

GTA REFORM: CITY OF BURLINGTON  
IDENTIFICATION & ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS USED BY THE  
CITY TO EVALUATE THE "GOLDEN" REPORT

MPA RESEARCH REPORT

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Introduction:

There is debate about the definition of public policy, in fact, definitions of public policy abound.<sup>1</sup> Public policy is defined as a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems.<sup>2</sup> Public policy has also been defined as the authoritative allocation of values for society<sup>3</sup>; or, in simpler terms, what governments choose to do or not to do.<sup>4</sup>

For the purpose of this paper, public policy will mean a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems. As well, for the purpose of this paper the term public policy will be synonymous with government decision-making.

The policy process is the means whereby policy problems are

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<sup>1</sup>Robert F. Adie and Paul G. Thomas, Canadian Public Administration Problematical Perspectives, Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., Scarborough, 1982, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>Leslie A. Pal, Public Policy Analysis An Introduction, Methuen Publications, Toronto, 1987, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>David Easton, A Framework for Political Analysis, Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1965.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas R. Dye, Understanding Public Policy, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1978, p. 3.

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defined, addressed, resolved, and reviewed.<sup>5</sup> It is collective and involves both conflict and co-operation, electors and elected, interest groups and legislators, bureaucrats, and the media.<sup>6</sup> In the political arena, persuasive policy arguments and good policy analysis are never enough to carry the day, because: (1) it is rarely possible to arrive at incontestable conclusions, and (2) the policy process, as a political process rests on power and interests.<sup>7</sup>

Various theories have been put forward to explain the policy-making process, or how government decision-makers arrive at decisions. A widely accepted theory of decision-making in government is comprehensive rationality. The steps employed in this model are:

1. identify the problem;
2. identify and clarify which goals would solve the problem and then rank them according to their relative importance;
3. identify all alternative policies that would achieve each identified goal;

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<sup>5</sup>Leslie A. Pal, Public Policy Analysis An Introduction, Methuen Publications, 1987, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

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4. assess the costs and benefits of each alternative policy; and,
5. select the goal, and the policy to achieve that goal, which will provide the maximum benefits at the least cost with the least number of unwanted side effects.<sup>8</sup>

The result of this process is a rational decision, one that most effectively achieves a desired end.<sup>9</sup>

The rational theory of policy making maintains that policy makers who employ this strategy are above bureaucratic politics, internal council dissension, personality politics, and the influence of neighbourhood and other interest groups.<sup>10</sup> This model makes a number of other questionable assumptions: (1) it assumes that a problem can be clearly identified and that policy goals can be delineated and then ranked; (2) it assumes that governments have a large number of administrative personnel assigned to gather and process information; (3) it assumes that decision-makers have

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<sup>8</sup>Jack Masson, Alberta's Local Governments and their Politics, Pica Pica Press, Edmonton, 1985, p. 134.

<sup>9</sup>Robert F. Adie and Paul G. Thomas, Canadian Public Administration Problematic Perspectives, Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., Scarborough, 1982, p. 97.

<sup>10</sup>Jack Masson, Alberta's Local Governments and their Politics, Pica Pica Press, Edmonton, 1985, p. 135.

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unlimited time to identify problems and rank goals; and, (4) it assumes that once the particular goal and policy is found, council will adopt it in spite of politics.<sup>11</sup>

However, in reality the definition of problems and policy goals is often subjective. In addition, the policy may be formulated before the problem is clearly defined. Moreover, a substantial part of the politics on City Councils revolves around identifying problems and ranking policies. Politics is integral to the policy process.<sup>12</sup>

Charles Lindbloom offers some additional criticism of the rational theory. Lindbloom argues that the analytical requirements for rational decision-making cannot be completed. The information required to consider all possible alternatives and their consequences simply will not be available. Most government decision-making occurs under pressures of time and often the timeliness of a decision is as important as the thoroughness with which it has been considered. Lindbloom also points out the difficulty of weighting and ranking the values to be sought through

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

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policy.<sup>13</sup>

Lindbloom introduced another model to describe government decision-making, this model is known as incrementalism.<sup>14</sup> Incrementalism is a more realistic, intuitive, unstructured and unsystematic approach than rationalism. Intuition, hunches and insights play an important part in this kind of decision-making.<sup>15</sup> In this model, incremental comparisons are usually made with the status quo, not across all available alternatives as the rational model implies. The range of possible consequences may also be deliberately restricted, since policy makers are only interested in what is relevant, not in some abstract list of all possible outcomes.<sup>16</sup> The term "muddling through" was coined by Lindbloom to describe the activities of decision-makers who are continually making incremental changes in policy rather than employing a

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<sup>13</sup>Robert F. Adie and Paul G. Thomas, Canadian Public Administration Problematical Perspectives, Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., Scarborough, 1982, p. 98.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Leslie A. Pal, Public Policy Analysis An Introduction, Methuen Publications, Toronto, 1987, p. 46.



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comprehensive, rational approach.<sup>17</sup>

Incrementalists use a number of strategies to cope with complexity:

- \* they simplify through omission, ignoring non-incremental policies, not exploring all possible consequences, and discarding objectives that are not attainable by present means;
- \* they engage in "satisficing" by adopting policies that will satisfy the demands being made and will suffice for the present;
- \* they do not engage in an exhaustive search for maximum goal fulfilment because exhaustive searches are not worth the costs involved;
- \* they adopt a remedial approach, seeking to eliminate known social ills rather than producing some desired, future state of affairs;
- \* they may make use of feedback and next chance by deliberately choosing a policy that leaves open the possibility of doing better in a subsequent effort and builds in feedback to allow for better choice on the next chance; and,

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<sup>17</sup>Jack Masson, Alberta's Local Governments and their Politics, Pica Pica Press, Edmonton, 1985, p. 136.

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- \* they may make use of bottlenecks or delays, to make time to clarify problems and to decide whether to act on them.<sup>18</sup>

Viewed another way, the decisions of public organizations can be divided into two fundamental categories: "problem solving" and "persuasion".<sup>19</sup> "Problem solving" involves gathering empirical data and proposing and assessing alternatives until all concerned feel content with the scope of the inquiry. Participants assume that they share relevant criteria and goals and attempt to determine a course of action through collective investigation of the problem. If the participants discover that they do not share the same criteria and goals, decision-making involves "persuasion", emphasizing the beliefs and values of the participants instead of the empirical aspects of the problem.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the policy-making process in municipal government to determine how decisions are made. In particular, while the rational model of decision-making and "problem solving" still serves as a goal or ideal, in reality it is

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<sup>18</sup>Robert F. Adie and Paul G. Thomas, Canadian Public Administration Problematical Perspectives, Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., Scarborough, 1982, p. 98.

<sup>19</sup>Frank Fischer, Politics, Values, and Public Policy: The Problem of Methodology, Westview Press, Boulder, 1980, p. 6.

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asserted that the incremental model and "persuasion" best describes the decision-making process used by local governments to determine the nature of their governmental organization and their external affiliations. The paper will explore this concept in the context of the process used by the City of Burlington to respond to the Report of the GTA Task Force and to establish the City's policy with respect to governance issues related to GTA Reform.

The GTA Reform issue was an extremely important policy decision for the City of Burlington, because Burlington's response could have had serious implications on how it was governed. In addition, this was a policy decision that had long-term consequences, i.e. once decided, the form of governance adopted would likely remain in place for many years.

Information on the process used by the City of Burlington was obtained through a number of means including a review of relevant documents, reports, letters, and internal memorandums, as well as through the conducting of interviews with key City officials. In particular, interviews were conducted with Mayor Walter Mulkewich; the Chairpersons of the Corporation's committees of Council: Alderman Mark Carr (Budget & Strategic Planning Committee), Alderman Mike Wallace (Committee to Review Government Structures),

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Alderman Bob Wood (Community and Corporate Services Committee), Alderman Joan Lougheed (Community Development Committee), and Alderman Ralph Scholtens (Public Hearings Committee); and, the members of senior staff most directly involved in the City's GTA Reform process, including Tim Dobbie (City Manager), Doug Brown (General Manager - Business Affairs Division), Gary Goodman (General Manager - Development and Infrastructure Division), Bob Carrington (Director of Finance and City Treasurer), and Ron Lathan (City Clerk).

Given the complexity of policy problems, which usually generate significant risk and uncertainty, it is anticipated that decision-making in local government will be based on estimates, best guesses, or even hunches that specific outcomes will result.<sup>20</sup> Even with the use of highly sophisticated statistical techniques and analysis, it is expected that decision-making will be much less than scientific, since analysis introduces assumptions which rest on intuition, common sense, or personal values.<sup>21</sup>

A quotation from Max Weber sums up the problem of public

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

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policy/government decision-making and what is anticipated as a result of this review:

*"The distinctive characteristic of a problem of social policy is indeed the fact that it cannot be resolved merely on the basis of purely technical considerations which assume already settled ends. Normative standards of value can and must be the objects of dispute in discussion of a problem in social policy because the problem lies in the domain of general cultural values."*<sup>22</sup>

THE GTA:

GTA stands for Greater Toronto Area. It comprises the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and the four surrounding regional municipalities of Durham, Halton, Peel, and York. This area covers some 7,200 square kilometres and contains a total of 30 local area municipalities, including the City of Burlington.<sup>23</sup>

The City of Burlington is located in the Region of Halton approximately 45 kilometres west of Toronto, and is nestled beside

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<sup>22</sup>Max Weber, The Methodology of the Social Sciences, Free Press, New York, 1949, p. 56.

<sup>23</sup>Anne Golden et al., Greater Toronto Report of the GTA Task Force, Queen's Printer for Ontario, Toronto, 1996, p. 23.

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Hamilton, Burlington Bay, and Lake Ontario.<sup>24</sup> Burlington has a population of approximately 136,000, and is known for its impressive quality of life.<sup>25</sup> Its business community comprises predominantly high-tech industries and head office complexes.<sup>26</sup>

The Halton Region comprises the Towns of Oakville, Milton, and Halton Hills, in addition to the City of Burlington.<sup>27</sup> Centred between Toronto and Niagara, the Regional Municipality of Halton forms a significant sector of the Golden Horseshoe fronting onto the Lake Ontario shoreline.<sup>28</sup> Halton is one of Canada's fastest growing areas.<sup>29</sup> Over 14,000 businesses are located in the Region and this number is growing by approximately five percent per year.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Jamie Edwards and Joan Berta, Prosperity<sup>3</sup> Burlington Where Prosperity takes on New Dimensions, Burlington Community Development Corporation, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Kate Johnston, Halton: Invitation for Investment, Region of Halton, Oakville, 1996.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

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THE GTA TASK FORCE:

On April 1, 1995, the Premier of Ontario, the Honourable Bob Rae, appointed a group of five individuals to provide direction for the future governance of the GTA, including the potential restructuring of the responsibilities and practices of municipal and provincial governments and the review of virtually every aspect of governance of the five regions comprising the GTA.<sup>31</sup> With the change of government in June 1995, the Task Force's mandate was renewed under the newly elected Premier.<sup>32</sup> However, the time the Task Force had to complete its work was shortened considerably: from the original eighteen month time frame to nine months.<sup>33</sup>

The Task Force was created by the Premier in response to a number of concerns, namely:

- \* that the quality of life the people in the GTA had come to know was being threatened;

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<sup>31</sup>Anne Golden et al., Greater Toronto Report of the GTA Task Force, Queen's Printer for Ontario, Toronto, 1996, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

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- \* that the GTA's lagging economic recovery from the post 1989 recession had revealed its vulnerability in a changing global economy; and,
- \* that people felt overgoverned, unfairly taxed, and they worried that the systems they had relied on no longer meet their needs.<sup>34</sup>

The Task Force submitted its report to the Province in January, 1996. Some of the highlights of the recommendations of the report included:

- \* a framework for a Greater Toronto economic strategy that focused on both physical and human infrastructure;
- \* a common assessment system for the Province, based on Actual Value, with a program to cushion the impacts on those adversely affected;
- \* equalization of property taxes that businesses in the GTA pay for education;

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 17.



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- \* removal of the barriers to efficient infrastructure investment to allow for a more sustainable urban form;
- \* removal of overlap and friction between the Province and municipalities through a financially neutral disentanglement of responsibilities;
- \* improved co-ordination for services that cross boundaries, without centralizing service delivery;
- \* replacement of the five existing regional governments with a single, streamlined Greater Toronto Council with a more limited range of functions; and,
- \* giving local municipalities added powers and responsibilities to deliver a wider range of services more efficiently.<sup>35</sup>

WHAT DID THE REPORT OF THE GTA TASK FORCE MEAN TO BURLINGTON:

Following the completion of its work in early January, 1996, the GTA Task Force submitted its report to the Minister of Municipal

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

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Affairs & Housing, the Honourable Al Leach, and the Ministry appointed a panel of three individuals to receive public comments.

At this time, the Provincial government had not officially adopted the recommendations of the Task Force report, including recommendation 49 suggesting that a Greater Toronto Implementation Commission be established to oversee implementation of the recommended reforms in Greater Toronto. Consequently, it was difficult to determine what impact the report would have on Burlington. However, in the eyes of the members of Burlington City Council and senior staff, the report seemed to indicate that three general governance options existed for Burlington, and that Burlington may be required to choose one of them, or at the very least, let the Province know its views on each option.<sup>36</sup>

Burlington City officials came to this conclusion as a result of the report of the GTA Task Force.<sup>37</sup> In particular, the following quotation taken from Chapter six, Governing the City - Region, lead them to this conclusion:

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<sup>36</sup>John Bolognone, Minutes of the Committee to Review Government Structures Meeting of January 29, 1996, City of Burlington's Clerk's Department, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

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*"Others called for the third option, the status quo with some boundary modification. For instance, some argued that Burlington is, in every sense except government, an integral part of the Hamilton region. According to this view, Burlington's direct municipal affiliation with Hamilton-Wentworth is overdue. Alternatively, based on commuting patterns, Burlington could be divided at Appleby Line, with one half going to Hamilton-Wentworth and the other to the Greater Toronto region. The City of Burlington has acknowledged that it occupies a "unique bridge position between the Greater Toronto Area and the Hamilton Niagara Area", and has indicated that it wishes to reserve the right to choose its regional affiliation."*<sup>38</sup>

This comment, included in the Report of the GTA Task Force, did not come by chance. In September, 1995, Burlington City Council submitted its position paper on GTA Reform to the GTA Task Force.<sup>39</sup> In that paper Burlington City Council adopted five principles for reform; a main message; and, eleven recommendations for reform,

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<sup>38</sup>Anne Golden et al., Greater Toronto Report of the GTA Task Force, Queen's Printer for Ontario, Toronto, 1996, p. 168.

<sup>39</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 8/96 Governance Issues - The Greater Toronto Area Task Force Report - Burlington's Actions and Response, Office of the City Manager, 1996, p. 3.

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including Burlington's role relative to the GTA, the role of the Regional Municipality of Halton, the role of the Greater Toronto Area, and the role of the Provincial Government.<sup>40</sup>

At this point, it is important to note that Burlington City officials seemed to feel that as a result of their position paper the Province had accepted the City's view: that Burlington had three general governance options available to it; and, that Burlington should choose which option it most preferred, or at the very least, that Burlington should let the Province know its views on each option.<sup>41</sup> The conclusion reached by Burlington was not substantiated until much later in the process at a meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing. (Burlington City officials had originally scheduled a meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing for early February. However, the Minister cancelled this meeting, and City officials were subsequently not able to meet with the Minister until March 20, 1996). In the meantime, Burlington City officials pressed on in hopes that their perception of what the GTA Report meant to them

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<sup>40</sup>Lifetime Consulting Services, Greater Toronto Area Governance: City of Burlington's Position on GTA Reform, City of Burlington Print Shop, 1995.

<sup>41</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

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would manifest itself with the Province.

It is also interesting to note that Burlington City officials completely ignored the statement in the Report of the GTA Task Force that Burlington could be divided at Appleby Line, with one half going to Hamilton-Wentworth and the other to the Greater Toronto region. When questioned at a public meeting jointly held by himself and the City of Burlington, the Honourable Cam Jackson, MPP for Burlington, publicly stated that he did not support this position and would be persuading the Premier not to follow this course of action. He also mentioned that he could not understand how the GTA Task Force could have come to a conclusion such as this, and given the pressures they were under to respond to the Premier, questioned if this information was incorrectly shown in the report.<sup>42</sup>

It is interesting to note that Burlington City officials did not consider all possible governance options for Burlington, and narrowed their analysis to three general governance options. This behaviour is consistent with how a policy-maker would behave under

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<sup>42</sup>M. Frost was in attendance at the Town Hall Consultation Meeting on Reforms in the GTA, and heard the Honourable Cam Jackson, MPP, make this comment.

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the incremental model of decision-making.

As indicated in the preceding paragraphs, it appeared to Burlington City officials that there were three general governance options available to the City of Burlington, with each general governance option having a number of possible sub options associated with it. The permutations of sub options under each general option was unlimited.<sup>43</sup> Burlington City officials chose not to analyze any of the sub options associated with the general options, limiting their analysis to only the three general options.<sup>44</sup>

Further information on the three general governance options is summarized below:<sup>45</sup>

Option 1 - Remain in Halton

In the eyes of Burlington officials, this option could mean one or more of the following for Burlington:

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<sup>43</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 10/96 Strategy for Burlington Council's Position on Municipal Reform Options, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 12/96 GTA Task Force Report: Burlington's Position, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996, p. 4.

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- \* Along with Oakville, Halton Hills, and Milton, Burlington would remain an area municipality within the Region of Halton. The structure of the regional government could change to one of several options such as:
  - a non taxing utility or a Co-operative Services Agency, selling specific services to taxpayers within Halton (e.g. water, sewage, etc.); or
  - a streamlined regional layer of government working with stronger local government through the use of service boards at the Regional level.
  
- \* The four local municipalities being eliminated and being replaced by a single municipal government for the entire region, creating the City of Halton.

Option 2 - Agree to Greater Toronto Area Reform

Based on the Burlington official's interpretation of the GTA Task Force Report, under this option the City of Burlington would become one of 30 area municipalities under a Greater Toronto Council. The existing Regional governments in the GTA would be eliminated.

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Implications could include:

- the pooling of commercial and industrial assessment across the entire GTA for education tax purposes;
- the elimination of the 15% differential between residential and non-residential mill rates for education property tax purposes, affecting residential tax rates;
- the Province assuming full responsibility for the cost of general welfare and children's services;
- the Province discontinuing conditional transfer payments to municipalities; and,
- the shortfall to municipalities resulting from the changes in funding and service responsibilities being balanced across the GTA by new unconditional Provincial grants.

Option 3 - Join the Greater Bay Area (Hamilton-Wentworth/  
Burlington)

In the opinion of the members of Burlington City Council and senior



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staff, under this option the City of Burlington would establish a formal relationship with the Hamilton-Wentworth Region. The exact mix of City versus GBA services would have to be determined through negotiations with Burlington and the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth. Obviously, those decisions would impact property taxes and governance. Other implications could include:

- the pooling of commercial and industrial assessment across the entire GTA for education tax purposes;
- the elimination of the 15% differential between residential and non-residential mill rates for education property tax purposes, affecting residential tax rates;
- the Province assuming full responsibility for the cost of general welfare and children's services;
- the Province discontinuing conditional transfer payments to municipalities; and,
- the shortfall to municipalities resulting from the changes in funding and service responsibilities being balanced across the GBA by new unconditional Provincial grants.

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There was uncertainty surrounding whether or not these three options were legitimate governance options that were actually open to the City of Burlington.<sup>46</sup> There were many unanswered questions, i.e much uncertainty.<sup>47</sup> To eliminate this uncertainty and to facilitate analysis of the three general options, assumptions were required to be made.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the foregoing descriptions of the three general options available to the City of Burlington are fraught with assumptions. These assumptions were based on the limited information available at the time, as well the intuition, common sense, interests, and personal values of the members of City Council and senior staff who generated them. This is not surprising because given the complexity of policy problems, which generate risk and uncertainty, evaluative decisions must frequently be based on estimates, best guesses, or even hunches that specific outcomes will result.<sup>49</sup> This behaviour is typical of a policy-maker operating in accordance with the incremental model of decision-making.

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<sup>46</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Robert A. Dahl, Modern Political Analysis 3d ed., Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1975, p. 132.

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BURLINGTON CITY COUNCIL'S GTA REFORM DECISION-MAKING PROCESS  
PROCESS DESCRIPTION & ANALYSIS:

The Start - The Committee to Review Government Structure:

The process actually began in January, 1993, when Burlington City Council established a subcommittee of Council known as "the Committee to Review Government Structures".<sup>50</sup> This committee was the creation of Alderman Doug Greenaway.<sup>51</sup> Alderman Greenaway was known by his fellow Council members and senior staff for his unorthodox views.<sup>52</sup>

The committee was created well in advance of the emergence of the GTA Reform issue, and was originally intended to be inwardly focused.<sup>53</sup> The Committee was created to improve City Council

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<sup>50</sup>Helen MacRae, Burlington City Council Minutes of Monday, August 16, 1993, City of Burlington Clerk's Department, Burlington, 1993.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City council and senior staff.

<sup>53</sup>Helen MacRae, Burlington City Council Minutes of Monday, August 16, 1993, City of Burlington Clerk's Department, Burlington, 1993.

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efficiency and effectiveness.<sup>54</sup> In the eyes of Alderman Greenaway, City Council was deferring too many items, creating too many staff directions for further review and analysis of issues, and not making decisions.<sup>55</sup> In addition, in Alderman Greenaway's view the line between policy and administration was breaking down, with members of City Council becoming more and more involved in day-to-day administrative matters that used to be handled strictly by staff.<sup>56</sup>

The Committee to Review Government Structures comprised eight members of City Council and the Mayor.<sup>57</sup> The balance of City Council (eight Alderman), sat on the Strategic Plan Update and Review Committee which was created approximately four months after the Committee to Review Government Structure.<sup>58</sup> The Mayor also sat

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<sup>54</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Helen MacRae, City of Burlington Council Minutes, Burlington City Clerk's Department, Burlington, 1993.

<sup>58</sup>Helen MacRae, Burlington City Council Minutes of Monday, December 5, 1994, Burlington City Clerk's Department, Burlington, 1994.

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on the Strategic Plan Update and Review Committee.<sup>59</sup> Because of his leadership role on City Council, the Mayor was required to sit on both committees.<sup>60</sup> (Burlington City Council comprises 17 officials elected from eight wards: one City Alderman and one Regional Alderman per ward, and the Mayor elected from across the entire City).<sup>61</sup>

The Committee to Review Government Structures commenced preliminary work on its original mandate before the emergence of the GTA Reform issue.<sup>62</sup> All GTA Reform issues were dealt with by the Committee to Review Government Structures, prior to City Council consideration, i.e. this committee was a subcommittee of City Council which assumed all responsibility for addressing governance issues, be they internally or externally generated.<sup>63</sup>

Burlington City Council's position on the three general governance options available to it was the result of a process that began in

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

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September, 1995 with the submission of City Council's position paper on Greater Toronto Area Governance to the GTA Task Force.<sup>64</sup> The position paper included five principles for reform, and ten recommendations addressing Burlington's role relative to the role of the Regional Municipality of Halton, GTA and GBA, and Provincial government.<sup>65</sup> The main message from Burlington City Council as expressed in its position paper is summarized in the following quotation from the document:

*"Burlington is on the western edge of an area defined by the Provincial Government as Greater Toronto Area (GTA), an area that works as an economic area. Burlington is also on the edge of another important economic area to the west. In essence, to be successful in the future, Burlington must bridge both ways, to the east and to the west."*<sup>66</sup>

Based on the advice of senior staff, namely the City Manager, Tim Dobbie; General Manager Community Services, Gary Goodman; and, City

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Lifetime Consulting Services, Greater Toronto Area Governance: City of Burlington's Position on GTA Reform, City of Burlington Print Shop, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

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Clerk, Ron Lathan, Lifetime Consulting Services was hired to facilitate the preparation of the City's position paper. The facilitator worked with the aforementioned members of senior City staff and the members of the Committee to Review Government Structures to develop the City's position on the issue of GTA Reform.

The City had a definite motive in mind with the submission of its position paper.<sup>67</sup> The position paper was a well-thought-out document that indirectly set the stage to introduce the Province to three general governance options for Burlington, and to establish the opportunity for Burlington City officials to be able to choose their most preferred governance option from the three, rather than having a Provincially-dictated decision forced on them.<sup>68</sup> In retrospect, the promulgation of the three general governance options proved to be a wise choice for City officials.

Burlington's approach is not surprising since policy actors are not

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<sup>67</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

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neutral cogs in a policy machine.<sup>69</sup> They have political interests to extend and defend.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, when groups and individuals participate in the policy process, they frequently do so to defend or extend their interests, routinely disguising this pursuit with moral justification.<sup>71</sup> Pal asserts that in the policy process "interests are disguised with the fig leaf of moral argument".<sup>72</sup>

Attempting to determine the best option from three options is consistent with the comprehensive rationality model or "problem solving". However, defining general governance options based on assumptions which rest on best guesses, and putting forward these options in the general context of a well-thought-out strategy aimed at protecting one's interests, is not consistent with the model of comprehensive rationality or "problem solving".

The Formal Process:

With Burlington City Council's adoption of its position paper on

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<sup>69</sup>Leslie A. Pal, Public Policy Analysis, Methuen Publications, Toronto, 1987, p. 47.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.



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GTA Reform on September 9, 1995, the City's formal process to address the GTA governance issues began and included the following:<sup>73</sup>

1. February 26, 1996

City Council Meeting

Adoption of Principles for Decision-making on Municipal  
Options

2. February 29, 1996

GTA Panel Hearing

Presentation of Burlington's position

3. February 29, 1996

Committee to Review Government Structure

Status report and further discussions

4. March 6, 1996

Public Meeting

Presentation of information; Meeting moderated by Interlink

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<sup>73</sup>Linda Bowles, Speaking Notes: Mayor Walter Mulkewich - Presentation to the GTA Panel, February 29, 1996, Office of the Mayor, Burlington, 1996.

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Inc. Research Consulting

5. March 8, 1996

Public Consultation

Telephone interviews with 400 residents; Surveys mailed to  
Burlington residents and businesses

6. March 20, 1996

Meeting with Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing - Council  
appointed working group

7. March 21, 1996

Committee to Review Government Structure - Preparation of  
report to Council

8. March 25, 1996

Council Meeting

Confirm Burlington's position to be forwarded to Province of  
Ontario

The informal process, as well as interesting events that occurred  
"behind the scenes", will be described and analyzed in conjunction  
with important elements of the formal process.

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Both the formal and informal processes included a number of key milestones, namely:<sup>74</sup>

1. the establishment of work teams to address the GTA Reform Issue;
2. the preliminary report from the work teams to the Committee to Review Government Structures;
3. the full evaluation of the three governance options by the work teams;
4. the preparation of the final report to committee and Council;  
and,
5. the local media deciding that coverage of the GTA Issue and its impact on Burlington made good press.

Establishment of Work Teams:

The actual evaluation and analysis of the three options began with

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<sup>74</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City council and senior staff.

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the establishment of work teams by City Manager, Tim Dobbie, and the decision to evaluate the options based on five criteria.<sup>75</sup> Mr. Dobbie is known for his ability to "get the job done" regardless of the time lines or external forces affecting the project.<sup>76</sup>

Prior to reporting to the Committee to Review Government Structure, Mr. Dobbie met with his General Managers and the Director of Finance (his senior staff "cabinet") to determine the best way to tackle the issue of how to analyze the three governance options.<sup>77</sup> Based on this meeting, the City Manager and his senior executive team concluded that the most effective way to evaluate the three governance options was to evaluate them based on five criteria, and to form five staff teams to evaluate the criteria, one team to address each of the criteria.<sup>78</sup>

This proposal was presented to the Mayor and the Chair of the Committee to Review Government Structure prior to it actually being

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<sup>75</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 9/96 Work Program: Responding to Governance Issues - Burlington's Position, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>76</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

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considered by the full committee.<sup>79</sup> Both members of Council endorsed this approach and encouraged the City Manager to seek the Committee to Review Government Structures and City Council's approval to proceed with the evaluation on this basis.<sup>80</sup>

Following his discussions with the Mayor and Chair of the Committee to Review Government Structures, Mr. Dobbie met with the members of staff he wanted to assist with this project: a hand-picked group of staff who had a proven track record of doing good work under tight time frames and extreme pressure.<sup>81</sup> In other words, in light of the importance of this issue to City Council and the Burlington community, Mr. Dobbie recruited the people he could count on from his ranks of senior staff.<sup>82</sup>

As indicated, in his report to the Committee to Review Government Structure, the City Manager recommended that the three general governance options available to the City of Burlington be evaluated based on five criteria, namely:

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

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- \* financial issues;
- \* economic development;
- \* governance and intergovernmental relationships;
- \* service delivery; and,
- \* environment.<sup>83</sup>

As previously mentioned, it was further recommended that five staff work teams be established (one for each criteria) to evaluate the options. For staff, membership on the Teams was based on their area of expertise. For example, the City Treasurer was a member of the financial issues team, the Manager of Economic Development was on the economic development team, etc. Each team comprised approximately five members of City staff.<sup>84</sup>

The Committee to Review Government Structures ultimately approved Mr. Dobbie's report, with one change: the Committee amended the composition of the work teams to include one member of the Committee on each team, to act as a liaison between staff and the

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<sup>83</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM9/96 Work Program: Responding to Governance Issues - Burlington's Position, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

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Committee, i.e the elected officials.<sup>85</sup>

Burlington City Council has a tendency not to micro manage, knowing the division between "policy" and "administration".<sup>86</sup> In most cases, City Council confines its work to the policy as opposed to the administrative area.<sup>87</sup> In the case of the GTA Reform issue, members of City Council, particularly the members of the Committee to Review Government Structures, were assuming roles normally left for staff.<sup>88</sup> This included: doing research; editing staff reports and information brochures and attempting to put their "spin" on them before they were completed; interacting directly with consultants hired by, and working for, staff; and, participating in staff meetings to assist the GTA Reform evaluation teams in meeting their mandate.<sup>89</sup> To facilitate the direct involvement of the elected officials in the process, the Committee to Review Government Structures amended the City Manager's recommendation and

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<sup>85</sup>John Bolognone, Minutes of the Committee to Review Government Structures Meeting of February 5, 1996, City of Burlington Clerk's Department, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>86</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

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appointed a member of the Committee (an elected official) on each of the evaluation teams, as a so called "liaison" person between the Committee and staff. In the Committee's view, their amendment would improve communication between staff and the Committee, ensure better analysis, and lead to better decision-making.<sup>90</sup>

Given the importance of the GTA Reform issue, it is not surprising that the elected officials became intimately involved in the day-to-day affairs of the process. One by-product of this intimate involvement by the elected officials was that they were influencing the outcome of the decision-making process so that it was consistent with their position.<sup>91</sup> City Council member involvement in day-to-day GTA Reform issue work tended to slow the process down, often times making the items being addressed even more insurmountable.<sup>92</sup> In addition, the involvement of the elected officials often took the form of pressuring staff to see things their way.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.



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An example of the level of elected official direct involvement is the design of the GTA Reform Brochure (to be discussed later in more detail). Under normal circumstances, a document of this nature would be designed by staff in concert with the consultant working on the job with very limited Council member input.<sup>94</sup> Once designed, the brochure would be produced in-house and then distributed to the public.<sup>95</sup> In the case of the GTA Reform Brochure, all of the members of City Council wanted the opportunity to review the draft document, before it went to print.<sup>96</sup> What this meant in practice was that 17 people reviewed a document often changing each other's amendments in an attempt to put their slant on the final product.<sup>97</sup> In addition, the Council members commented on how the document should be produced and distributed.<sup>98</sup> This severely slowed down the production of the document, notwithstanding the tight time pressures to have the document produced and into the public's hands. It also created tension and conflict amongst the members of City Council and staff involved in

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

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the project.<sup>99</sup>

The members of Council were concerned with the look and content of the document for one reason: to shape the document so that it reflected their views on the GTA Reform issue and in particular the three general governance options.<sup>100</sup>

The rational theory of policy making maintains that policy makers who employ the rational model are above bureaucratic politics, internal council dissension, personality politics, and the influence of neighbourhood and other interest groups.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, each player or set of players does not try to influence the policy process in their favour and achieve the outcomes which reflect their interests - the outcome is based on the "rational analysis".<sup>102</sup> Clearly, the direct involvement of elected officials early-on in the decision-making process, to influence the final outcome to reflect their views, is an example of bureaucratic

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Jack Masson, Alberta's Local Governments and their Politics, Pica Pica Press, Edmonton, 1985, p. 135.

<sup>102</sup>Leslie A. Pal, Public Policy Analysis An Introduction, Methuen Publications, Agincourt, 1987, p. 116.

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and personality politics, and is inconsistent with the rational model.

Preliminary Evaluation Team Reports:

As previously mentioned, five evaluation teams were established to evaluate the three general governance options based on five criteria. Further information on the criteria is outlined below:<sup>103</sup>

\* Financial Issues

The impact of each governance alternative on property taxes, assessment, and development charges.

\* Service Delivery

The evaluation of each governance option with respect to cost and effectiveness of the delivery of services to Burlington citizens.

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<sup>103</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 12/96 GTA Task Force Report: Burlington's Position, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996, p. 6.

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\* Economic Development

The impact of each governance option on the City of Burlington's economic future, i.e. the option's ability to create jobs and expand the tax base.

\* Environmental Impact

The impact of each governance option on the environmental services presently enjoyed by Burlington citizens.

\* Governance/Intergovernmental Relations

The evaluation of each governance option in terms of its ability to meet Burlington City Council's sixteen Principles for Decision-making on Municipal Options, approved on February 26, 1996.

The decision-making theory of comprehensive rationality implies a neat, logical process of decision-making, with the result of the process being a rational decision - one that most effectively

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achieves a desired end.<sup>104</sup> The overall process used by Burlington, i.e. evaluating three general governance options based on five criteria, appears neat, logical, and geared to producing a rational decision. However, under the incremental model of decision-making, the policy-maker does not engage in an exhaustive search for maximum goal fulfilment because the search is not worth the costs involved.<sup>105</sup> To that end, the City of Burlington limited its analysis to three general governance options and used only five evaluation criteria. This limiting of options and criteria is consistent with the incremental model.

Once the Committee to Review Government Structure approved the establishment of the evaluation teams and the formal process to address the GTA Reform issue, it was agreed that the Teams should report back in approximately two weeks time to let the Committee know how their work was progressing.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Robert F. Adie and Paul G. Thomas, Canadian Public Administration Problematical Perspectives, Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., Scarborough, 1982, p. 96.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 12/96 Strategy for Burlington Council's Position on Municipal Reform Options, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996, p. 2.

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In preparing for their interim status reports, the Teams encountered fundamental problems, basically resulting from uncertainty, a lack of information, and extremely tight time lines to report back to the Province on the preferred option.<sup>107</sup> In general, there was much uncertainty about what the three general governance options really meant (i.e. how they would be implemented) and how they could be evaluated, given that under each general option, there was a multitude of sub alternatives.<sup>108</sup> Also, early in the evaluation process, it was not known if the three general options were even legitimate alternatives for the City, i.e. endorsed by the Province.<sup>109</sup>

The three general option choices were specific to Burlington.<sup>110</sup> As such, there was limited information in the form of existing studies or reports that could be used by the evaluation teams to assist in their work.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, most of the work that had been

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<sup>107</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid.

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done by the Task Force, including its final report, background report, and related studies and working papers was too broad for use by the City's evaluation teams.<sup>112</sup> As a result, much of the work of the evaluation teams had to be performed from the ground up.<sup>113</sup>

Lastly, the City of Burlington was required to present its position to the Province on the issue of GTA Reform, and in particular, its preference of the three general governance options, by April 2, 1996, leaving the City evaluation teams only about ninety days to do their work.<sup>114</sup>

The rational model of decision-making assumes that decision-makers have unlimited time to identify problems and rank goals.<sup>115</sup> However, in the real world some issues require an immediate decision and seldom can a problem be put aside for six months or a year while the council explores all the goals it affects and all of

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Jack Masson, Alberta's Local Governments and their Politics, Pica Pica Press, Edmonton, 1985, p. 135.

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the policies that could be used to deal with it.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, policy-making is often distinguished by crisis response, short time horizons, and uncertainty, rather than the leisurely pace of dispassionate assessment implied by the rational model.<sup>117</sup>

The City evaluation team charged with addressing financial issues, led by the City Treasurer, had extreme difficulty meeting its mandate, and was required to hire the consulting firm of Hemson Consulting to do its work.<sup>118</sup> Hemson Consulting brought much needed expertise in the area of financial modelling and forecasting, and provided additional human resources (i.e. more warm bodies that were able to concentrate solely on this project). The resources provided by Hemson were needed to meet the tight, reporting time frames.<sup>119</sup>

The governance and intergovernmental relations team did not really do any detailed analysis, and merely evaluated the three general

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>Leslie A. Pal, Public Policy Analysis An Introduction, Methuen Publications, Agincourt, 1987, p. 45.

<sup>118</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.



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governance options against Burlington City Council's sixteen principles for decision-making.<sup>120</sup> The balance of the evaluation teams performed only a superficial analysis, based on limited research.<sup>121</sup>

Given the number of sub alternatives that could unfold under the umbrella of each general option, all of the City evaluation teams, but particularly the financial issues team, were required to make many assumptions regarding the three general governance options. These assumptions were necessary to address the level of uncertainty surrounding each of the general governance options and to analyze what the option really meant for Burlington residents and businesses. With the resulting analysis being predominantly assumption driven, the final results were only as good as the assumptions they were based on, and there was no way of measuring or testing the validity of the various assumptions used.

Intuition, hunches, and insights play an important part in the

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<sup>120</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 12/96, GTA Task Force Report: Burlington's Position, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996, p. 9.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., p. 7 - 9.

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incremental model of decision-making.<sup>122</sup> It would appear that a large part of the work of the evaluation teams was based on intuition, hunches, and insights, given the level of uncertainty and the number of assumptions that were required to complete their analysis.

Public Involvement & Communication:

Burlington's decision-making process also included a significant amount of public input.<sup>123</sup> During the week of March 4, 1996, a brochure outlining the options in summary form and an evaluation questionnaire were delivered to every home and business in Burlington.<sup>124</sup> On Tuesday, March 5, 1996 a public meeting was held in conjunction with the Honourable Cam Jackson, MPP, Burlington, to provide information to the public.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup>Robert F. Adie and Paul G. Thomas, Canadian Public Administration Problematical Perspectives, Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., Scarborough, 1982, p. 98.

<sup>123</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 10/96 Strategy for Burlington Council's Position on Municipal Reform Options, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996, p. 8 - 13.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

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Part of the brochure that was distributed included a questionnaire that allowed residents to choose their preference for governance for Burlington.<sup>126</sup> The questionnaire was structured to allow a choice of the three main options.<sup>127</sup> It also asked the respondents to indicate their preference for GTA or GBA options should the "Remain in Halton" option not be recognized by the Province.<sup>128</sup>

Also during this same time, a telephone survey of 400 randomly-selected homes and businesses across the City was conducted to provide a statistically-significant polling result for Burlington.<sup>129</sup> The results of both the telephone survey and the questionnaires mailed to all Burlington residents and businesses were identical for the first key question asked, and very similar for the second key question.<sup>130</sup> These results are summarized

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<sup>126</sup>GTA Public Involvement & Communications Team, GTA Reform Brochure, City of Burlington Print Shop, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 12/96 Strategy for Burlington Council's Position on Municipal Reform Options, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996, p. 9 - 13.

<sup>130</sup>Tim Dobbie, City Manager's Bulletin Issue #3, City of Burlington's Print Shop, Burlington, 1996, p. 1.

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below:<sup>131</sup>

1. Of the three options "Remain in Halton", "Agree to GTA Reforms", or "Join the GBA", what is your preference?

Remain in Halton	83.0%
Agree to GTA Reforms	3.0%
Join the GBA	13.0%
Refused to rank/undecided	1.0%

2. If the choice was restricted to "Agree to GTA Reforms", or "Join the GBA", what is your preference?

	<u>Phone Survey</u>	<u>Quest.</u>
Agree to GTA Reforms	16.0%	11.0%
Join the GBA	81.0%	84.0%
Refused to rank/undecided	3.0%	5.0%

It is interesting to note that similar surveys were conducted in March by the Hamilton Spectator, Burlington Post, and Taxpayers

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<sup>131</sup>Ibid.

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Coalition Burlington.<sup>132</sup> (The Taxpayers' Coalition Burlington is a local interest group concerned with the level of taxation imposed by government). Although the percentage breakdown under each survey was marginally different, the results were consistent:

- \* of the three general options, "Remain in Halton" was the most preferred option; and,
- \* if the choice was restricted to "Agree to GTA Reforms" or "Join the GBA", preference was to join the GBA.<sup>133</sup>

The balance of the questions in the brochure were not tabulated, given their open-ended nature and the number of responses received.<sup>134</sup> In actual fact, this was done because these questions really did not need to be answered.<sup>135</sup> Based on the results of the first two questions included in the GTA Brochure and the telephone survey, the majority of the members of City Council learned what they needed to know from the public input and

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<sup>132</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., p.2.

<sup>134</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

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communication process, and in their mind, it was a success.<sup>136</sup>

(The Hamilton Spectator and Burlington Post are the prominent local print media in the City of Burlington).

Burlington Council also considered the possibility of holding a referendum.<sup>137</sup> However, due to the number of notice periods and the Ontario Municipal Board requirement for approval of a referendum, there was not sufficient time.<sup>138</sup>

The information included in the brochure was based on the information available at the time of the evaluation team preliminary reports to the Committee to Review Government Structures.<sup>139</sup> In addition, the members of Council insisted that they have an opportunity to review the document before it was finalized and distributed to the public.<sup>140</sup> The result: the final document included numerous assumptions, to get around the amount of

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<sup>136</sup>Ibid.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid.

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uncertainty that existed when it was produced; and, it was somewhat slanted towards the "Remain in Halton" option.

At the same time the City public input and communication process took place, the local media began turning its attention to covering the GTA Reform issue, particularly what it meant to Burlington.<sup>141</sup> Most of the local media's information, as it related to Burlington, came from City of Burlington officials, both staff and members of Council.<sup>142</sup> There were many unknowns related to the issue of GTA Reform which the local media could not answer.

The incremental model contains an organizational component.<sup>143</sup> The model suggests that the vast complex of government and non-government actors involved in the policy-making process may in part be co-ordinated through an invisible and often unconscious mechanism of mutual adjustment.<sup>144</sup> Interest groups negotiating with bureaucrats, senior officials lobbying for support among related government departments for a policy proposal, and changes

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<sup>141</sup>Ibid.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid.

<sup>143</sup>Leslie A. Pal, Public Policy Analysis An Introduction, Methuen Publications, Agincourt, 1987, p. 46.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.

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in a policy proposal due to anticipated reactions by affected groups, are all examples of mutual adjustment.<sup>145</sup>

Since Burlington City officials and the Burlington community arrived at similar governance conclusions, the actors in the Burlington GTA Reform process may have been co-ordinated through an invisible and unconscious mechanism of mutual adjustment.

Meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs of Municipal Affairs  
& Housing:

To obtain information from the Province on the GTA Reform issue and its impact on the City of Burlington, members of City Council and senior staff met with the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing, the Honourable Al Leach, on Wednesday, March 20, 1996.<sup>146</sup> City officials had hoped to meet with the Minister much earlier, to avoid the possibility of proceeding on the basis of using incorrect assumptions, however, that was not possible.<sup>147</sup> The Minister

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<sup>145</sup>Ibid.

<sup>146</sup>Tim Dobbie, City Manager's Bulletin Issue #3, City of Burlington Print Shop, Burlington, 1996, p. 1 - 2.

<sup>147</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.



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would not meet with City officials until late March.<sup>148</sup> In the eyes of City officials, the Minister was perceived to be avoiding them, either because he did not know the full impact of the recommendations of the GTA Task Force on the City of Burlington, or he did know the impact but did not wish to share this information with City officials because of instructions he had been given by the Premier.<sup>149</sup>

In addition, the information provided by the Minister represented his personal position, and not a position taken by the Government of Ontario.<sup>150</sup> Although Burlington gleaned some information from that meeting, by no means could it be construed to be what would actually happen.<sup>151</sup> (As it turned out, the Minister's position did not represent the Provincial view, given the subsequent establishment of the "Who Does What" Panel by the Province). Notwithstanding the degree to which the Minister's comments could be construed as reality, it was, nonetheless, good news for Burlington: the Minister's comments did not preclude the City from

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<sup>148</sup>Ibid.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid.

<sup>150</sup>Tim Dobbie, City Manager's Bulletin Issue #3, City of Burlington's Print Shop, Burlington, 1996, p. 1.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid.

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completing the process it was well on the way of embarking on.

From that meeting, the City of Burlington learned the following:<sup>152</sup>

- \* All of the three general governance options were on the table.
- \* The Minister recognized that the west end of the GTA had more options available to it than other parts of the GTA.
- \* No one solution would fit all areas of the Province, and each area needed to determine what best met the needs of its taxpayers. The Province would do what makes the best business sense.
- \* No decisions had been reached to date on pooling of taxation or actual value assessment.
- \* Burlington did have the option of an association with Hamilton-Wentworth.

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<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

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\* With respect to the Halton options, the Province had no preference at that time regarding how it all would unfold, and was open to the following:

- Single-tier region (City of Halton);
- Single-tier local (City of Burlington);
- Single-tier local with service partnerships (City of Burlington with a very different regional structure);  
and,
- Two-tier (similar to the existing structure with the City and Regional government).

7. With respect to timing of Provincial initiatives, the Minister declared a personal preference to see some action in the spring, leading to legislation in the fall. If this was not practical, the Minister mentioned that he might consider a six-month or one-year extension of the current Council term.

8. When asked whether the Province would take part in a further review of Halton options, the Minister indicated that he would provide senior staff for this review, but would not commit to financial assistance.

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9. The Minister concluded that in his view, working out governance issues locally was better than the Province imposing a solution.

The incrementalist makes use of "bottlenecks" or "delays".<sup>153</sup> In the rationalist's view of decision-making, unwarranted delay is evidence of the breakdown of the process, but to the incrementalist it represents time to clarify problems and to decide whether to act on them.<sup>154</sup> The incrementalist may seem to be a timid compromiser and an indecisive procrastinator, but according to Lindbloom the incrementalist is a shrewd, resourceful problem-solver who is wrestling bravely with a universe that he/she is wise enough to know is too big for him/her.<sup>155</sup> Although somewhat ancillary to the City of Burlington's decision-making process, the Minister's unwillingness to expeditiously meet with City of Burlington officials can be characterized as incrementalist behaviour, if in fact he really was just avoiding City officials.

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<sup>153</sup>Robert F. Adie and Paul G. Thomas, Canadian Public Administration Problematical Perspectives, Prentice-Hall Canada Inc, Scarborough, 1982, p. 98.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid.

<sup>155</sup>Charles E. Lindbloom, The Policy-Making Process, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1968, p. 27.

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Burlington City Council's Official Position:

Burlington City Council was required to forward its official position on the issue of GTA Reform to the Province by Tuesday, April 2, 1996.<sup>156</sup> As a result, at its meeting of Monday, March 25, Burlington City Council approved a resolution adopting an official position on GTA Reform, based on a report from City Manager, Tim Dobbie.<sup>157</sup> Mr. Dobbie's report included an analysis of the three general governance options resulting from the work of the evaluation teams and outlined the final results of the public input and communication process.<sup>158</sup>

A brief summary of Burlington City Council's official position is shown below:<sup>159</sup>

1. The City's preference was to remain in some form of Halton

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<sup>156</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 12/96 GTA Task Force Report: Burlington's Position, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>157</sup>Ron Lathan, Minutes of Burlington City Council Meeting of Monday, March 25, 1996, Burlington City Clerk's Department, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>158</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 12/96 GTA Task Force Report: Burlington's Position, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

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area servicing arrangement and not to be part of the GTA or GBA for governance and tax purposes.

2. The City did not support the pooling of commercial and industrial assessment for education purposes across the GTA.
3. The City supported the implementation of Actual Value Assessment across the Province, starting with Metropolitan Toronto.
4. The City believed that any decision on governance should not have an adverse effect on the quality of life for residents of Burlington, nor provide for an increase in taxation.
6. The City endorsed a structure that would see two levels of government in Ontario: provincial and local municipal.
7. Should the Province not permit the recommended Halton option, the City wanted to continue discussions with the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth towards the development of a Greater Bay Area Servicing arrangement.
8. The City requested the Province to participate in a task force

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to implement the restructuring of governance in Halton, with the City of Burlington, Town of Oakville, Town of Milton, and Town of Halton Hills. The task force was to include representatives from the Region of Halton, the four area municipalities, and the Province at both the political and senior staff levels. The proposed mandate for the task force was to include extensive public involvement throughout the evaluation and implementation process.

9. The implementation was to be completed by the election of the next municipal council, unless the Minister decided to extend the term of the current council.

To Burlington's credit, it did take a proactive approach to what GTA Reform meant to its municipality and it did develop a well-thought-out position. In a general sense, Burlington's approach followed the rational decision-making model in that it appeared to follow a neat, orderly process<sup>160</sup>, and included four of the five following elements of the rational process, as described by

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<sup>160</sup>Robert F. Adie and Paul G. Thomas, Canadian Public Administration Problematical Perspectives, Prentice-Hall Canada Inc. Scarborough, 1982, p. 96.

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Pal<sup>161</sup>:

- \* objectives - what one wishes to accomplish - Burlington City Council's Position Paper on GTA Reform and its sixteen Principles for Decision-making on Municipal Options;
- \* alternatives - identification of the options or the means by which the objectives could be achieved - the three general governance options, i.e. "Remain in Halton", "Agree to GTA Reforms", or "Join the GBA";
- \* impacts - the costs and benefits associated with each alternative - discovered through the analysis of the five criteria;
- \* criteria - the ranking of all options in order of desirability based on some criteria - the five criteria used by Burlington City Council to evaluate the three general governance options, namely: financial issues, service delivery, economic development, environmental impact, and governance; and,
- \* models - the construction of models to help predict the empirical consequences of the chosen alternative - not applicable.

However, a key component of Burlington's position was its wish to

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<sup>161</sup>Leslie A. Pal, Public Policy Analysis An Introduction, Methuen Publications, Agincourt, 1987, p. 44.



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remain in some form of Halton area servicing arrangement and not to be part of the GTA or GBA for governance and tax purposes. Basically, this position represents only a small/incremental change or a modification of existing policies. Incrementalism is policy-making through small or incremental moves on particular problems rather than a comprehensive reform program.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, incrementalism is congruent with political reality, i.e. what is feasible politically are policies that are only incrementally or marginally different than what has gone on before.<sup>163</sup> In the same vein, policy-makers are pragmatic: they seldom search for the "one best way that will work" but instead end their search when they find "a way that will work".<sup>164</sup> The policy-maker's search usually begins with the familiar (i.e. with policy alternatives close to current policies), and in most cases modification of existing policies will satisfy particular needs - avoiding major policy shifts.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup>Robert F. Adie and Paul G. Thomas, Canadian Public Administration Problematical Perspectives, Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., Scarborough, 1982, p. 98.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid, p. 99.

<sup>164</sup>Thomas R. Dye, Understanding Public Policy, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1978, p. 31-32.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid.

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In addition, there were some fundamental weaknesses in the analysis and final reports of the City of Burlington's Evaluation Teams, brought on to a large extent by the short time horizons, uncertainty, and the crisis response mentality which was required by Burlington in this situation. In some cases these flaws are a result of "satisficing" and "simplifying through omission" being employed by the policy-makers and staff analysts. "Satisficing" occurs when an exhaustive search for maximum goal fulfilment is not undertaken because it is not worth the costs involved.<sup>166</sup> "Simplifying through omission" occurs when all possible consequences are not explored.<sup>167</sup> In other words, the short time horizons, uncertainty, and crisis response mentality precipitated the "satisficing" and "simplifying through omission" behaviours of the policy-makers and analysts which were required to cope with this issue. These behaviours are typical of the incremental model of decision-making in government.

The following briefly summarizes the fundamental weaknesses in the analysis and final reports of the evaluation teams.

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<sup>166</sup>Robert F. Adie and Paul G. Thomas, Canadian Public Administration Problematical Perspectives, Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., Scarborough, 1982, p. 98.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid.

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Financial Impact:

The financial impact analysis undertaken by the City of Burlington on the Golden Report was limited in the following ways:

- (a) it was based on already outdated financial information as reported by the municipalities to the Province in their 1994 Financial Information Returns (FIR) and did not recognize the very significant funding cuts in Provincial grants and subsidies which have occurred subsequent;
- (b) while the FIRs provide a snapshot of 1994 costs and related taxes, they do not attempt to reflect service level differentials among the various municipalities nor do they recognize more efficient service delivery;
- (c) because of the different basis of assessment, equalization factors were applied, which, at best, estimated tax impacts and in no way resolved the significant assessment problems which exist within Metro as a result of their outdated assessments;
- (d) no attempt was made to consider long-term financial impacts

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tied to the age, condition, and available operating capacity of existing infrastructure and the need, timing, or financing for future replacement; and,

- (e) with the education costs representing between 55% to 60% of the total property tax bills, the potential impact of education restructuring and financing reform were not addressed except to the extent of estimating the impact of pooling Commercial & Industrial assessments across the GTA.<sup>168</sup>

Notwithstanding these limitations, it was necessary to provide some financial impacts of the three general governance options available to the City of Burlington. Moreover, the analysis was influenced by the limitations outlined above, and was offered to provide an indication of the relative tax impacts of the three options and their alternatives, based on a consistent market valuation of a residence valued at \$250,000 and commercial and industrial properties valued at \$1.0 million.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 12/96 GTA Task Force Report: Burlington's Position, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.

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The limitations in the financial analysis and modelling which was undertaken in evaluating the government structure options for Burlington forced decision-makers to focus more on the concepts and ideas generated by the Golden Report and the various responses to it, rather than the tax implications of the three general governance options.<sup>170</sup> This was a tragedy since in the eyes of both the public and City officials, the tax/financial implications were one of the most important issues to be considered in any comparison of governance options for Burlington. (Pal recognizes the importance of economics in the policy process and asserts that three forces drive the policy process, interests, values, and causal assumptions. He states that interests refer to the preservation, extension or creation of circumstances which will maintain or further one's goals; and, since the pursuit of most goals requires resources, a critical category of interest is economic<sup>171</sup>). Furthermore, unqualified acceptance of the estimates and projections used in the City's financial analysis of the three general governance options is imprudent given the absolute dependence of the analysis on the assumptions which were

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<sup>170</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>171</sup>Leslie A. Pal, Public Policy Analysis An Introduction, Methuen Publications, Agincourt, 1987, p. 102 - 103.

made.<sup>172</sup>

Service Delivery Impact:

The analysis in this section did not address health and social services issues.<sup>173</sup> The primary focus of this analysis was on "hard" services and the comments related only to association with the GTA or GBA, assuming that the "Remain in Halton" option would likely result in service delivery as was presently enjoyed by the citizens of Burlington, which may or may not be the case.<sup>174</sup>

The analysis indicated that for the majority of services, it would appear that for both the GTA proposal and the GBA proposal, the impact would not be noticeable to the public.<sup>175</sup> The analysis also mentioned that there was less certainty about the situation with respect to an association with the GBA, however, there was nothing to indicate that significant changes would occur.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 12/96 GTA Task Force Report: Burlington's Position, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid.

These are very general statements that tend to over simplify the issue of service delivery rather than analyze it directly under the three general governance options.

Economic Development Impact:

The evaluation of the three governance options available to the City of Burlington in terms of Economic Development impacts was only conducted with specific reference to the potential and estimated effect of each option on two dimensions of municipal economic development, namely:

- \* the community's ability to create employment; and,
- \* the community's ability to maintain and expand its tax base.<sup>177</sup>

In other words, the analysis was limited to these two prime factors. Other dimensions, or measures of the local economy, such as housing and land prices, commercial and industrial rents, levels of inter-urban trade, corporate profits, etc. were not considered.

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<sup>177</sup>Ibid.

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In fairness to the City of Burlington, it is difficult to produce a definite conclusion, regardless of the analysis undertaken, on the effect of the three general governance options on economic development. A canvass by the evaluation team of the local Burlington business community also failed to produce a consensus on the question, reflecting the diversity of Burlington's business base, and the numerous factors which influence the location of economic activities.<sup>178</sup>

Governance Impact:

At its meeting of Monday, February 26, 1996, Burlington City Council approved sixteen Principles for Decision-Making on Municipal Options.<sup>179</sup> These principles were developed to assist City Council in selecting its most preferred governance option, in addition to the results of the public consultation process.<sup>180</sup>

The three general governance options were evaluated from a

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<sup>178</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>179</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 12/96 GTA Task Force Report: Burlington's Position, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid.



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governance perspective on the basis of Burlington City Council's sixteen principles, since the principles presumably reflect what is most important to City Council and the citizens of Burlington, i.e. their objectives.<sup>181</sup> This evaluation was done in a very unscientific, arbitrary manner by the Assistant to the Mayor and the Assistant to the City Manager, with no input from the members of City Council, senior staff, and the Burlington community.<sup>182</sup>

In addition, sufficient information was not available to meaningfully make use of three of these principles in the evaluation.<sup>183</sup> In particular, principles seven, thirteen, and fourteen simply could not be used in this evaluation, further reducing the credibility of this exercise.<sup>184</sup>

Principle seven, Short and Long-term Operating and Capital Costs, states that short and long-term operating and capital costs be a

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<sup>181</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid.

<sup>183</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 12/96 GTA Task Force Report: Burlington's Position, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid.

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consideration in selecting a preferred option.<sup>185</sup> However, since long-term operating and capital cost information was not considered at all by the City in the course of its evaluation of the three general governance options, information of this nature was not available to be used in the assessment of this principle.<sup>186</sup> Consequently, this principle was not addressed in the evaluation process.<sup>187</sup>

Principle thirteen, Two Levels of Government (Provincial/Municipal), states that as a first preference, the area of the GTA, Halton, and Hamilton-Wentworth should have only two levels of government - municipal and provincial.<sup>188</sup> This principle was not used in the evaluation process for one reason: it was unclear how any of the three general governance options would unfold in terms of levels of government, given the possible number of sub alternatives under each option.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup>Ibid.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid.

<sup>187</sup>Ibid.

<sup>188</sup>Ibid.

<sup>189</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

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Principle fourteen, Co-operative/Private Partnerships, states that municipalities should be allowed to enter into co-operative partnerships with other municipalities for services which benefit from greater economies of scale and further that private partnerships be considered.<sup>190</sup> This principle was not used in the evaluation process because it was uncertain how Burlington's ability to form co-operative/private partnerships would be affected by its form of governance.<sup>191</sup>

CONCLUSION:

The purpose of this paper was to explore the policy-making process in municipal government, in particular, the process used by local governments to determine the nature of their governmental organization and their external affiliations. It was asserted that while the rational model of decision-making and "problem solving" still serves a goal or ideal, in reality, the incremental model and "persuasion" describes the decision-making process used by local governments to determine the nature of their governmental organization and their external affiliations.

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<sup>190</sup>Tim Dobbie, CM 12/96 GTA Task Force Report: Burlington's Position, Office of the City Manager, Burlington, 1996.

<sup>191</sup>This information was gleaned during the interviews conducted with the key members of City Council and senior staff.

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The process used by the City of Burlington to respond to the Report of the GTA Task Force and to establish the City's policy with respect to governance issues related to GTA Reform was examined at great length, to assist in this exploration of local government decision-making.

The City of Burlington's GTA Reform decision-making process had elements of both the rational and incremental decision-making models. The process had the following characteristics of the rational model:

- (1) it appeared neat and logical;
- (2) it was geared to producing a rational decision; and,
- (2) it included four of the five basic elements commonly accepted with this model including: objectives, alternatives, impacts, and criteria.

Burlington's process included many elements that were not characteristic of the rational model, including:

- (1) consideration of a limited number of options;

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- (2) an analysis that was fraught with assumptions;
- (3) alternatives that were predominately assumption-driven, and were put forward as part of a well-thought-out strategy to protect the interest of the actor's in the policy-making process;
- (4) assumptions based on best guesses, intuition, and hunches;
- (5) the open display of bureaucratic and personality politics;
- (6) a limited amount of time to undertake the process;
- (7) a process distinguished by crisis response, short time horizons, and uncertainty;
- (8) the existence of an invisible and unconscious mechanism of mutual adjustment that co-ordinated the actors involved in the process;
- (9) the use of "bottlenecks" or "delays";
- (10) a process that evoked policy-making through small or

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incremental moves on particular problems rather than the development of a comprehensive reform program; and,

(11) the existence of "satisficing" and "simplifying through omission" on the part of the actors involved in the process.

Although these latter elements are not characteristic of the rational model of decision-making, they are illustrative of the incremental model.

One would be hard pressed to say that the process used by the City of Burlington was solely reflective of the rational model of decision-making. One would be equally hard pressed to say that the process used by the City of Burlington was solely reflective of the incremental model. Clearly, Burlington's process contained elements of both models, and it did illustrate more elements of the incremental model than the rational model. However, since it is difficult, if not impossible, to assign a weight to the rational model and incremental model elements forming part of Burlington's process, one would be hard pressed to determine an overall rating.

Pal claims that in most modern governments the policy process is

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closer to the incremental model, than the rational model.<sup>192</sup> The analysis of Burlington's process would tend to support Pal's view, based on the fact that more elements of the incremental model were illustrated than the rational model. Furthermore, it is anticipated that policy-making processes of other local governments about decisions to determine the nature of their governmental organization and their external affiliations will be similar to Burlington, and contain more elements of the incremental model than the rational model.

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<sup>192</sup>Leslie A. Pal, Public Policy Analysis An Introduction, Methuen Publications, Agincourt, 1987, p. 46.

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