



CIVIC AFFAIRS

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NEWS BULLETIN TO INSTITUTE AND BUREAU SUBSCRIBERS

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PROPOSALS FOR AN IMPROVED SYSTEM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR THE WINDSOR METROPOLITAN AREA

Annexation by the City of Windsor of the towns of Ojibway, Riverside and Tecumseh, the Village of St. Clair Beach and urban portions of Sandwich East, Sandwich West and Sandwich South, was recommended as the result of a comprehensive study of the metropolitan area carried out by the research staff of the Citizens Research Institute and the Bureau of Municipal Research.

Produced under Institute auspices, the impartial survey was commissioned by the Windsor Junior Chamber of Commerce and the work was carried out with the full co-operation of all the municipalities concerned.

The Institute recommended a complete merger rather than a metropolitan federation similar to those in the Montreal and Toronto areas. If the proposals are adopted, one result will be to increase Windsor's population from 120,000 to nearly 190,000 and its area from less than fifteen square miles to nearly fifty-five square miles.

The Institute's findings were made public by your director, Eric Hardy, at a special dinner sponsored by the Jaycees and attended by elected representatives and senior appointed officials from all municipalities in the area, together with members of the Chamber, members of the Institute and other prominent citizens. Quoting the Windsor Star of April 29th: "Mr. Hardy spoke for an hour to an audience of 300" and received "a standing ovation when he concluded."

In carrying out the survey the Institute placed particular emphasis upon the problems of providing municipal services under the existing divided authority. Among the factors considered by the Institute in coming to its conclusions were local attitudes and opinions concerning various alternative solutions.

In recommending against a municipal federation the report made the following criticisms of Toronto's Metro system:

The system only partially equalizes the tax capacities of the member municipalities.

The federation has raised the level of municipal spending, thereby reducing the ability of the poorer local municipalities to pay for local services.

In the greater Toronto area, the metropolitan federation has been unable to form a metropolitan concept of planning and land use.

The system adds another layer of local government in the city and requires senior executives to do double duty.

Although a metropolitan federation may be a useful stage toward unification of municipal government throughout the metropolitan area, the danger is that it will become just as entrenched as the old pattern of fully divided jurisdiction.

The Province's creation of Metropolitan Toronto in 1953 was a less courageous solution than outright amalgamation, Mr. Hardy noted. Under the present system of provincial grants to local authorities, the proposed Windsor annexation would result in a significant reduction in revenues from this source. "It would be most unfortunate", the Institute stated, "if the anticipated loss in provincial grants and subsidies became the chief obstacle to a metropolitan merger." Consequently, the Institute recommends that Windsor petition the Province either to change the grant system generally or to provide special financial assistance to facilitate the Windsor annexation.

In the opinion of the Institute, a good deal of preparatory work would be needed before an application for merger could be submitted to the Ontario Municipal Board with a good prospect of being granted. With this in mind, the report recommends a programme for immediate action by the local municipal authorities designed to produce a water-tight case in favour of the change.

On the evening following the presentation of the report, the City of Windsor held a council meeting at which it was decided to request the Institute to direct this preparatory undertaking.

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