



PORT COLBORNE

· MAYOR'S OFFICE ·

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March 5, 2026

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Re: The Future of Municipal Governance in Niagara

The Honourable Premier Doug Ford:

As Mayor of the City of Port Colborne, I am writing in response to the recent discussion regarding municipal governance reform in Niagara. Port Colborne does not support amalgamation. Period.

We are a strong and independent community with unique marine heritage and real momentum. Forced amalgamation is neither necessary nor beneficial to our continued success. Past restructuring has not produced positive outcomes for Port Colborne, particularly in areas such as healthcare and transit, and decades of research show that municipal amalgamation fails to produce cost savings while also reducing local responsiveness and accountability.

That said, we recognize that there are legitimate regional challenges that deserve serious review. Pressures related to infrastructure funding, water and wastewater costs, and regional roads are concerning and require innovative solutions. A thoughtful governance review, focused on coordination, efficiency, and value for taxpayers, is both appropriate and necessary.

For that reason, we support the governance review approved by Niagara Regional Council on February 26 as a responsible path forward grounded in analysis rather than assumption.

While Regional Council has indicated that the Chair's work on this matter should not proceed further at this time, it remains my responsibility as Mayor to ensure that

Port Colborne's voice is heard and our community's perspective is clearly represented in this discussion.

Port Colborne has built significant momentum over the past two years, demonstrating strong leadership and measurable results, including:

- Securing over \$2 billion in new investment and job creation, strengthening our marine, industrial, and employment lands.
- Advancing provincial housing priorities through accelerated approvals and a strong development pipeline.
- Expanding licensed childcare spaces to better support working families and population growth.
- Taking proactive, evidence-based steps to improve healthcare access and outcomes within our community.
- Using Community Improvement Plans to strategically reduce development charges and encourage investment.
- Partnering with the Province to establish a Municipal Services Corporation for water and wastewater servicing on the East Side Employment Lands which, if expanded under the *Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act, 2025*, would create a path to stabilize and lower rates for Port Colborne residents.

This momentum is underpinned by strong financial management. Port Colborne operates under a disciplined and forward-looking financial plan that prioritizes sustainable investment to grow the city. Our financial position has been assessed as low risk by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing under its Financial Health Indicators framework. As our community and economy continue to grow, we have been intentional about balancing expansion with fiscal responsibility. In partnership with the provincial and federal governments, we have invested heavily in infrastructure and have a funded asset management plan that addresses our infrastructure needs. We are confident in our ability to deliver services efficiently and responsibly, backed by strong asset management and direct accountability to our residents.

If the objective is to reduce bureaucracy and duplication in Niagara's governance system, we believe there are more targeted solutions available than full-scale amalgamation. Port Colborne is prepared to assume greater responsibility for local services and ready to explore modernized governance models that improve efficiency without destabilizing communities. We are aligned with the following recommendations put forward by the eight mayors in their joint letter released on March 4:

- Establishing a Municipal Water and Wastewater Public Corporation under the *Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act, 2025*.
- Reforming local and regional services by transitioning regional roads to local municipalities, and any remaining services, such as Social Services, Public Health, and EMS, to Public Service Boards.
- Reducing the size of councils to maintain accountable, streamlined decision-making and ensure responsiveness to resident and business needs.

These are practical, modern governance tools that deserve full evaluation before pursuing structural amalgamation.

Simply put, decisions of this magnitude require careful review and a clear understanding of the impacts on our communities. Our residents deserve a process grounded in evidence, supported by a strong business case, and informed by meaningful consultation.

Port Colborne is committed to working constructively with our regional and provincial partners through that process. At the same time, we will continue to advocate for solutions that strengthen Niagara while protecting the progress our community has worked hard to achieve.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the discussion about Niagara's future and look forward to working constructively with Regional Council and the Province as these issues are considered.

Sincerely,



Mayor William Steele
City of Port Colborne

cc: Honourable Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Sam Oosterhoff, MPP – Niagara West
Robert Dodd, Chief of Staff, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Bob Gale, Regional Chair
Regional Councillors c/o the Regional Clerk