Abstract (Summary): Towards the end of the 1990's, a complicated situation occurred in Toronto, Ontario. The conservative political forces undertook a plan to restructure the system of urban governance, and the result was consolidation for Toronto (Keil, 2000). There were many political debates on amalgamation and secession that was tied in with discourses on size, efficiency and form of urban government. Amalgamation and secession was introduced as strategic options of governance restructuring in the City of Toronto in the late 1990s in order to reduce costs and improve the efficiency of municipal services. Also, there was a central theme in the conservative party's plan in revolving the shift from government to governance. Each city has a specific set of external relationship with other geographical and political scales and a set of characteristic internal contradictions, Toronto makes use of a metropolitan governance model (Keil, 2000). Both projected and realized scalar changes of governance processes and institutions had been accompanied and characterized by social struggles and widespread political debate (Keil, 2000).

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Public Space: Amalgamation

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Introduction

Towards the end of the 1990’s, a complicated situation occurred in Toronto, Ontario. The conservative political forces undertook a plan to restructure the system of urban governance, and the result was consolidation for Toronto (Keil, 2000). There were many political debates on amalgamation and secession that was tied in with discourses on size, efficiency and form of urban government. Amalgamation and secession was introduced as strategic options of governance restructuring in the City of Toronto in the late 1990s in order to reduce costs and improve the efficiency of municipal services. Also, there was a central theme in the conservative party’s plan in revolving the shift from government to governance. Each city has a specific set of external relationships with other geographical and political scales and a set of characteristic internal contradictions, Toronto makes use of a metropolitan governance model (Keil, 2000). Both projected and realized scalar changes of governance processes and institutions had been accompanied and characterized by social struggles and widespread political debate (Keil, 2000).

On January 1st, 1998, the city of Toronto was re-created as the province of Ontario amalgamated five municipalities (see figure 1A) including East York, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, and York to create one mega city with a population of 2.4 million inhabitants (Toronto City Council, 2000). The purpose of this report is to look at how the Toronto amalgamation affected residents of Ward 43, East Scarborough, focusing on Ward 43 and East Scarborough’s land form and the availability of public spaces.
The Amalgamation

The amalgamation in Toronto was the result of a top-down approach, which involved consultations with the community and the City stakeholders (City of Toronto, 2004). As a result of these consultations, the provincial government established the Toronto Transition Team to develop a governance structure for the Council and to provide a structure for the city (see Appendix B).

This transition team was responsible for laying the groundwork for the new City Council, which would come into affect on January 2nd of 1998 (City of Toronto, 2004). The Transition Team's role in laying the groundwork for the Council included drafting governance and administrative structures for consideration by the new council, completing a legislative review of any needed changes as a result of amalgamation, and to prepare a consolidated budget for 1998. The team was also required to hire officials mandated by legislation and a senior management group, and consult the public on roles and responsibilities of community councils relative to the new council. One of the key challenges that the transition team needed to address was the size and scope of the new department, which would be responsible for serving a population of 2.3 million. The magnitude and scale of the amalgamation was never seen before in Canadian Municipal history, thus there had yet to be any solutions which could easily be put into place that would ease the transition from seven different municipal governments and administration systems into one system. The transition team was to analyze the existing system and consult different levels of the government and community in order to facilitate the coming amalgamation.
The purpose of the amalgamation, as stated by the provincial government of Ontario was to reduce costs and improve efficiency of municipal service delivery. A common method of evaluating efficiency improvements is to analyse changes in levels of expenditure adjusting for changes in the quantity and quality of services delivered (City of Toronto, 2004). The province of Ontario wanted to reduce the number of elected officials in order to avoid duplication. However, the concept of amalgamation brought about the emotions of the community, which polarized members of the community who supported the reform process versus those who were opposed to it. A group "Citizens for Local Democracy" came together to speak against amalgamation. As a result the Transition Team made use of an extensive and broad base consultation process which listened to the advice and opinions of as many people as possible (City of Toronto, 2004).

The consultation process took place in several town hall meetings throughout the seven city halls. Community members were given the opportunity to share their views on the role of community councils and neighborhood committees; they were also able to voice their opinions regarding any issue of the amalgamation process. These town hall meetings had over a thousand people attending. The Transition Team also generated a public opinion poll which interviewed fourteen thousand Torontonians. The Transition Team members visited all seven municipal councils to gather input from officials on issues regarding access and equity, anti-racism, community-based social services, arts and culture, environment, planning and development (City of Toronto, 2004). Following these workshops and townhall meetings, a draft process was brought to the commissioners' table for consideration. The transit team's approach in developing a
a system was seen in few other disciplines and the process served as a model for others to follow (Tucker-Reid, 1998).

Residents Response

When asked about the results of the Toronto amalgamation, residents of Ward 43, East Scarborough felt that they were being short changed (James, 2008). Most residents of the former municipalities argue that the province’s tax money is not spent adequately in revitalizing their municipality since the amalgamation occurred, but is focused in the downtown core (Hertz, 2007). Surveys have also indicated that although support for the amalgamation had slightly increased in most areas over time, the level of opposition has not changed. Mr. Wing, a resident of Ward 43, pointed out that he was against the amalgamation from the day it was introduced. Upon the introduction of the amalgamation, Mr. Wing and his neighbors had many concerns which included the reduction of the number of councillors to 44 from the current 106, which was feared that it would dilute their political voices and make local government less responsive. Another concern Mr. Wing feared was that property taxes will rise, not only because of the amalgamation, but also because of separate provincial plans to reform the tax system and to off-load the cost of social services onto the municipalities. Mr. Wing argues that the amalgamation is waste of tax payers money, he feels as though there has been not positive changes to Ward 43. Instead he argues that the mayor consistently breaks his promises, specifically, he point out that the mayor broke his campaign promise which was not to raise taxes past the rate of inflation. Beyond that, Mr. Wing argues like other residents, that the Toronto amalgamation neglects the needs of the “insignificant” post
war suburbs, such as Scarborough, since no revitalizations is taking place. Mr. Wing feels that the neighbourhood does not have a sense of community attachment, which can be attributed to a lack of public space where residents can meet. Mr. Wing also argues that he and his neighbours feel disconnected from their government, as their concerns and opinions never reach the top tier governments, which is evident through the lack of effective structures in place.

**Politicians' Response**

David Miller, Toronto’s current mayor also sees problems with the Toronto amalgamation. Miller argues the amalgamation was rushed and was based on the wrong idea that there were going to be massive savings. He argues that not only was it was done against the will of people, there was downloading at the same time and a tax freeze. All those things together became a recipe for chaos which was what ensued (Hertz, 2007). However, Miller does see a positive side to the amalgamation. He argues that these policies and city wide planning decisions would have never been possible through six governments, but can now be accomplished through one government (Hertz, 2007). Due to the amalgamation, Miller pointed out that the amalgamated government is now larger than that of any provinces. It is the fifth-largest city in North America, closely following Mexico City, New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, thus creating a more influential economically on the world stage (Hertz, 2007). Miller also points out that the Toronto amalgamation has also helped some of the poorer pockets of the city (Hertz, 2007). However, the then Mayor of Missisauga Barbara Hall argued that "It makes no sense, they've not thought it through, and yet it has the potential to seriously damage a
community that is the envy of the world" (Chidley & Hawaleshika, 1997). Mayor Hall feared a flight of the middle class, a declining infrastructure, and more poor people on the streets as a result of this amalgamation (Chidley & Hawaleshika, 1997). While North York's then Mayor Mel Lastman, a passionate civic booster, also shared the same argument as Barbara Hall, he was visibly upset when he talked about the megacity stating "You won't find North York anywhere on the map! North York is gone! They're carving us up like a turkey and it isn't even Thanksgiving!" (Chidley & Hawaleshika, 1997).

Although many activists and public figures spoke out against the succession and amalgamation, supporters of the amalgamation argued that there were many redundant services from different municipalities that were overlapping and convoluted. The division of powers pre amalgamation had the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto providing about seventy percent of services, including police, ambulances, sewage, water and public transit across the entire area. But the rest of the municipal structure was a complex network of individual city bylaws governing roads, health, and garbage collection and planning. This caused a redundancy, which is evident as the Toronto area contained six different fire departments, each with its own fire chief and training facilities. There was further confusion due to the fact that some services are provided both by the Metro government and by the individual cities. Some roads were owned by Metro, while others were owned by the local municipality (Chidley & Hawaleshika, 1997).

**Research Methods**

Through conducting literature searches, journal articles and case studies were retrieved from the University of Toronto Library electronic resources, as well as
examining old newspaper articles related to the amalgamation data were collected. The newspaper articles were collected from the Toronto Star, CBC, Maclean's Magazine and National Post archives and the amalgamation case study was collected from the City of Toronto. Due to conflicting schedules, I was unable to set up an interview with the councilor of Ward 43; instead I made use of newspaper articles to gather information regarding the current Mayor of Toronto David Miller’s view of the Toronto amalgamation after it took place and the then Mayor Barbara Hall’s opinion prior to the amalgamation. The newspaper articles provide the views of the different politicians of the seven different municipalities, and the articles also describe the current situations ten years after the amalgamation and how it has affected all the residents. The newspaper articles also gave a general overview of how residents of all the municipalities felt about the amalgamation on their neighborhoods.

The research method that was employed to gather information was through conducting an interview. An interview was conducted with current Ward 43 resident, Mr. Richard Wing (see references) in regards to his feelings towards the amalgamation that took place ten years ago. The semi-structured interview took approximately twenty five minutes to conduct, and the questions asked were content focused, such that they dealt with the issues that are relevant to the amalgamation, and how it has affected Ward 43 (see Appendix C). The semi-structured interview was essential to this research as this structure of interview allows for flexible questioning which gives room for a conversation, allowing my respondents to feel at ease. Through the semi-structured interview I was able to have a conversation with the respondent, rather than a formal question and answer interview. Through the conversation Mr. Wing was able to share his
personal thoughts, experiences and views about the amalgamation and how it has affected the neighborhood he lives in without feeling pressured. His responses to my questions were very passionate, and detailed which was helpful to my research. Unfortunately I was unable to set up an interview with another resident of Ward 43, who felt that the amalgamation was beneficial to the Ward. It would have been useful as it could have been incorporated in my research to compare and contrast different views of residents who reside in the same ward.

**Relevance and Contribution of Individual research**

My individual research on the Toronto amalgamation is important to the research of public space in East Scarborough as it exemplifies how policy can negatively affect residents of the neighborhood while benefiting the larger municipality. One of the biggest concerns regarding the amalgamation was that residents would lose their sense of attachment to their local communities because the local communities would disappear as separate legal entities. A related concern was the fear that the closure of the local town office would lead to greater travel costs to a distant and an unfamiliar centralized office (Kushner, & Siegel, 2003). The closure also had sentimental and economic dimensions. Some residents were nostalgic for the passing of former old civic buildings, which would soon be taken over by private developers. The economic dimension arose because if residents had to go the large city to handle municipal business, they were more likely to do their shopping in the big city as well (Kushner, & Siegel, 2003). In most communities a significant amount of people still held a significant attachment to their local community even after amalgamation at the same time, community activism increased. Most residents
of Ward 43, East Scarborough felt that they already lacked public space. With the amalgamation, they believed that most of their tax money would not be spent in their ward, rather than improving infrastructure and investing in public space such as community recreational centers and parks.
Sources


References

Wing, Richard. Current resident of Ward 43; Guildwood Area.
Figure 1A

Source: www.toronto.ca
The City of Toronto Amalgamation Challenges

BY CLAIRE TUCKER-REID, GENERAL MANAGER OF PARKS AND RECREATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND TOURISM DEPARTMENT, CITY OF TORONTO

In April 1997 the City of Toronto Act (Bill 103) received royal assent amalgamating seven municipalities into one. The province of Ontario, through this legislation, formed a six member Toronto transition team to:

- Draft governance and administrative structures for consideration by the new Council;
- Complete a legislative review of any needed changes as a result of amalgamation;
- Prepare a consolidated budget for 1998;
- Hire officials mandated by legislation and a senior management group;
- Consult the public on roles and responsibilities of community councils relative to the new council.

The transition team completed its work, including orientation sessions for the 57 member council, by its sunset date of January 31, 1998. The document "New City Opportunities" presented one hundred and thirty-six recommendations to council providing a governance and administrative framework for the formation of the new city.

The parks and recreation team was highly involved in the transition process from the start, and in many cases, showed tremendous leadership. In December, 1996, anticipating the enactment of the City of Toronto Act, the commissioners and directors of the seven municipalities (East York, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, Toronto, York and the regional government of Metropolitan Toronto) arranged and participated in a facilitated workshop to determine the issues and opportunities surrounding amalgamation.

A key challenge was to address the size and scope of the new department, responsible for serving a population of 2.3 million. Shortly after the workshop, a draft process was brought to the commissioners' table for consideration. This proactive approach was seen in few other disciplines and the process served as a model for others to follow.

The parks and recreation transition planning process followed a logical and sequenced approach, out of which work plans were developed and tracked. It was a participatory and engaging process with commissioners meeting weekly to discuss policy and hear the progress of various work teams. Over 200 parks and recreation practitioners were involved in the process while working at their full time positions.

The parks and recreation transition team was lead by Joe Halstead, then commissioner from North York. The commissioners' group chose to form an advisory committee of citizens and stakeholders to provide input and guidance throughout the process. This advisory group lent considerable credibility to the recommendations that were formulated.

New Department Defined

The Parks and Recreation Division housed in the newly formed Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department, is comprised of:

- 4,000 full time equivalents (F.T.E.s);
- 10,000 part time staff;
- 200,000 volunteers;
- 8,000 hectares of parks;
- 1,500 named parks;
- seven golf courses;
- 900 facilities.

The new department has seven reporting to Commissioner Joe Halstead:

- General Manager of Parks and Recreation;
- Managing Director of Economic Development;
- Director of Culture;
- Director of Policy and Planning;
- Director of Support Services.
Director of special Events;
The Olympic Bid Office (special project)

**Amalgamation Process**

Since the new City of Toronto was formed January 1, 1998, it has followed a three-phased approach to integration lead by the amalgamation office, reporting directly to the CAO. Claire Tucker-Reid, the former Commissioner of Parks and Recreation in East York, and Executive Director of the Toronto Transition Team, is the Director of Amalgamation.

**Phase One**

The departmental structure was approved January, 1998 with six departments:
- Community and Neighborhood Services;
- Corporate Services;
- Finance;
- Economic Development and Culture and Tourism;
- Urban Planning and Development Services;
- Works and Emergency Services.

**Phase Two**

The organizational design of departments and divisions is undertaken with positions filled after the design is reviewed by the Amalgamation Office and approved by the respective Commissioner and CAO. All management positions are currently being filled.

**Phase Three**

Service rationalization, standards around resource allocation, and business process re-

- Corporate Services;
- Finance;
- Economic Development and Culture and Tourism;
- Urban Planning and Development Services;
- Works and Emergency Services.

There have been many challenges along the transition route:

1. Standardizing rates and fees in equitable fashion.
2. Projecting and achieving budget reduction targets of 10 per cent corporately (department percentages varied).
3. Creating and delivering downsizing targets. Reduction of 200 staff is projected for 1998 in Parks and Recreation and it is thought there will be a similar target for 1999.

Generally, staff dynamics within the Parks and Recreation Division have been positive. While in the throes of anxiety, this group pulled together in an altruistic way and met the challenges head on. The people side of amalgamation has always remained a key consideration.

Service satisfaction levels remain at 87 per cent, according to a recent poll of Toronto residents conducted by York University Leisure was the highest rated service. Overall satisfaction concerning municipal services rests at 80 per cent.

"Personally, I feel this transition/amalgamation process has taxed the most creative of our minds; it has allowed us to build the strongest of teams, and has given us the opportunity to address 'renewal' on the largest of scales. Knowing people in the department as I do, we will rise to the challenges in a collective sense and celebrate our milestones along the way," says Claire Tucker-Reid about the Parks and Recreation practitioners in the new city.

Claire Tucker-Reid was the former Commissioner of Parks and Recreation in East York until June, 1997, when she was seconded, becoming Executive Director of the Toronto Transition Team. In January, 1998, she became Director of Amalgamation, City of Toronto.
Appendix C

Questions

Before the amalgamation occurred, were you opposed to the amalgamation, in favour, or had no opinion?

Has your opinions changed, ten years after the amalgamation?

After ten years, do you feel the amalgamation has benefited your neighbourhood?