

Dundas vs. the Stewart Commission:
Resident Opposition to City Absorption

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1. Introduction

Within local government, a problem dealing with the spatial extent of municipalities continually occurs. There are two opposing poles to the problem -- consolidation versus community control (Bish,7). Supporters of the consolidation argument say that organization into fewer government units enhances service delivery efficiency (Bish,7). Supporters of community control see consolidation leading to big city bureaucracies which cannot relate to, and thus not properly service, the various neighborhoods (or communities) within the city.

This leads us to the idea of regional government. In Ontario, a two-tier local government system services many municipalities. The upper tier (region) provide services, such as arterial roadways, which are more efficiently provided for on a larger scale; while the lower tier (municipalities) provide services, such as neighborhood planning, which are best provided on a smaller scale. In theory, two-tier municipal government looks very efficient; in practice, the general public has tended to reject it. Why? The answer lies in how the public views their local community. This leads to the aim of this research paper.

In 1978, the Report of the Hamilton-Wentworth Review Commission recommended "the lower tier municipalities of Hamilton-Wentworth be abolished and a single-tier local government structure composed of one municipal council be established in the present Region of Hamilton-Wentworth" (Stewart, rec. 4.1). This report brought strong negative reaction from the residents of Dundas. Inherent to this vast opposition is the residents' strong sense of local identity. The proposed hypothesis is, then, that residents' identify strongly with their local community (or neighborhood) and will oppose any organizational changes which are perceived to be detrimental to their community (or neighborhood).

The hypothesis will be addressed through a study using

qualitative, rather than quantitative, data. In other words, the data will not be readily statistical, but more analytical. The data will be obtained from two sources. First, a newspaper survey will be conducted using back issues of two Dundas weekly community newspapers and the Hamilton Spectator. Findings from this survey will be the basis for the research paper's third chapter. These data will be analyzed and then, through mention of important names and facts, be used to guide and direct the personal interviews, which are the second source of qualitative data.

These personal interviews will be with people who sat on Dundas town council in 1978, as well as with those who currently sit on town council. What will hopefully be elicited from them are their reasons for opposition to the commission recommendations. For example, the interviews should tell us if residents were, or are, opposed because of reasons of personal preference, economics, local identity, or something else. These findings will compose the fourth chapter of the research paper.

Before addressing the proposed hypothesis, the second chapter will present a brief study of the Stewart Commission Report and a review of other literature related to this topic. This review will include literature from both geography and political science.

The review of the Stewart Commission Report will begin with a look at regional government showing what the Stewart commission was trying to reform. After reviewing the terms of reference which the Stewart Commission was charged with, the major recommendations made will be studied emphasizing the goals behind the recommendations.

The final chapter will draw from the qualitative analysis in chapters three and four to produce overall conclusions about why such vocal opposition to the Stewart commission recommendations was heard. These conclusions will still have relevance to us today even though the report is ten years old since two-tier municipal government is still with us and people are still calling for political reform. In fact, people will always be calling for political reform, therefore knowing how people identify with their local community will always be important. As well, any reform which alters the spatial landscape of

municipalities will ultimately affect these local communities.

This paper concludes that the proposed hypothesis is true. That is, residents do have strong local identity and will, as a result, oppose any organizational change which is perceived to diminish their status quo. There may be other reasons found to accentuate the vocal opposition to the commission recommendations. It is reasonable to suggest that perceived tax increases; perceived less local involvement in planning (Higgins,139); or perceived increases in bureaucratic 'red-tape' resulting from a more consolidated and distant local government may be contributing factors to the opposition. Overall, the residents' strength of local identity should reign supreme as the reason for Dundas resident opposition to absorption into a larger city.

2. Literature Review

This literature review is composed of three basic sections. First, the Stewart Commission Report will be examined. A review of literature dealing with political reform, especially keying on opposition to political reform, will be presented. Finally, there will be a discussion of study methods which may be used to tackle the problem of studying local identity.

2.1. Report of the Hamilton-Wentworth Review Commission

The Commission, headed by chairman Henry E. Stewart, was asked to answer two basic questions;

- (1) what should local government be capable of doing?
- (2) are the local governments of Hamilton-Wentworth doing an efficient and cost-effective job, given the current responsibilities they have? (Stewart, 1978).

The answer to question one is simply that the purpose of local government is to "ensure that the people are able to control regional services to meet their wants and needs" (Stewart, 1978). The answer to the second question led to the numerous recommendations, and to the disdainful response of Dundas residents concerning the future political structure of the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth.

Through stressing factors of inter-relation between Hamilton and the municipalities of the Region (ie...all municipalities within the Region have more residents employed within Hamilton than in the municipality itself (Stewart, 1978)), the Commission made a total of 113 recommendations. The most important of these recommendations, and the one from which most other recommendations were derived, was recommendation 4.1. It advocated the abolishment of all lower tier municipal governments within the Region and the establishment of a single tier municipal government covering the entire geographic area of the existing Region (see figures 1 and 2) (Stewart, 1978).

- a Hamilton
- b Dundas
- c Ancaster
- d Flamborough
- e Stoney Creek
- f Glanbrook
- g Brantford
- h Caledonia

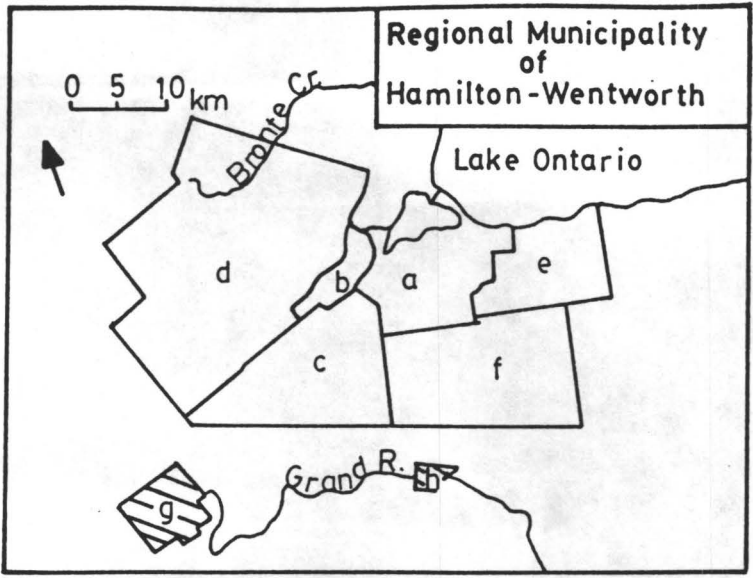


fig. 1 Municipal boundaries within the Hamilton - Wentworth region, 1974
(source - Burghardt, 1987)

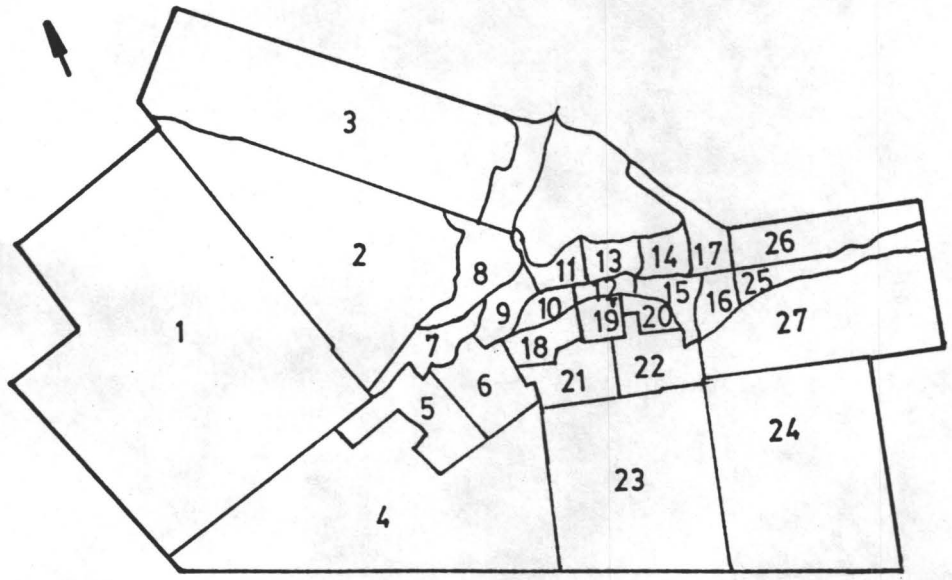


fig. 2 City of Wentworth Boundaries
Proposed municipal boundaries, as contained within the Stewart Commission recommendations
(source - Stewart, 1978)

Stewart advocated this new political structure in an attempt to do away with the problem plagued regional government system. He believed that a single tier would overcome the basic flaws of regional government. Initially, it would limit the acrimonious relationship between the city and its neighbours (Stewart, 1978) by bringing all the bitter parties together into one government. Secondly, single tier government would reduce the lack of accountability inherent in a regional system (Stewart, 1978). Since regional councillors are also elected to serve on the lower tier of local government (ie...the local municipal councils which make up the region), their regional duties are not directly accountable to the regional populous. Also, while on regional council they must split their time between regional and municipal duties as they sit on two councils simultaneously. Thirdly, a single tier would eliminate inefficiencies resulting from the duplication of services (Stewart, 1978). Since there are currently two tiers of local government, inefficiency results in the grey areas where their jurisdictions overlap. A single tier of local government would resolve this inefficiency.

2.2. Political Reform

Political reform is simply an effort to rectify "some aspect in the structure of governmental institutions in order to improve performance" (Bish, 1976). It is important to note here that the pressure for reform usually "does not come from those most directly involved in local government itself" (Burghardt, 1982). Over the last twenty-five years, political reform has been a way of life in Ontario municipalities. Beginning in 1966, Ontario became the first North American state or provincial jurisdiction to embark on a comprehensive regional government plan (Richardson, 1981). There were already two-tier governmental structures in other parts of the world, but Ontario was innovative and was praised for establishing this governmental form on this side of the Atlantic Ocean.

However, the praise for Ontario's innovative government soon

turned sour. Regional government has been plagued by problems since its inception in Ontario. There is a great deal of antipathy toward regional government (Kay, 1982) for a number of reasons. Firstly, people have a difficult time understanding the purpose of regional government since the communities in Ontario grew for almost 125 years, beginning with the Baldwin Act of 1849, without regional government (Higgins, 1977). Secondly, the organization of local government is made unnecessarily confusing to the average citizen with services inter-mixed between regional, metropolitan, and local levels of government. For example, Metropolitan Toronto has 189 locally-elected municipal positions, and this high number of elected officials means, among other things, very confusing ballots at election time (Robarts, 1977).

Regional government became a reality in the Hamilton area on January 1, 1974, when the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth officially came into existence (Burghardt, 1987). Hamilton had pushed for a one-tier regional structure, but the province opted instead to implement a two-tier structure. Even after the Region had been formed, Hamilton was still pressuring for a single tier. This fueled the animosity felt between the outlying municipalities and Hamilton, and "confrontation rather than co-operation" became the norm between members from the city and surrounding area on the regional council (Burghardt, 1987). Costs rose with the implementation of regional government. The city faulted these increases on duplication of services between the two-tiers while the surrounding municipalities calling for a return to the old system, blamed the increases on larger government (Burghardt, 1987). As a result, new political reform was called for to revamp the regional government system.

This call for reform led to the Report of the Hamilton-Wentworth Review Commission. The recommendations this report made met with controversy. Suburban communities felt the recommendations were approval for direct annexation by Hamilton (Horne, 1980). Although Stewart recommended centralizing the government of Hamilton-Wentworth, numerous studies have found centralization to have negative effects. Kay found that as city size and size of city

council increase, local governments tend to become polarized and not accessible to the general public (Kay, 1982). A study by the National Opinion Research Centre in the United States found that:

- (1) crime rates are higher in larger jurisdictions,
- (2) citizen evaluation of police is higher in suburbs and smaller jurisdictions, and
- (3) relatively similar services have higher costs in larger jurisdictions (Bish, 1976).

These studies tend to imply that smaller, more decentralized governments are more suited to the local scale.

Recent government reform has stressed efficiency over local democracy (Rowat, 1983). Government policy implementation is dependent on the machinery set up to implement policy (Richardson, 1981). Often, this machinery is only made more efficient, as in the case of regional government, by detracting from local democracy. In other words, efficiency is often equated with giving fewer powers to a municipality and more power to a regional or provincial government.

Government reform can be traumatic "upon all those involved, upon society generally and upon the public services in the change-over" (Riley, 1983). Continued reform only magnifies these effects and confuses the community's population. To limit this trauma and confusion, political reform should encompass two ideas. The first is the socialist principal that "what touches all should be decided by all" (Walzer, 1978). The second is a nineteenth century ideal: "the belief that every substantial local community -- and especially every city -- ought to have its own autonomous government" (Magnusson, 1985). These two ideas advocate maintaining local democracy. Government reform in Ontario has met with opposition because it ignored these two ideas thus limiting the importance of local democracy. The limited importance of local democracy is synonymous with diminishing the importance of local identity.

2.3. Local Identity and Community Participation

Local autonomy is "a utopian conception of how the powers of social institutions ought to be geographically arranged" (Clark, 1984). Also, autonomy is used to define the "extent of local discretion in terms of local government functions, actions, and legitimate behaviour" (Clark, 1984). The concepts of local autonomy and local identity emphasize the importance of the nineteenth century ideal referred to earlier.

No matter what the overall size of a metropolitan area is, Benjamin found that "most citizens tend to identify with their local community as their home area" (Benjamin, 1977). In other words, local identity exists. If it is strong (as is investigated in this paper), it will be a formidable force against government reform. With government reform, the task is to determine the proper "locus of responsibility for planning in the total political/ administrative structure of government" (Ricardson, 1981). If local government is deemed important, then local government should reflect and support locally perceived communities and public institutions must be quite fragmented (Higgins, 1977).

Local autonomy, or identity, brings to the fore two concepts. These are the theory of territoriality and the principal components of power. The theory of territoriality is simply "the attempt to affect, influence, or control actions and interactions by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a geographic area" (Sack, 1983). The theory of territoriality constructs the voice of local identity -- either local government or public views as shown through opposition to policy -- since the local community is trying to impose control over a local geographic area. "Territoriality is an agent of control" (Sack, 1983). It is relevant in the sense that we are dealing with autonomy; it is irrelevant in the sense that the theory was conceived on a larger than local scale.

There are two principal components of power. These are initiation and immunity (Clark, 1984). Proponents of fragmented

governmental structures, the believers in local identity, try to have initiation and immunity controlled at a small scale. Initiation refers to the governments ability to set its own agenda and implement its own policies (Clark, 1984). Immunity refers to higher-tier control of a lower-tier government. The more immune a local government is, the more independent it becomes (Clark, 1984). Thus, greater immunity comes with a greater respect for local autonomy.

Local governments in Ontario have much initiation power since they can set agendas and create and implement their own policies. However, they have only limited immunity since municipalities are charters of provincial government. The provincial government, either through providing funds or through structures like the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), can dictate or control major undertakings of the municipality. The provincial government has vast powers over municipalities, but local identity mirrored in public opposition can be a great force in local politics also.

This leads to the view that government "could be improved by making it more responsive to the differences between people" (Magnusson, 1985). In other words, the local state of government should be more fragmented to reap the positive benefits of local identity. A commission set up to study political reform in Scotland recommended considerable consolidation of existing towns and districts. The Scottish Commission revered efficiency, which meant historical factors were given little argumentive weight (Burghardt, 1982). Considerable public outcry resulted -- people were scared that centuries of tradition were being sacrificed and that local identity and affinity were being destroyed (Honey, 1977). As a result, the Scottish government opted to reform, but still maintain smaller districts for two reasons. This allowed residents to be closer to their political representatives and ensured that local identity could be maintained in most areas (Honey, 1977).

Local autonomy has been important to past decision making by the Ontario government. In creating Metropolitan Toronto, they retained locally-elected councils within the boroughs of Toronto because "a single council for the whole area would be to remote too deal with

local matters" (Higgins, 1977). When regional government was proposed for the Hamilton area, the smaller municipalities "powerful will to live" and "almost two centuries of traditions and local associations" (Burghardt, 1987), played a role in the inception of two-tier rather than one-tier local government. When the Stewart commission recommended a centralized government in the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth, public outcry resulted in the recommendations not being implemented by the province (Horne, 1980).

Community participation is an important aspect of government. If the community in general has no voice in how their tax dollars are spent, then democracy has failed. Elections are one way to voice local concerns, but equally important is public input into policy making. An argument in favour of the importance of public input can be strengthened by examining the consequences of a lack of it in the implementation of regional government in Ontario. There were no public opinion surveys and people were not educated about the role of regional government as public input was limited to only "a few public hearings" (Jacek, 1980). The result? Regional government has never been accepted by the people and political reforms have been called for almost since its inception. In implementation, the provincial government failed to completely understand "the public's attachment to the existing local municipal governments and its belief in the importance of local democracy" (Jacek, 1980).

Community participation is important since members of a political community are believed to have certain rights "simply by virtue of their membership" within a community (Walzer, 1978). Because of this, local decision making should be based on a 'bottom up' format (Richardson, 1981). This means that local considerations and local views (ie...bottom level of political hierarchy) are important to government (ie...top level) decision making -- hence, the 'bottom up' analogy. In larger cities, many citizens feel they have unsatisfactory governmental services and no say in determining governmental policy (Bish, 1976). As a result, government reform should aim for democratic values such as, citizen participation (Rowat, 1983).

2.4. Methods of Analysis

There have been few studies dealing with local identity. Thus, methods of analysis are very sparsely distributed through the literature. For this type of study, Horne defined two basic methods of obtaining information: 1) interviews and, 2) mass media (Horne, 1980). Higgins tried to measure local identity through the study of the following indirect measures: 1) travel boundaries, 2) origin and destination of telephone calls, 3) extent of newspaper circulation and, 4) media viewing or listening area (Higgins, 1977). This paper uses interviewing techniques and newspaper study since Higgins' methods could delineate, but not determine the strength of local identity.

A newspaper, and especially a community paper such as the Dundas Star, has "an obligation to express its community" (Horne, 1980). If a newspaper does this then it is valid to use the newspaper to study local identity. As Horne assumed, newspapers are "a logical device" for expressing community feelings (Horne, 1980).

A newspaper study and an interview both rely on three characteristics to obtain useful information. These characteristics are: 1) the content of the message the newspaper or interviewer is trying to get across, 2) the characteristics of the receiver of the information and, 3) the environment in which the information is received (Horne, 1980). These characteristics, with the exception of the first are self-explanatory. The content of the message refers to both the actual questions an interviewer is asking and the actual responses a newspaper will print.

2.5. Conclusion

The general conclusion which can be drawn from this brief literature review is that there seems to be a consensus among authors that local identity is, indeed, a very important factor delimiting political reform. Although most reforms stress efficiency in

government (ie...Stewart Commission Report), local autonomy is often stressed by the actual decision-makers (ie...Ontario's decision not to implement Stewart's recommendations). In summary, actual reform in Scotland stressed the importance of maintaining local identity (Honey, 1977), Magnusson stressed the nineteenth century ideal that each local community should have its own autonomous government (Magnusson, 1985), and the implementation of reform in Ontario has taken into account local identity. In Ontario, Metropolitan Toronto has subordinate councils for their boroughs (Higgins, 1977) and the Stewart Commission Report was not implemented because of local autonomy concerns (Horne, 1980).

3. Content Analysis: Three Local Newspapers

This newspaper survey is separated into two main sections. The first section will deal with reports concerning the Stewart Commission published by the Hamilton Spectator in May, 1978. The Spectator offered appreciable articles on the Stewart Commission topic during this month only. The second section will deal with articles published in two Dundas weeklies -- the Dundas Star and the Valley Journal -- between January and June of 1978 inclusive. Predictions that the Stewart Commission would recommend a one-tier governmental structure, coupled with local concerns, led these two weeklies to publish a considerable number of articles on this topic both before and after the actual report was released.

Both the length of time and space devoted to this issue by the various newspapers being studied leads to an interesting minor conclusion. Although all three papers did cover the topic, time and space allotted suggests that the Spectator did not deem it as important as the Dundas weeklies did. Assuming that local newspapers convey their community's feelings within their pages (Horne, 1980), we can conclude that this issue stirred greater, and/or more controversial emotions in Dundas than in Hamilton. Furthermore, a content analysis reveals that the Spectator remained neutral during the one-tier/two-tier debate, while the two Dundas weeklies vehemently opposed one-tier.

3.1. The Hamilton Spectator

Articles within the Spectator did discuss various foci of opposition towards one-tier government. Unlike the Dundas weeklies, the Spectator devoted relatively more space to discrediting the arguments of various anti-one-tier groups. The Spectator also acknowledged arguments made by dissenters of the anti-one-tier group, from the ranks of Dundas citizens, with more plausibility than the

Dundas papers offered.

In this content analysis study, articles dealing with the Stewart Commission were grouped under four subheadings. The first three subheadings -- "upheaval caused", "history", and "lack of local control" deal with reasons (or foci) for opposition to one-tier government. The fourth subheading -- "Dundas dissenters and Hamilton's view" deals with the strength of the local support for the anti-one-tier movement and the reactions to the Stewart Commission Report from Hamilton.

3.1.1. Upheaval Caused

Anne Jones, then Chairman of the Regional Council for Hamilton-Wentworth, rejected one-tier government on the grounds that it would cause "tremendous upheaval" within the Region (Spectator, 31/05/78). This upheaval referred not only to people having to become accustomed to a new form of local government, but also to the problems associated with agglomerating various local governmental services into larger regional service agencies. An example would be forming one region-wide fire-fighting service by agglomerating all the existing fire departments. Problems anticipated here would occur since Hamilton had a full-time contingent of fire-fighters while Dundas was largely served by volunteers (Clodman, 30/05/78).

Four years previous to the Stewart Commission's Report, the city and surrounding area was caught up in the political upheaval associated with the formation of regional government. This fact can be analyzed in two ways. Firstly, it can be used as an argument for providing one-tier government immediately since the people have demonstrated an ability to deal with the upheaval. Secondly, it can be argued that these people should not be put through a second series of upheavals after only four years of political calm.

Mrs. Jones used the second argument when she spoke of upheaval. As well, her comments were made only after she spent approximately three weeks (from May 10 to May 31, 1978) measuring public reactions to, and reservations about, the Stewart Commission recommendations (Spectator, 31/05/78). However, she failed to note that the upheaval would be short-lived while the benefits of one-tier would last.

Thus, to reject the one-tier recommendation, one had to either disprove the benefits of one-tier local government or accentuate the benefits of two-tier local government. Simply stated, upheaval was not the most relevant factor on which to base either acceptance or rejection of one-tier government.

3.1.2. History

Historical reasons for the preservation of the smaller towns within the Region, while abundant inside articles of the two Dundas weeklies, were notably absent from the Spectator. While the Spectator did deal with historical reasons for maintaining Stoney Creek, there was virtually no mention of this during the Stewart Commission era with respect to the long history of Dundas.

Then Dundas Mayor, Joe Bennett, based a great amount of his anti-one-tier tirade on the "131 years" of Dundas history (Star, 8/02/78). Instead of publicizing this, the Spectator chose to write humorous articles about the Dundas campaign instead. Although the Spectator did provide the publicity sought, a group from Dundas and Stoney Creek felt that their protest at Queen's Park was limited in terms of coverage by the paltry photograph and small article. Only details of the demonstration, instead of reasons behind the protest, were presented (Frankie, 31/05/78).

Stoney Creek's history however, fared better in the articles of the Spectator. One article briefly discussed the history of the town with reference to the Battle for Stoney Creek, the turning point in the War of 1812 (Spectator, 23/05/78). A second article dealt with how the council of Stoney Creek sought federal financial assistance in waging the "third battle for Stoney Creek" by citing special historical significance as reason enough for the town not to be "wiped off the map" (Spectator, 26/05/78).

Thus, the Spectator did not view the history of the small, surrounding municipalities as important obstacles to implementation of the recommendations of the Stewart Commission. This conclusion is based on the lack of coverage offered to the history of these small towns.

3.1.3. Lack of Local Control

Fears of the Dundas residents that they would lose control of local parks and institutions seemed to be paramount in the opposition to one-tier-government as expressed by the Hamilton Spectator. Fears that "strangers", or "absentee landlords", would be running the Town of Dundas were derived from the number of council members that would be elected to the City of Wentworth council by the town (Spectator, 16/05/78). Only one council member would be elected from each of the two wards that Dundas was to be split into. If neither of these two were then appointed to the parks, recreation, and culture committee, then the control of Dundas' parks would be delegated to people from outside the town. This was a concern since the townspeople, as of May 1978, were spending \$36.60 per capita annually on recreation while the residents of Hamilton were spending only \$21.21 (Spectator, 16/05/78).

This was one focus of opposition which captured attention within the Hamilton Spectator. Albeit important, sheer volume of articles within the Dundas weeklies tended to suggest that local identity (or small-town atmosphere) was a more important focus of opposition. The Spectator however, never substantially mentioned this local identity issue. Instead, as volume suggested, the Spectator emphasized not only this perceived lack of future control, but also dissent from, and other lack of support for, the anti-one-tier cause.

3.1.4. Dundas Dissenters and Hamilton's View

Where the Dundas weeklies treated the issue of Dundas town Councillor Carswell's demur of the anti-one-tier groups with scorn (Star, 14/06/78), the Hamilton Spectator paid much more attention (Clodman, 30/05/78). Councillor Carswell believed that the council in the Town of Dundas was too large and too responsive to pressure groups. She felt that nine council seats for a population of 20000 were far too many, and that reorganization into one-tier, with Dundas having only two representatives, would help to detract the influence of pressure groups (Clodman, 30/05/78).

In another article, the Spectator continued to point out kinks in the armour of the anti-one-tier groups arguments. This time, the

Spectator questioned the support being given to the anti-one-tier stance. Only 500 people attended a rally at the Dundas arena to hear local leaders denounce the Stewart Commission Report (Clodman, 26/05/78). Although the Dundas weeklies discussed how the "one-tier proposal got blasted with both barrels" (Journal, 31/05/78), the Spectator limited their report to a discussion of the number of supporters that showed up to the rally (Clodman, 31/05/78). The Spectator then suggested low attendance was the result of a Stanley Cup hockey game which was being played the same evening (Clodman, 31/05/78). The article proceeded to suggest that a large crowd at an earlier rally was only on hand to view a fireworks display (Clodman, 26/05/78).

The Spectator dealt with unfavourable aspects of the Report as seen by Hamilton politicians. Hamilton city council favoured the one-tier proposal, provided that the city received more power on the new City of Wentworth council (Foley, 30/05/78). The City of Hamilton contained over 75% of the population that would eventually make up the City of Wentworth yet would have obtained only 14 of the 27 seats on the new council (Foley, 30/05/78).

The Spectator continued to report how unfair the new tax structure proposed by the Stewart Commission would be to urban dwellers. Alderman Henry Merling of Hamilton City Council took exception to tax recommendation which he said amounted to "a one-tier political system but a two-tier tax system" (Spectator, 26/05/78). The two-tier tax base (property tax rates based on urban or rural designation) would result in people who have to put up with industrial traffic and pollution paying higher property taxes than someone living on a "five-acre homestead" in the country (Spectator, 26/05/78).

3.1.5. Conclusions

The Hamilton Spectator limited its' reporting of reasons for opposing a one-tier governmental structure, but accentuated both Hamilton's relatively minor concerns over the Commission recommendations and the kinks in the support for anti-one-tier sentiments. The Spectator never actually supported nor opposed the

Stewart Commission's recommendations. The paper appeared to remain neutral in its' reporting. However, the articles within the Spectator tended to support the main hypothesis of this study. That is, residents do identify strongly with their local community and will oppose any organizational changes which are perceived to be detrimental to their community.

The Spectator should have conveyed the feelings of the residents of Hamilton. As a result, the Spectator tended to downplay the concerns of Dundas residents yet has stressed factors of the Commission recommendations which may prove detrimental to the existing City of Hamilton. Since one-tier was accepted, in principle, by Hamilton, the Spectator deemed concerns of Dundas residents to be minor. True to the hypothesis of this paper, the Hamilton Spectator drew attention to factors which concerned Hamilton residents. These factors, despite how unimportant they might have actually been, signalled the upheaval caused by reorganization (Spectator, 31/05/78), problems associated with a two-tier tax structure (Spectator, 26/05/78), and the issue of Hamilton's relative under-representation on the new city council (Foley, 30/05/78).

Thus, the Spectator remained neutral on the Stewart Commission topic. The Spectator, by mirroring the feelings of Hamilton, had accepted the recommendations in principle yet had opposed those organizational changes which were perceived as detrimental to Hamilton.

3.2. The Dundas Weeklies (Dundas Star & Valley Journal)

Articles written the Dundas weeklies suggested vehemently opposition to the recommendation of one-tier local government. Except for brief articles attuned to Councillor Carswell's denunciation of the anti-one-tier movement, the Dundas weeklies overwhelmingly opposed one-tier. With respect to Councillor Carswell, the Dundas Star suggested that those who favoured one-tier had either "no roots" in the local community or "personal gain" in the switch to one-tier (Star, 7/06/78,2).

As suggested in section 3.1.1., to reject the one-tier proposal, one must either disprove the benefits of one-tier local government or accentuate the benefits of two-tier local government. A content analysis suggested that the Dundas weeklies discussed the Stewart Commission with respect to both of these acceptance criteria. The content analysis can be split into five foci of opposition. These are: 1) "upheaval", 2) "history", 3) "local control", 4) "efficiency or people" and, 5) "small-town atmosphere".

3.2.1. Upheaval

The upheaval issue was examined only briefly by the Dundas weeklies. As with coverage in the Spectator, coverage in the Dundas weeklies tended to suggest the relative lack of importance this issue commanded. Regional Chairman Anne Jones felt that the Region had just gone through the upheaval created by the incorporation of regional government, so should be left alone (Star, 7/06/78,16).

The Dundas weeklies only offered this focus of opposition a token amount of coverage. The resulting conclusion was that although this point was important enough to receive coverage, it was easily overshadowed by the other anti-one-tier arguments. Relating this to the main hypothesis of this paper, we can conclude that the upheaval caused by a move to a one-tier system was not perceived to be very detrimental to the local community of Dundas. This may have been due to the length of time over which these effects would be felt. Effects of upheaval are short-lived while other foci of opposition to one-tier relate to longer term detriments.

3.2.2. History

"The name Dundas, synonymous with early Canadian history and the right of self government, will disappear" (Star, 4/01/78,1). Mayor Joe Bennett was adamant in saying that Dundas had a "deep rooted history of good local government" (Journal, 4/01/78,1). The Dundas weeklies showed appreciable coverage to Dundas' 131 years of history. Again, however, there were many other arguments against one-tier government which commanded more attention.

The fact that history, which seemed to command a great deal of Joe Bennett's time in his anti-one-tier campaign, did not receive

more coverage in the Dundas weeklies is interesting. Since the Commission was dealing with the future benefit of the Region, it was a good (possibly unintentional) idea for the newspaper not to dwell on the past. Although historical reasons may be good enough to save a building from demolition, they are not necessarily relevant reasons to save a town from absorption by a larger city, especially if that absorption is seen as beneficial to the Region as a whole. Although history may be why some residents identify strongly with a community, and loss of a community may be perceived as detrimental for historical reasons, opposing a future-oriented plan with an historically-oriented argument is not ideal.

3.2.3. Local Control

Loss of local control was an important factor of opposition to one-tier local government. As mentioned earlier, this was the focus of opposition to one-tier which commanded the most attention in the Hamilton Spectator. This however, was not the main focus of the Dundas weeklies.

The Dundas weeklies did allude to the importance of this argument. Townspeople would lose their "right to live in and have a meaningful voice concerning their local community" (Journal, 4/01/78,6). Mayor Bennett referred to the recommendations in the Stewart Commission Report as destroying "the freedom of citizens to control local affairs" (Star, 7/06/78,3). One-tier would "extinguish the flame of local autonomy and democracy" (Star, 7/06/78,3).

Residents did oppose one-tier government on this point. Local control of facilities, such as parks and rinks, were deemed to be very important. This importance was captured in the articles of the Dundas weeklies, but volume of articles saw this factor eclipsed by other arguments against one-tier. However, we can conclude that any organizational change which results in perceived less local control of amenities will be viewed as detrimental to the community and will be opposed by local residents. Mayor Bennett summarized the argument for local control simply by asking that Dundas "remain a separate municipality empowered to determine its own direction" (Star, 8/02/78).

3.2.4. Efficiency or People?

The argument under this focus of opposition is simple. Reformers call for larger, impersonal bureaucracies for reasons of efficiency; the people call for small, local governments for reasons of accessibility. Thus, the Dundas weeklies published articles which tended to undermine the claims of efficiency made by the Stewart Commission and overstated the benefits of decentralization. This focal point of opposition related to the continuing argument between community control and consolidation (Bish, 1976).

An article in the Star, written by Eric Cunningham, stated that bigger governments were neither better nor cheaper governments. They were, however, more confusing and more expensive (Cunningham, 31/05/78). Similarly, one-tier would eliminate not only local identity, but also the accessibility and availability of local council (Journal, 14/06/78). With smaller governments, costs were less difficult to control, communication with citizens was easier, and people were more apt to become involved on a voluntary basis within their community (Star, 4/01/78). It was charged that the Commission Report was based on the "premise that big is better. It isn't, and the people of Dundas and Ancaster know that -- that's why they live where they do" (Journal, 17/05/78,6). When asked by the Dundas Star what he thought of the one-tier recommendation, a Dundas resident replied simply that "everything has become so impersonal" (Star, 24/05/78). Eric Cunningham seemed to sum up the town's feelings when he suggested that the Stewart Commission was too preoccupied with the system instead of the people (Star, 17/05/78,1).

It is obvious from this short list of extracts that Dundas was staunchly opposed to a consolidated government. Dundas saw the Commission recommendations as resulting in a large, inefficient, expensive bureaucracy. A bureaucracy in which more distance would be put between the citizens and their political representatives (Star, 24/05/78,5). Thus, the pre-recommendation governmental structure was viewed as more desirable. The result was that the Dundas weeklies identified strongly with their local community and opposed the organizational change which would detriment their local community

through the creation of a "faceless bureaucracy" (Star, 17/05/78,4).

3.2.5. Small-Town Atmosphere

This was, arguably, the focus of opposition towards one-tier government which carried the greatest support not only among Dundas residents, but also among residents of all the outlying communities within the Region. Dundas residents, being proud of their small-town, saw the one-tier recommendations as direct annexation by the City of Hamilton (Star, 4/01/78). If annexed, the pleasures of small-town life would "erode and eventually disappear" (Star, 17/05/78,4).

Many Dundas residents lived in Dundas because of the small-town atmosphere (Journal, 17/05/78,6). Thus, they feared the possible ramifications of being encompassed by a larger city. Some feared Dundas would become a mere extension of King Street, complete with glass and steel skyscrapers (Journal, 17/05/78,1). Others saw Dundas as being swallowed by a "huge melting pot of high rise, stainless steel, glass, and asphalt" (Journal, 31/05/78). Still others felt that a one-tier bond with Hamilton would "take away any chance for our children to enjoy small community life" (Journal, 14/06/78).

When asked by the Dundas Star what Dundas' greatest asset was, most respondents mentioned the "small-town feeling" (Star, 3/05/78). "It's an old town and it's small, not at all like downtown Hamilton. The people are friendly" (Star, 3/05/78). For the few years prior to the Stewart Commission, Dundas had the highest annual population growth in the Region. Mayor Bennett hypothesized that this was because many Hamiltonians had fled Hamilton for the "small-town atmosphere" of Dundas (Star, 8/02/78).

Thus, as both volume of articles and strength of argument suggested, preservation of the small-town atmosphere was the main focus of local opposition to the Stewart Commission recommendations. Viewing big-city life as less appealing than their small-town life, residents of Dundas saw a merging with Hamilton as having negative effects on their community. Their opposition, based on this focus, supports the main hypothesis of this paper.

4. Personal Interviews With Dundas Political Figures

Thirteen personal interviews were conducted with present and past political figures in the Town of Dundas. Seven members of the current town council, along with six members of the 1978 town council (the council in power when the Stewart Commission Report was released), were interviewed. This section will discuss the opinions of these thirteen people in order to extrapolate the views of Dundas residents towards one-tier regional government. Thus, here we assume that political representatives earnestly and correctly present the views and values that their constituents adhere to.

This discussion will examine the major arguments for and against one-tier government which were elicited during the personal interviews. This section will include conclusions about which variables the Dundas residents use as grounds for opposition to one-tier. Throughout this chapter, there will be a constant theme of distinguishing between the answers given by present and past councils. This will allow us to see any shift in the major arguments used in combatting one-tier government.

One question asked in each interview was simply 'are you in favour of one-tier regional government?'. The answers presented in Table 1 are interesting. All seven members of today's town council answered with an ardent 'no'. However, only four of the six town councillors from 1978 are definitely not in favour of one-tier today. Of the other two, one is in favour of one-tier while the other, stating benefits to both one- and two-tier government, declined to answer one way or the other. This would seem to indicate that today's council is more adamant in their opposition to a single tier government.

As a follow-up to this simple yes-or-no question, the interviewees were asked why they do or do not support a single tier governmental structure. Common answers continually popped up and arguments from present and past town councillors generally were

similar. These arguments, or poles attracting thoughts on the one-tier subject can be split up into six categories. These are: "economic viability", "history", "local control and government bureaucracy", "small-town atmosphere", "local identity", and "other associated variables".

Table 1: The Interviewees.

<u>Current Council</u>	<u>Opposed to one-tier?</u>
J. Addison	yes
S. Dufour	yes
H. Everett	yes
R. Powers	yes
A. Redish	yes
A. Samson	yes
M. Seldon	yes
<u>Past Council (1978)</u>	
D. Blackadar	yes
A. Jackson	yes
W. McMicking	yes
J. Orme	no
J. Prentice	yes
J. Southall	yes/no

4.1. Economic Vitality

Economic vitality refers to two cost related variables: 1) the relative administrative costs of one- and two-tier regional governments and, 2) the vitality of the local economies which are governed by these systems of government. It is interesting to note that three of the four interviewees who mentioned economic vitality stressed that a one-tier government is more economically viable than a two-tier system, even though only one of them is a staunch supporter of one-tier. It is equally interesting to note that none of the current council members who were interviewed used any

arguments based on economic vitality. Since they are all opposed to one-tier government, their failure to oppose on this point may mean that they actually believe one-tier to be less expensive. This inference however, cannot be validated.

Mr. Blackadar, a thirty-five year resident of Dundas, is opposed to one-tier regional government. He believes that smaller governmental structures are more economically viable since "less stratas of control are needed". Thus, using this argument, a larger government, such as a one-tier regional government, is inefficient because of the extra costs which are incurred in setting up a regional set of governmental controls.

Both Mr. Prentice and Mr. Southall, on the other hand, argue that one-tier would cost less money. Although not in favour of a one-tier system, Mr. Prentice feels that Dundas would be economically better off in a one-tier system. Mr. Southall feels that a local council in every municipality within the region costs too much money. As a result, he states that "whether we like it or not, we may be forced to have one-tier just to (be able to) afford it (government)".

Mr. Orme discussed economic vitality in relation to the second cost-related variable -- the vitality of the local economy within the various governmental structures. A local economy must be vibrant or else it will stagnate. A local area's actual survival is rooted in the businesses which operate within it. Thus, Mr. Orme as a businessman, is a supporter of one-tier because he sees a much more economically vibrant and viable community in Westdale (an area of the larger city) than in Dundas.

4.2. History

The Town of Dundas has a long history. In fact, the town is older than the City of Hamilton. With the Desjardins Canal, and an early viable source of water power, Dundas was the original economic powerhouse at the western tip of Lake Ontario. This is a history that Dundas residents are understandably proud of. This history is a variable, mentioned by six of the interviewees, which is used as a

platform for opposition to one-tier government.

A variable mentioned equally by past and present Dundas town councillors, history is an important rallying cry against one-tier government. History is something Dundas residents are proud and conscious of. The argument which uses this variable was stated eloquently by Mrs. Redish when she said one-tier would result in both the name and the actual Town of Dundas being "swallowed up by Hamilton".

4.3. Local Control and Government Bureaucracy

The argument surrounding these variables against one-tier government is quite straightforward. The Town of Dundas would become a ward of the new city, it's two political representatives would be too busy to deal with constituents at a personal level, and it's two political representatives would be so inconsequential on the larger council that Dundas would end up being run by people who are not residents of Dundas. This view however, is contentious. While five interviewees use these variables to argue against one-tier government, one other uses the same variables to argue in favour of one-tier.

Mr. McMicking feels that one-tier would result in the town being run by outsiders. Local councillors are more attuned to the needs of, and more accountable to the local residents. If one-tier is incorporated, Dundas will be run by people "not necessarily as concerned about the town". Mr. Blackadar favours two-tier because he feels the constituents are closer to their elected officials under this system. Mr. Orme, however, cannot see the need for nine political representatives for a population of only 20000. While many feel that one-tier would create a large and faceless bureaucracy, Mr. Orme feels that, with nine councillors, there is "more bureaucracy in Dundas than Hamilton".

From the current town council, no one disputed the local control argument against one-tier government. Mr. Addison feels a move to one-tier would result in a loss of government responsiveness to local

citizen needs. Mr. Everett believes that a single council could not do the job of adequately replacing the seven local and regional councils which are operating today. Mrs. Dufour extolled the virtues of 'grass-roots democracy' with its inherent arguments for local control of local services.

Thus, it would seem from this quick list of arguments that the popular opinion is that local control over the Town of Dundas would be lost with the advent of one-tier regional government. Although a larger bureaucracy or may not be created, there seems to be a consensus that local control will disappear. Even Mr. Orme, in his arguments for one-tier, never disputes this.

4.4. Small-Town Atmosphere

With respect to this variable, there was a general consensus among responses. People from both past and present councils seem unanimously agreed that the small-town atmosphere is an asset to Dundas as a community, and would be lost if one-tier became a reality. Dundas' quiet atmosphere and immense number of community volunteers permeates a distinct "feeling of community". Although he praises the virtues of one-tier regional government from a financial viewpoint, Mr. Prentice argues for two-tier from a social viewpoint. He feels that the people so greatly enjoy their small-town atmosphere that a loss of it would be unjustified, even in light of the perceived monetary savings.

The present council members are equally concerned with the apparent loss of small-town atmosphere in a one-tier system. Mr. Powers is afraid of losing the "neighbourhood feeling" which he feels is strong in Dundas. A general argument, brought forth by three separate present council members deals with a movement of population from Hamilton into Dundas. They argue that people are attracted to Dundas because of the small-town flavour, as opposed to the hustle and bustle of the big city. Thus, the small-town atmosphere appeals to the many who "live in Dundas because they want to".

Small-town atmosphere is a common magnet of opposition to a one-

tier regional government. People treasure their community feeling which they perceive will disappear in a one-tier system. Even Mr. Orme, a supporter of one-tier concedes that there will be some loss of local atmosphere. Thus, small-town atmosphere seems to be the first variable upon which all interviewees presented a united concern and argument. We can conclude from this that residents' strongly treasure their feeling of community atmosphere and will oppose any organizational shift which is perceived to detriment this atmosphere.

4.5. Local Identity

This single variable was mentioned by more interviewees than any other. This fact alludes to the importance with which the Dundas political representatives view the local identity of Dundas as a town in itself. Among all the fear expressed about losing local identity, one interviewee dissented from the crowd. Although some fear that Dundas will simply turn into "another Westdale" in the advent of a single tier, Mr. Orme welcomes the change since he views Westdale as a thriving community.

The general consensus however, from the members of the 1978 council, is a strong feeling of community identity. Mr. Jackson, who feels the town offers a better environment than Hamilton, thinks the town's identity would be lost in a single tier. Mr. McMicking stated that one-tier would "wipe out (the) identity of the town". If incorporated into a larger city Dundas would become an area rather than a town. Opposed to this occurrence, the residents of Dundas "want to maintain (their) presence as a community, not as (an) integrated part of the overall good". Although neither supporting nor opposing a one-tier government, Mr. Southall concedes that Dundas would lose its' identity and be overwhelmed by Hamilton in a one-tier system.

Of the members of the current town council who were interviewed, all adamantly rejected one-tier on the basis of losing the town's local identity. Mayor Seldon echoed the thoughts of other councilors when she equated the inception of one-tier government to the

annexation of Dundas by Hamilton. The mayor feels it is worth paying more in taxes to maintain local identity. Mrs. Dufour mirrored these thoughts by saying that Dundas residents "won't just lose the small-town feeling, the town would (also) be lost".

Thus, local identity seems to be of universal importance to both present and past council members. Mr. Orme, who sees no harm in becoming another Westdale did not actually dispute the claim that local identity would be lost. Instead of arguing from such a personal level, Mr. Orme argued from the viewpoint of a businessman wanting to do business in a viable and strong economy. The conclusion which can be made here is supportive of the main hypothesis of this paper. That is that residents identify strongly with their local community and will oppose any organizational shift which is perceived to be a detriment to their community.

4.6. Other Associated Variables

Although only mentioned by a few interviewees, arguments related to taxes and the duplication processes are important to note. Also, three separate interviewees seemed to contradict themselves as they argued the benefits of keeping Dundas a small town in itself.

Tax was used by a past councillor, Mr. Orme, to argue for one-tier, and alternately used by a current councillor, Mr. Addison, to argue against one-tier. Mr. Addison argues that taxes would increase with the inception of a one-tier regional government as, for example, school boards become amalgamated. Mr. Orme however, feels that taxes under a one-tier system would be lower for Dundas since residents would be able to benefit from the large industrial base in Hamilton.

Although the duplication of processes was sighted as inefficient and used, within the Stewart Commission Report, as an argument for the one-tier proposal, past councillor Mr. Blackadar presented an interesting argument to deflate this duplication concern. He concedes that two-tier duplication is an inefficiency of the current system, yet Mr. Blackadar reminds us that "democracy is, in essence, inefficient". In other words, since democracy is based on the axiom

that the majority rules, then it is inefficient, as people do not always vote for efficiency. Thus, a smaller tier of government is usually preferable since it puts politicians on a more personal level with their constituents. Similarly, duplication allows for people at various levels of government to meet on a face-to-face basis, promoting a closer relationship between town, city, and region.

It is interesting to note that three interviewees (one past and two present councillors) all similarly contradicted their own arguments as they discussed the benefits of Dundas life while opposing one-tier government. All three stated smallness of size to be the major asset of Dundas, while they similarly lauded the lack of industry in Dundas to be the major liability. This is a contradiction since they argue against big city life while wanting a greater industrial tax base.

5.0 Conclusions

The hypothesis of this paper states that residents identify strongly with their local community and will oppose any organizational changes which are perceived to be detrimental to their community. Both the content analysis of the newspapers in chapter three and the personal interviews of chapter four have supported this presumption. Conclusions based solely on a content analysis hinge on an important assumption -- that newspapers express the true feelings shared by the residents of the local community (Horne, 1980) -- and thus, cannot be verified without further study. Conclusions based on both a newspaper study and personal interviews overcome this limiting assumption. From this study, five such conclusions can be made.

- (1) Hamilton residents tended to accept the one-tier recommendations with slight reservations about the limited power Hamilton would receive in the new city. This conclusion is based mostly on the relative space given the various arguments against one-tier in the local newspapers. This conclusion cannot be directly verified by the interviews since no interviews were conducted with Hamilton residents. However, Mayor Seldon's statements about Hamilton wanting to annex Dundas tend to support this conclusion.

- (2) Hamilton residents seem to have a greater concern about the monetary implications (ie. taxes) inherent within the recommendations. Again, this conclusion cannot be directly be verified, in the Hamilton case, because only Dundas residents were interviewed. The Dundas aspect of this conclusion is, however, staunchly verified. Mayor Seldon

feels it is worth paying more in taxes in order to maintain the identity of the town. Mr. Prentice feels there would be monetary savings to the town in a one-tier system, yet he still adamantly opposes such a system.

- (3) Dundas residents seem to have a greater vocal (or emotional) response to the recommendations, while Hamiltonians seem to not care as much about the implications. This conclusion was based solely on the newspaper survey and content analysis. No attempt was made to actually judge, in a comparable manner, the emotions evoked from Hamiltonians and Dundas residents over the issue of one-tier regional government.

- (4) Dundas residents view the recommendations as a threat to their way of life -- they do not simply knock the report over concerns of upheaval caused, tax effects, or even history. Dundas residents genuinely relate to, and are concerned with losing, their small-town atmosphere. This conclusion is staunchly supported by both sources of qualitative data. Loss of such variables as small-town atmosphere, local political control, and local identity, were common themes throughout many of the newspaper articles and personal interviews. In fact, ten of the thirteen interviewees lamented about the perceived loss of small-town atmosphere which would accompany any move to one-tier regional government. All thirteen respondents mentioned at least one of these three variables as an important loss if one-tier was incorporated -- including Mr. Orme who is in favour of bringing Dundas under the cover of

one-tier.

- (5) These conclusions tend to support the main hypothesis of this paper -- residents do identify strongly with their local community and will oppose any organizational shift which is perceived as detrimental to their community. This is genuinely supported by all three major sections of this paper -- the literature review, the newspaper survey, and the personal interviews.

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