shift towards regional government in the 1950s. Rapid urbanization changed how the province viewed urban and rural areas. During this period, urban growth spilled over into areas once thought to be "rural". This growth created shifts in labour and settlement patterns. Increased suburbanization caused provincial policy makers to see urban and rural areas as connected, therefore requiring greater policy coordination.

This shift in organizational thinking was accompanied by institutional change. Following the creation of Metropolitan Toronto in 1953, Toronto became the first city in Ontario to be part of a two-tier structure. The inception of Metropolitan Toronto followed nearly two decades of efforts to find solutions to the region's growing infrastructure deficiencies and social problems. Policy makers argued that the solution was to align the urban core of Toronto with its neighbouring suburban communities and mostly rural townships in order to create continuity between service and infrastructure. This same mode of institutional thinking was behind the

creation of the province's ten regional governments in the 1960s and 1970s, when common political institutions were introduced into southern Ontario's rapidly suburbanizing areas.

Despite this evolution in Ontario's municipal system towards regional government, numerous cities remained separate from their counties. Today, eighteen cities and towns in Ontario remain separated: Barrie, Windsor, Guelph, London, Kingston, Peterborough, Orillia, Pembroke, Brockville, Prescott, Gananoque, Cornwall, Smiths Falls, St. Thomas, Belleville, Quinte West, Stratford and St. Mary's.[3] In many of these areas, county municipalities are actively pursuing growth and development and breaking down much of the original logic behind city-county separation.

Growth, Development and County Life

City-county separation was intended to create institutional divisions between urban and rural areas. As such, it carried with it an implicit bargain: growth and development would be directed toward the separated city and the rural county municipalities would remain rural. The extent to which this original bargain is still being followed will be examined below in three Ontario case studies: London, Barrie and Guelph.

London-Middlesex County

For many years, London has experienced growth outside of its borders, resulting in a large annexation of adjoining county territory in 1993. Despite this large annexation, growth in the county continued. Much of this growth has occurred in the area north of London, in the

[3] Pelee Township is also a separated municipality. Created as separate from Essex County in 1869, Pelee Township is a small island community located midway in Lake Erie. There are less than 100 permanent households on the island, which is primarily a seasonal destination in the summer months. Due to its size, Pelee was not included in this study, as it did not have the standard relationships typical of other separated municipalities.

community of Arva, which is part of Middlesex Centre. In February of 2011, London city council received a plan calling for London to expand Arva's access to the city's sewer system in order to facilitate growth within the area (Middlesex Centre 2011). In the 1990s, Middlesex Centre first approached London asking for access to the city's sewage treatment plant, in part because the sewage in Arva was polluting nearby Medway Creek (Sher 2011). Even though the agreement was intended to avoid environmental contamination, the City of London was concerned about potential growth in Arva. A 2000 amendment to the original agreement limited the amount of residential and commercial development that could be brought onto the sewer system. Specifically, the amendment mandated that only ten new residential units could have access to the system per year (City of London and Middlesex Centre 2000). Commercial access was restricted to 1,000 square metres in any given year, without exceeding 4,500 square metres over a ten-year period (City of London and Middlesex Centre 2000). London's former mayor explains that these housing limits were intended to control growth (Personal Interview – March 8, 2012). London's interest in extending servicing to Arva was limited to its desire to help solve an environmental problem with Medway Creek (Personal Interview – March 8, 2012). If the environmental concern did not exist, it is very possible that the agreement would not exist.

Following the correction of these early environmental concerns, the community no longer had enough capacity for future development. Middlesex Centre contended that this new proposal would facilitate growth, with Mayor Al Edmondson predicting that expanded access to London's sewer system could allow the area to grow from 550 to 1,547 residents during the next two decades (Maloney, 2011[a]).

The idea of such rapid growth near London's borders created mixed opinions on city council and after some debate, councilors decided to reject the request and not expand servicing

northward. In the wake of London's decision not to expand servicing to Arva, Middlesex Centre altered its official growth plan with a 2011 revision. This plan projected 20 percent growth in Ilderton, just north of London, and Komoka-Kilworth, which lies on the city's western edge. Middlesex Centre's original official plan, published in 2010, classified Ilderton and Komoka-Kilworth as "urban settlement areas" and designated Arva and Delaware "community settlement areas" (Middlesex Centre 2010, 28). As the official plan explained, only Ilderton, Komoka-Kilworth and Arva are generally serviced with municipal water and sewage (Middlesex Centre 2010, 28). Furthermore, the official plan noted that only the urban settlement areas either provide or have the potential to provide full municipal services (Middlesex Centre 2010, 29).

In October of 2011, Middlesex Centre planners released an amendment (No. 28) to the municipality's official plan that dealt solely with the Ilderton and Komoka-Kilworth areas. The amendment essentially enlarged the urban settlement areas of Ilderton and Komoka-Kilworth and removed land from the settlement area boundaries in the communities of Arva, Kirr, Poplar Hill & Coldstream, Denfield and Melrose (Middlesex Centre 2011, 5). Areas in northern Arva, previously designated as residential, were converted back into an agricultural designation (Middlesex Centre 2011, 7). At the same time, the plan added new employment and residential lands to the settlement areas in Ilderton and Komoka-Kilworth (Middlesex Centre 2011, 7).

The amendment states that this change in focus resulted from the failure to gain adequate levels of servicing necessary from the City of London (Middlesex Centre 2011, 6). Instead, the amendment calls for the expansion of the Ilderton and Komoka wastewater treatment facilities, the latter of which would extend servicing to the Delaware area (Middlesex Centre 2011, 7). Additionally, the amended plan calls for the expansion of Ilderton to "accommodate both planned and future development"; however, the plan is unclear whether this growth is planned

solely in Ilderton or would eventually be extended to Arva, an area in close geographical proximity to Ilderton (Middlesex Centre 2011, 7).

This growth projection caused London some concern, as city politicians sent a letter to Middlesex Centre requesting that the town explain how it expected such a rapid rate of development in comparison to London (Van Brenk 2011). London planning staff had previously spoken at a public meeting held by Middlesex Centre as part of the public consultation phase of the town's new official plan. At the meeting, John Fleming, London's Director of Planning, stated that the city had concerns regarding Middlesex Centre's projections for growth. Since London has no jurisdiction in their municipality, Middlesex Centre councilors asked Mr. Fleming to remind London city council that they did not owe them an explanation of their growth projections (Personal Interview – March 8, 2012).

The *London Free Press* attempted to draw parallels to the growth in Middlesex Centre with the growth of Lambeth and Glanworth —then called "parasitic" by London politicians – prior to the 1993 annexation (Van Brenk 2011). Middlesex Centre mayor Al Edmondson, however, rebuffed these suggestions, arguing that both jurisdictions had a good working relationship and that growth in Middlesex Centre was beneficial to London (Van Brenk 2011).

While Middlesex Centre politicians seem unconcerned about the possibility of annexation, other politicians throughout the county believe that Middlesex Centre may be unintentionally inviting London to expand its boundaries into their territory (Personal Interview – March 16, 2012). These politicians suggest that the province will inevitably determine that urban areas should be under London's purview, an argument consistent with the original aims of city-county separation. One county politician noted that, "if you keep expanding the urban area

around London it's just going to naturally lead to an attempt by the city to move its boundary out" (Personal Interview – March 16, 2012).

The concerns from London officials about this growth may be justified. Amendment 28 of Middlesex Centre's official plan calls for the construction of more compact housing units in the Komoka-Kilworth area. Specifically, the new residential designations in the amendment call for 60 percent low density residential (single homes, semi-detached homes) and 40 percent medium density residential (townhouses) (Middlesex Centre 2011, 14). Middlesex Centre officials confirm that this was intended to attract younger families to the areas, whom they hoped would migrate from the city in order to buy their first home and take advantage of lower property taxes (Personal Interview – February 15, 2012). Building up the Komoka-Kilworth areas, then, would not only provide housing, but also a community setting close to London that takes advantage of the city's amenities, such as its shopping centres and entertainment features.

Overall, officials from municipalities around London are no longer content to remain rural. Some, such as Middlesex Centre, are actively pursuing development and are openly presenting themselves as a suburban alternative to the city. This contravenes much of the rationale behind city-county separation, which specifically envisions the city as urban and its surrounding area as rural. Although regional government perhaps represents one way of managing growth in rapidly urbanizing counties—a process in which once rural areas have become suburban enclaves—London has largely avoided this situation throughout its history through regular rounds of annexation, creating a situation wherein the city is geographically dominant within the county's borders. This expansion is perhaps one reason why London and Middlesex County avoided being converted into a regional government in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Sancton 1998, 163).

In the absence of regional planning mechanisms, London has attempted to control expansion around its borders by restricting the expansion of its water and sewer infrastructure. City officials argue that if areas such as Arva do not have access to the City's water system, they will be able to restrict development along its border. Unfortunately for London, politicians in Middlesex Centre have recently pledged to find alternative sources to facilitate municipality's expansion, which has made London's strategy appear temporary and perhaps flawed. Without any formal control over planning outside of their borders, London officials are left with few alternatives if they hope to direct growth within the City's boundaries.

Barrie-Simcoe County

Over the past decade, Barrie's population has increased by over 65 percent, leading municipal officials to seek new land for commercial and residential expansion. As a result of these growth pressures, Barrie recently pursued a large annexation of territory to its south, causing tension with its neighbours and Simcoe County.

In 2002, city planners informed Barrie city council that the city was quickly running out of employment land and required additional land to sustain internal employment (Personal Interview – June 14, 2012). Since city planners had previously encouraged a policy of density to avoid further suburban expansion within the city's boundaries, they argued that this should continue for residential housing and development although additional industrial land was necessary (Personal Interview – June 1, 2012).[4] Expansion offered the best opportunity to fulfill this future growth.

[4] A report by Meridian Planning Consultants, commissioned by Barrie in 2001, echoed the predictions of city planners. The report argues that, "The City of Barrie will continue to be the major centre of population and economic growth in the region…it lacks a sufficient land base to meet growth requirements in the short terms". It continued by arguing that, "combining the city's additional land need for both residential and employment uses, a

In 2008, the City of Barrie introduced a proposal to annex 518 hectares of industrial land in Innisfil, a municipality to its south. With a 2008 population of 180,000, Barrie wished to accommodate a population of 220,000 in order to make upgrades to its sewage treatment plant more affordable (Watt 2008a). In exchange for the land, Barrie proposed to extend servicing to approximately 188 hectares of the Innisfil Heights community (Watt 2008a). Innisfil initially rejected the proposal. Although Alan Wells, the provincial development facilitator, attempted to resolve this impasse, talks soon broke down (Watt 2008b).

When Simcoe County released a revised growth plan that envisioned industrial growth along the Highway 400 corridor south of Barrie, the city criticized it for misplacing regional priorities (Watt 2008c). The plan envisioned 228,000 more area residents over the next 25 years, of which Barrie would receive only 10,000 (Watt 2008c). The majority of this population growth would occur along Highway 400 outside of the city, in growing population centres such as Alliston where an expanded Honda plant was expected to increase the population and create economic nodes along provincial highways in Bradford West Gwillimbury and Innisfil (Watt 2008c). Barrie officials argued that these projections were unsupported by current growth trends and that population growth should be directed towards the city itself, where density could be better achieved and public transportation more easily provided.

While the county's growth projections intensified Barrie's desire to annex industrial land in Innisfil, a report by the bond-rating agency Standard and Poor's added additional urgency to their expansion plans. In the summer of 2008, Standard and Poor's released a report arguing that Barrie's economic future was directly linked to its ability to expand (Watt 2008d). In the wake of this report, the province released a growth report under the title *Places to Grow*, a plan intended

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minimum of 750 hectares of land beyond the current boundaries is required to meet growth needs to 2021" (Meridian Planning Consultants 2002, 4).

to better control the development in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Ontario 2009, 1). Finding rapid rates of development in the Simcoe area, the province decided to examine the region's growth trends in more depth to better accommodate future development. Simcoe County was, according to the report, under "intense development pressures," (Ontario 2009, 1).

Places to Grow is an expansive plan, of which Simcoe is only one part. Left unchecked, the report suggests that growth in the Simcoe region could increase the population to over one million people by 2031 (Ontario 2009, 5). Utilizing proper planning practices, the report projects a healthy estimate of 667,000 inhabitants and an employment forecast of 254,000 jobs (Ontario 2009, 5). To achieve these development goals, the province focused on the creation of "urban nodes" in the five largest communities in the Simcoe area: Barrie, Orillia, Collingwood, Alliston and Bradford West Gwillimbury (Ontario 2009, 9). By directing growth to these areas and encouraging density, the province hoped to avoid unrestrained growth and sprawl into the more rural parts of the county.

Of the portion of the report focused on the Simcoe area, much of it was centred on Barrie. Specifically, the report argues that Barrie had the greatest opportunity to bring density to the area, noting that, "Barrie will be recognized as the anchor node of the Simcoe area, and will continue to function as the primary location for new population and employment growth and regional services" (Ontario 2009, 9). To achieve these ends, the report noted, Barrie would require "a sufficient supply of land to accommodate future growth"—a notion that undoubtedly did not sit well with opponents of Barrie's proposed annexation in Innisfil (Ontario 2009, 9). The report's final priority was the development of land along the Highway 400 corridor for manufacturing, another key aspect of Barrie's internal growth plans (Ontario 2009, 18).

Following a joint meeting hosted by Municipal Affairs Minister Jim Watson, the county came to support Innisfil's position that an annexation was unnecessary (Watt 2009b). Believing that the province was supporting Barrie's position, Innisfil refused to resume discussions. Innisfil officials were adamant that Barrie politicians were waiting for the province to unilaterally change the city's boundaries, to the detriment of Innisfil (Vanderlinde 2009a). In February 2009, Innisfil publicly proposed an alternative agreement that would see one acre of its employment zone in Innisfil Heights on the Highway 400 corridor serviced by Barrie for every acre that it gave the city through boundary adjustment (Vanderlinde 2009a). Barrie officials refused and continued to lobby the provincial government to solve the disagreement. In response, Simcoe County council passed a resolution urging the province not to "reward" Barrie for refusing to work with its neighbours and plan for growth (Watt 2009e). Innisfil summarily passed two resolutions criticizing the proposed boundary changes (Watt 2009e).

On 4 June 2009, the province proposed a solution that provided Barrie nearly 2,300 hectares of land, enlarging its land base by approximately 30 percent (Vanderlinde 2009b). On 8 December 2009, the provincial legislature approved the *Barrie-Innisfil Boundary Adjustment Act*. Importantly, the decision did not provide Barrie with all of the land that its officials had initially requested. While Barrie was awarded a significant amount of land from Innisfil, it did not receive the Innisfil Heights area—which the province recognized as a clear growth area for Innisfil, designating it an enterprise growth zone—a victory in the eyes of Innisfil and county politicians (Vanderlinde 2009b). The land that Barrie was awarded was primarily rural and located around the Highway 400 corridor south of the city, affecting approximately three hundred residents (Vanderlinde 2009b).

Much like London, Barrie officials were concerned about development; namely, the City's supply of good quality industrial land and its ability to create jobs within its boundaries in the future. Although the municipalities around Barrie were primarily rural with agriculturally focused economies when Barrie initially separated from Simcoe County in 1959, these municipalities—including Innisfil—had gradually become suburban. Residents slowly migrated to these areas with the intention of commuting during the week to areas within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) for work. No longer was there a clear distinction between urban Barrie and its neighbouring rural communities.

The rapid rate of suburbanization in Simcoe County is blurring the distinction between the criteria that once led to city-county separation. Certain areas within the county have become suburban communities, with many in the south now key destinations for commuters in the Greater Toronto Area. The province helped facilitate this expansion and even encouraged certain areas to grow rapidly through their *Places to Grow* legislation. This is largely why the boundary dispute between Barrie and Innisfil intensified so quickly, since both had designs to develop and further attract industry and residents. Innisfil is no longer content to be rural and the ambitions of both communities now conflict, resulting in a very public, drawn out dispute over land primed for future industrial and commercial expansion.

Guelph-Wellington County

In 1990, Wellington County initiated an examination into their governance structure, hoping to streamline service delivery between itself and the separated City of Guelph. After Guelph rejected a recommendation to either rejoin the county or form a partnership, the City of Guelph again engaged in boundary expansion to facilitate future population growth, the eighth in its history. The rationale for the expansion centered on water supply, specifically the Arkell

Springs Water Supply Area located within Puslinch Township (Proctor and Redfern Group 1988a, 1). Since the Arkell Springs supplied between 30 and 70 percent of the city's daily water needs, Guelph officials sought to "protect" the supply source by bringing the area into the city's boundaries (Proctor and Redfern Group 1988a, 1). Guelph dramatically expanded its boundaries in three large annexations in 1990, 1991 and 1993 after the completion of several studies.

The need to annex this water source was highly dependent on growth figures for Guelph. In one report, the consulting firm Proctor and Redfern Group estimated that the city's population would reach 112,000 residents by 2011, a sharp increase from the 85,000 that then resided in the city (Proctor and Redfern Group 1988a, 4). The report argued that Guelph was growing at a quicker pace than the rest of the province (Proctor and Redfern Group 1988b, 1).

The Proctor and Redfern report concluded that Guelph had adequate residential land for population growth until 2011, but needed an expanded supply of industrial land. Although the report suggested that downzoning certain lands may be required to accommodate future residential demand, the greater concern was the lack of industrial land that was available within the city's limits (Proctor and Redfern 1988b, 20). Thus, the report concluded that Guelph would require a maximum of 964 additional acres of industrial land to meet growth demands by 2011 (Proctor and Redfern 1988b, 21).

While the report began as an examination of the city's water needs, it quickly became dominated by Guelph's need to absorb more industrial land. The report determined that Guelph required an immediate additional 600 acres of land to meet industrial requirements (Proctor and Redfern 1989, 10). County officials wanted assurance that there were no such lands available within the city already, arguing that even by re-developing and re-zoning current lands, the city would still be short of the required amount of land (Proctor and Redfern 1989, 10). The report

found that suitable lands for Guelph's expansion existed to the south of the city and along its north and northwest boundaries (Proctor and Redfern 1989, 10). After examining several possibilities, the report concluded that a parcel of land to the south of the city—adjacent to the Hanlon Parkway—offered the best chance for the city's industrial expansion, with a second set of lands to the west—in the Hanlon Business Park—offering the next best solution (Proctor and Redfern 1989, 22). In the short-term, the report concluded that it might be desirable for the city to annex lands adjacent to its Northwest Industrial Park for immediate expansion (Proctor and Redfern 1989, 22).

A report prepared by Wellington County planning staff in response to Proctor and Redfern, largely agreed with the position that Guelph required additional lands to expand. The report reassured Guelph that the county "intends to ensure that urban areas have adequate lands to support growth for the next 20 to 25 years" (Cousins 1990, 1). Wellington was willing to provide the city with the lands it needed to expand, but had concerns about the viability of the county and its municipalities in the future. The county wanted to see Guelph take on a more "compact urban form" in its future planning and "discourage a land use pattern on [its] fringe" (Cousins 1990, 2).

The Wellington report argued that Guelph required 1,400 to 1,500 additional acres of industrial land to expand until 2016 (Cousins 1990, 6). However, the county recommended that Guelph receive as much as 3,000 acres so that it had the necessary "flexibility" to allow for more rapid growth (Cousins 1990, 7). Since the county wanted to remain rural, its concern with the annexation process lay primarily in the preservation of quality farmland. Consequently, the report recommended that the area south of Guelph be annexed over the areas to the north and west of the city since these lands were poorer agriculturally, as compared to the north and west

areas (Cousins 1990, 9). Additionally, areas to the south were closer to Highway 401 and the Hanlon Parkway, which Wellington County felt were more "attractive to both business and resident[s] who commute to work in the Toronto area" (Cousins 1990, 9).

While the report found lands to the south more desirable, it also argued that annexing lands in this area would have a negative impact on the community of Puslinch. The areas that the city wanted to annex—primarily for access to the Arkell Springs and for industrial expansion—represented 64% of Puslinch's commercial and industrial tax base, which in turn represented 10% of the county's tax base (Cousins 1990, 10). Additionally, the proposed area also contained the town office, a fire hall, a community centre, a sportsfield, a library, the town roads garage and a county roads garage—all of which were recently constructed (Cousins 1990, 10). County officials worried expanding into this area would sever Puslinch's connection to these facilities.

Consequently, the report concluded that while areas to the east and west were not favoured for annexation because of their value as prime agricultural lands, expanding to the south would have a "devastating effect" on the viability of Puslinch as a community and would "weaken" the county (Cousins 1990, 10). Furthermore, there was no plan for expansion past 2016 and further annexation of rural land was undesirable (Cousins 1990, 11). Since the Wellington County official plan discouraged development along the city's boundaries in the hope of creating viable rural communities, the report recommended the creation of a cooperative planning mechanism within the area to ensure the increased density of Guelph and protection of rural communities well into the future (Cousins 1990, 11).

Ultimately, Guelph annexed 4,420 acres from the county (County of Wellington 1994, 1). 742 acres came from Guelph Township, while the bulk—3,678 acres—came from Puslinch

(County of Wellington 1994, 1). The annexation greatly expanded the city's southern and northern borders, providing additional lands for industrial expansion well into the future.

Guelph's most recent annexation was significantly different than the situations in London and Barrie. To provide the city with enough room to grow well into the future, Guelph negotiated with the county. Although the county was unenthusiastic about losing land and held concerns about the continued health of Puslinch, officials recognized the need for the city to grow. The county also wanted to remain rural, believing that the sustainability of their communities relied upon the maintenance of their rural culture. Therefore, directing urban growth towards Guelph was in their best interest. Unlike the communities surrounding London and Barrie, their lower-tier municipalities held no aspirations to become suburban enclaves adjoining their larger urban neighbour, which facilitated a smoother annexation and adhered to the original logic of city-county separation.

Breaking the Bargain?

City-county separation was the original method of organizing municipalities in Ontario as a result of organizational thinking that believed politically separating urban areas from rural areas was mutually beneficial. Over time, increased suburbanization gradually blurred the distinction between urban and rural, replacing the logic behind city-county separation with the notion that urban and rural needed to be linked. This shift largely occurred in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s with the introduction of regional government. Beginning with the creation of Metropolitan Toronto, the province established a series of regional governments to help coordinate many of Ontario's rapidly urbanizing counties.

Two key reports in the 1960s led the push for regional government: the report of the Select Committee on the Municipal Act and Related Acts and the report of the Ontario

Committee on Taxation. The Select Committee on the Municipal Act and Related Acts argued that growth and development was no longer isolated to Ontario's urban centres. Areas around cities, and especially around the province's separated cities, were gradually becoming more suburban. This, the committee noted, created serious governance problems: "not only have our cities developed a new vigour but population has spilled over into rural areas which are neither financially or politically equipped to deal with the resulting problems" (Ontario 1965, 167). The report referred to these newly suburbanizing communities as "dormitory municipalities", that were becoming bedroom communities to their larger, urban neighbours (Ontario 1965, 168). The Ontario Committee on Taxation found similar results, arguing that the southern part of the province was rapidly urbanizing and that the provincial government needed to create municipal structures that could properly address the needs of these areas (Ontario 1967).

Although these two reports helped establish regional governments across the province, eighteen cities and towns were left separated from their counties once this process had concluded. The province later turned its attention towards these areas in the 1980s, finding similar trends of urban growth as cities. *Patterns for the Future*, a 1987 provincial report, agreed that Ontario's counties were experiencing rapid rates of growth. The report argued that, "few municipalities are now predominantly rural in nature," and that suburban development will likely lead to increased annexation disputes (Ontario 1987, 19). These problems placed the viability of the separated city-county system into doubt.

Two additional reports found similar trends. In 1988, *County Government in Ontario*, argued that, "the distinction between the rural and urban communities in counties is no longer as clear as it once was…this change has placed new requirements and demands on a government system designed for a primarily agricultural society" (Ontario 1988, 1). In this case, it appeared

that Ontario was outgrowing its old county system, necessitating changes to adapt these structures to the new reality of population growth and settlement. *Toward an Ideal County*, published in 1990, recommended the re-integration of separated cities back into county structures as a way to overcome the problems associated with increased urbanization.

Despite this series of reports, city-county separation remains a part of Ontario's municipal landscape to this day. Yet, the urbanization that each report describes has also not abated; in fact, in some areas, it has only grown stronger. Officials from lower-tiers on the outskirts of some separated cities are no longer content to allow their municipalities to remain rural. Rather, they hope to attract residential, commercial and industrial development and expand their assessment base. Furthermore, in some instances, such as in Middlesex County, politicians from these areas are not shy about their ambitions to become suburban enclaves to the separated cities they border.

These aspirations are the antithesis of the logic that first created city-county separation in the province: rural areas were to remain rural and separated cities were to remain urban. Shifting population and settlement patterns have eradicated this formerly clear and clean-cut distinction. Ultimately, the authors of *Patterns for the Future* were correct: few municipalities remain predominantly rural in nature, especially in southern Ontario. This fact has created tensions between some separated cities and their surrounding areas. Officials from cities that want to ensure that the majority of development and growth around them occurs within their borders must now compete against newly ambitious politicians from rural municipalities.

Separated cities commonly use annexation to control development. London, Orillia, Barrie and Guelph have all incrementally expanded their borders, generally with the help of the province. London has undergone 15 major boundary expansions, while Barrie has expanded its

borders nine times since 1954. There have been eight rounds of annexation in Guelph as the city progressively expands outwards. Provincial officials have facilitated these expansions, using the justification that each city must expand to facilitate development. In some cases—most notably in London and Barrie—these annexation disputes become hostile, requiring provincial intervention to resolve the conflict.

City-county separation remains most enduring in areas where urban areas want to remain urban and rural areas want to remain rural. Guelph's most recent annexation, for example, was aided by the desire of county officials to remain rural and provide the city with the land it needed to grow. On the other hand, London and Barrie's experiences have been more negative because the desire of city officials to expand now conflicts with their desire of officials from their once rural neighbours to grow.

Nevertheless, city-county separation is an enduring institution that remains in place due largely to the following three factors. The first is that many counties with a separated city are still mostly rural. While some areas such as Simcoe County are experiencing rapid growth rates in various areas, other regions, such as Renfrew County, Lanark County, or the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, remain predominantly rural and experience very modest rates of growth compared to their separated cities and other rural municipalities. In these instances, there is not much need for institutional change since the original intention of city-county separation is being maintained.

The second is that the re-integration of separated cities is, in some cases, entirely unfeasible. The problem identified in the reports from the 1980s that recommended an end to city-county separation remain: there is no clear way to re-integrate large cities back into county life without severely curtailing the representation of smaller communities on re-constituted

county councils. Each report stated that the distinction between urban and rural was rapidly breaking down, but none could offer concrete recommendations on how to manage this newfound reality. The pragmatics of re-introducing a separated city into its county are daunting and, as such, institutional change is not a realistic option.

Finally, the province of Ontario has allowed the progressive outward expansion of separated cities for decades, ensuring that the maintenance of city-county separation remains an institutional practice through the continuous absorption of urbanizing territory into separated cities. Despite the insistence of provincial policy makers in the 1980s that city-county separation needed to be stopped, the province has continuously maintained city-county separation through this incremental expansion. Through this incremental annexation process, Ontario's separated cities have grown enough that that city borders now comfortably contain much of the region's urban growth. While officials from some neighbouring rural municipalities have a newfound desire to grow and expand, the province has continuously allowed separated cities to annex developing territory, thereby maintaining the institution of city-county separation.

Although separated cities have commonly used provincially supported annexation to control growth, these boundary extensions are sometimes controversial. Prior to the provincial push towards consolidation in the 1990s, large separated cities were more easily able to annex the smaller bordering communities. As Williams and Downey (1999) demonstrate, the provincial government's amalgamation agenda created larger municipalities with larger populations. Consequently, it then becomes more difficult to annex larger communities since they are now stronger governmental actors. Although Innisfil—a growing community bordering Barrie—was recently subjected to an attempted annexation, its increased size allowed it to fight against the broader boundary expansion. Barrie eventually received a smaller annexation than requested, in

large part because Innisfil officials made a convincing case against a bigger expansion into their municipality. Thus, the province's preferences for consolidation sometimes work at cross-purposes: while consolidation traditionally facilitates the preservation of the system of city-county separation by allowing separated cities to expand their borders to take in more urbanizing sections of the county, the provincial push for consolidation in the 1990s also created stronger municipalities on the edge of separated cites, making further annexations more challenging.

Since rates of urbanization continue to grow, some counties with a separated city—such as Simcoe County—could make a strong case for why they should be converted into regional governments that could help with items such as regional planning. In the absence of these types of conversions, the province has attempted to fill the gap, acting as an arbiter in annexation disputes and helping to regulate land use and development in certain areas. Whatever direction the province chooses to take, the fact remains that in many areas, the weakened distinction between urban and rural has wide-ranging effects, particularly in policy areas such as planning and service delivery. Arguably, rural communities could avoid many of these consequences by choosing to remain solely rural. However, in many cases, rural communities are encouraging urban growth to the detriment of cities that continue to adhere to the original logic of municipal organization in their region.

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Appendix A: Interview Listing

Region	Municipality	Position	Date
Middlesex	London	Director, Intergovernmental and	Feb. 6, 2012

		Community Liaison	
Middlesex	London	Ward 3 Councilor	Feb 13, 2012
Middlesex	North Middlesex	Mayor / County Councilor	Feb 14, 2012
Middlesex	Middlesex Centre	Mayor / County Councilor	Feb 15, 2012
Middlesex	Southwest Middlesex	Administrator/ Clerk	Feb 17, 2012
Middlesex	Middlesex Centre	Ward 3 Councilor	Feb 21, 2012
Middlesex	Lucan Biddulph	CAO/Clerk	Feb 21, 2012
Middlesex	Middlesex County	CAO	Mar 2, 2012
Middlesex	Thames Centre	Mayor/County Warden	Mar 2, 2012
Middlesex	London	Ward 5 Councilor	Mar 5, 2012
Middlesex	Middlesex Centre	Ward 1 Councilor	Mar 5, 2012
Middlesex	Middlesex Centre	Deputy Mayor	Mar 7, 2012
Middlesex	Adelaide Metcalfe	Mayor/County Councilor	Mar 8, 2012
Middlesex	London	Former Mayor	Mar 8, 2012
Middlesex	Middlesex Centre	Ward 5 Councilor	Mar 8, 2012
Middlesex	Middlesex Centre	CAO	Mar 13, 2012
Middlesex	London	Ward 14 Councilor	Mar 13, 2012
Middlesex	London	Former CAO	Mar 15, 2012
Middlesex	Southwest Middlesex	Mayor/County Councilor	Mar 16, 2012
Middlesex	Strathroy Caradoc	CAO	Mar 21, 2012
Middlesex	Strathroy Caradoc	Mayor/ County Councilor	April 4, 2012
Wellington	Wellington North	Mayor/County Councilor	April 12, 2012
Wellington	Minto	CAO	April 13, 2012
Wellington	Puslinch	CAO/Clerk-Treasurer	April 13, 2012
Wellington	Puslinch	Mayor/County Councilor	April 16, 2012
Wellington	Centre Wellington	Mayor/Former County Warden	April 16, 2012
Wellington	Guelph/Eramosa	Mayor/County Warden	April 26, 2012
Wellington	Guelph	Ward 2 Councilor	April 30, 2012
Wellington	Guelph/Eramosa	Ward 4 Councilor	April 30, 2012
Wellington	Puslinch	Councilor	May 2, 2012
Wellington	Guelph	Ward 1 Councilor	May 2, 2012
Wellington	Guelph	Former Ward 4 Councilor	May 2, 2012
Wellington	Guelph	Ward 4 Councilor	May 2, 2012
Wellington	Erin	Former Mayor/County Councilor	May 10, 2012
Wellington	Guelph	Ward 5 Councilor	May 10, 2012
Wellington	Mapleton	Mayor/County Councilor	May 16, 2012
Wellington	Guelph	Ward 3 Councilor	May 17, 2012
Wellington	Wellington-Halton Hills	Member of Provincial Parliament	May 18, 2012
Wellington	Guelph	Former Ward 3 Councilor	May 25, 2012
Wellington	Guelph/Eramosa	CAO	June 4, 2012
Wellington	Erin	Mayor/County Councilor	June 4, 2012
Simcoe	Tay	CAO	May 23, 2012

Simcoe	Wasaga Beach	CAO	May 25, 2012
Simcoe	Springwater	Mayor/County Councilor	May 29, 2012
Simcoe	Collingwood	Mayor/County Councilor	May 29, 2012
Simcoe	New Tecumseth	Mayor	May 30, 2012
Simcoe	Adjala-Tosorontio	CAO	May 30, 2012
Simcoe	Orillia	Ward 3 Councilors	May 30, 2012
Simcoe	Orillia	Deputy CAO/CFO	May 30, 2012
Simcoe	Bradford West Gwillimbury	CAO	May 31, 2012
Simcoe	Penetanguishene	Mayor/ County Councilor	May 31, 2012
Simcoe	Tay	Mayor/County Councilor	May 31, 2012
Simcoe	Severn	Mayor/County Councilor	May 31, 2012
Simcoe	Brandford West Gwillimbury	Mayor/County Councilor	May 31, 2012
Simcoe	Orillia	Ward 4 Councilor	June 1, 2012
Simcoe	Barrie	Ward 2 Councilor	June 1, 2012
Simcoe	Oro-Medonte	Mayor/County Councilor	June 1, 2012
Simcoe	Oro-Medonte	Deputy Mayor/County Councilor	June 1, 2012
Simcoe	Orillia	Ward 4 Councilor	June 1, 2012
Simcoe	Simcoe North	MPP/Former County Warden	June 5, 2012
Simcoe	Barrie	Ward 8 Councilor	June 5, 2012
Simcoe	Tiny	Mayor/County Councilor	June 8, 2012
Simcoe	Collingwood	Deputy Mayor/County Councilor	June 8, 2012
Simcoe	Adjala-Tosorontio	Deputy Mayor/County Councilor	June 8, 2012
Simcoe	Springwater	Former Mayor/County Warden	June 8, 2012
Simcoe	Barrie	Mayor	June 14, 2012
Simcoe	Midland	Mayor/County Councilor	June 14, 2012
Simcoe	York Simcoe	Member of Provincial Parliament	June 15, 2012