



## NEWS RELEASE

# Niagara's Mayors Welcome Provincial Action on Regional Council Reform

*Coalition of Niagara Municipalities welcomes today's legislation and calls on the Province to work with all municipalities to get the details right.*

**For Immediate Release**

**April 2, 2026**

The Mayors of Grimsby, Port Colborne, West Lincoln, Pelham, Thorold, Wainfleet, and the Lord Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake today welcomed the Province of Ontario's introduction of the Better Regional Governance Act, 2026, as an important step forward, while calling on the Province to ensure that the final legislation reflects the made-in-Niagara principles this coalition has championed since February.

"We wrote to Premier Ford in February because we believed Niagara needed reform; locally led, evidence-based, and built around the principle that every community deserves a real voice," said Lord Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake Gary Zalepa. "Today's announcement reflects that direction, and we welcome it. But the details matter, and we will be engaged every step of the way to make sure the final product serves all of Niagara's communities."

### **A Made-in-Niagara Agenda Already in Motion**

This coalition has been acting on governance reform ahead of any provincial directive. Since issuing their joint letter to Premier Ford in February 2026, the municipalities have made tangible progress:

- Niagara-on-the-Lake, Thorold, Grimsby, and Port Colborne have each passed formal resolutions to voluntarily reduce the size of their local councils, demonstrating that Niagara's municipalities can lead reform without waiting for direction from above
- The group is actively championing publicly-owned Water and Wastewater Service Corporations and the transition of services such as regional roads, Social Services, Public Health, and EMS to locally-governed Public Service Boards,



delivering best value for money while keeping essential services close to the communities that depend on them

- A comprehensive governance and service delivery review was initiated by Niagara Regional Council on February 26, 2026, with overwhelming support, proof that the appetite for made-in-Niagara reform runs deep across the region's elected leadership

## Getting the Details Right

On weighted voting, any framework must balance representation by population with fairness, ensuring every municipality retains a meaningful voice. The group welcomes the Province's commitment to develop this collaboratively and will be active partners in that process.

On strong chair powers, the group has serious questions. An appointed chair with authority to veto bylaws and override elected mayors sits in tension with local accountability and with the weighted voting model the Province is simultaneously proposing. The group will be seeking clarity from the Province before the legislation passes.

## On Local Council Reductions: Act Now

The group renews its call on the Province to move quickly to provide the legislative authority needed to implement local council reductions in time for the 2026 municipal election. Any changes not approved before May 2026 will not take effect until 2030, a four-year delay Niagara's taxpayers should not have to wait for.

## Recognizing Those Who Have Served

The group recognizes that many Regional Councillors have served Niagara with dedication and distinction. Today's changes will mean real transitions for people who have given much to public life, and it is in that spirit of service that this coalition will continue to advocate for reform that is locally led, delivers for taxpayers, and maintains the exceptional public services Niagara's communities depend on.

"Today is a moment to move forward together; province and municipalities, working in the same direction," said Mayor of Thorold Terry Ugolini. "Partnership means local communities have a real seat at the table, not just a ceremonial one. That is what we will continue to fight for."



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