



THE BOUNDARY BARGAIN

Growth, Development and
the Future of City-County
Separation

ZACHARY SPICER



@imfgtoronto | #IMFGtalks



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!

(William Cowper's "The Task" 553-7)



THE BOUNDARY BARGAIN:

Development is pushed towards the separated city, allowing rural areas to remain rural and urban areas to grow as they please

THE BOUNDARY BARGAIN:

Development is pushed towards the separated city, allowing rural areas to remain rural and urban areas to grow as they please*

*Pursue density

Baldwin Act [1849]

Regional Government [1960s, 70s]

County Reform [1980s]

Consolidation [1990s]

[INSTITUTIONS THAT SEPARATE]

Baldwin Act [1849]

Regional Government [1960s, 70s]

County Reform [1980s]

Consolidation [1990s]

[INSTITUTIONS THAT LINK]

Barrie Belleville Brantford Brockville Galt
Chatham Cornwall Eastview Gananoque
Guelph Hamilton Ingersoll Kingston
Kitchener London Niagara Falls Orillia
Oshawa Ottawa Owen Sound Pelee
Township Pembroke Peterborough
Prescott Quinte West Riverside Sarnia
Smiths Falls St. Catharines Stratford St.
Mary's St. Thomas Toronto Trenton
Waterloo Welland Windsor Woodstock

Barrie Belleville Brantford Brockville Galt
Chatham Cornwall Eastview Gananoque
Guelph Hamilton Ingersoll Kingston
Kitchener London Niagara Falls Orillia
Oshawa Ottawa Owen Sound Pelee
Township Pembroke Peterborough
Prescott Quinte West Riverside Sarnia
Smiths Falls St. Catharines Stratford St.
Mary's St. Thomas Toronto Trenton
Waterloo Welland Windsor Woodstock

Barrie Belleville Brantford Brockville Galt
Chatham Cornwall Eastview Gananoque
Guelph Hamilton Ingersoll Kingston
Kitchener London Niagara Falls Orillia
Oshawa Ottawa Owen Sound Pelee
Township Pembroke Peterborough
Prescott Quinte West Riverside Sarnia
Smiths Falls St. Catharines Stratford St.
Mary's St. Thomas Toronto Trenton
Waterloo Welland Windsor Woodstock

Barrie Belleville Brantford Brockville Galt
Chatham Cornwall Eastview Gananoque
Guelph Hamilton Ingersoll Kingston
Kitchener London Niagara Falls Orillia
Oshawa Ottawa Owen Sound Pelee
Township Pembroke Peterborough
Prescott Quinte West Riverside Sarnia
Smiths Falls St. Catharines Stratford St.
Mary's St. Thomas Toronto Trenton
Waterloo Welland Windsor Woodstock

Barrie Belleville

Brockville

Cornwall

Gananoque

Guelph

Kingston

London

Orillia

Pelee

Township Pembroke

Peterborough

Prescott Quinte West

Smiths Falls

Stratford St.

Mary's St. Thomas

Windsor

1. Why do we still have separated cities?
2. What is the impact of the continued use of city-county separation?
3. What are the alternative governance arrangements?
4. Is urban/rural still a “pervasive binary” in political science and local government research?

London + Middlesex County
Guelph + Wellington County
Barrie + Simcoe County

London-Middlesex

- Growth around the city's periphery has caused tension between city and county officials
- County has sought to create an alternative to city living outside London's borders
- London officials have refused to cooperate on service extension
- County officials no longer content to remain rural

Guelph-Wellington

- City + County able to agree on urban expansion
- County officials want to remain rural, content to see Guelph grow within borders
- Unclear if situation would change with increased growth pressure
- County has demonstrated belief that City is not sufficiently committed to density

Barrie-Simcoe

- Subject to a great deal of provincial attention
- Tremendous growth, unevenly distributed
- Fast growing south, slow growing north
- New, development-focused politicians in southern Simcoe county have resisted Barrie's growth plans

- Growth viewed much differently in rural areas
- Urbanization now a directed process
- Growth adopted on “rural terms”

Cultural shift in understanding of urban/rural

City-County Separation is an Enduring Institution

- Difficult to re-integrate cities back into counties
- Representation imbalance too great to overcome

City-County Separation as Stalemate

- Province has allowed rounds of urban annexation
- At the same time, amalgamation created larger (once rural) neighbours + stronger political actors
- Limited ability to expand

Rigid institutions, shift in rural/urban values, and perception of growth have established competition for growth in areas that were designed to have none

An unenviable position....

-Hard to annex + preserve status quo

-Challenging to establish common institutions

-No growth consensus

Easiest – Informal/Inter-Local Cooperation

Middling – Special Districts/Transfer Functions

Hardest – Single-Tier/Two-Tier Restructuring

No “one size fits all” solution

-In some cases, city-county separation still works well

-Where it does not, reform can be achieved

Questions/Comments?

Zachary Spicer

@ZacSpicer

zspicer@brocku.ca



#IMFGtalks

@imfgtoronto