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Should the Niagara Region Chair Be Directly Elected?

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A comparative analysis of Ontario heads of council of upper-tier regional governments and the introduction of directly elected mayors in English local government by the Blair government.

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Should the Niagara Region Chair Be Directly Elected? Executive Summary:

Key Words: Local government; municipalities; regional government; Ontario; Greater London Authority; elections; soft powers; economic development; voter turnout; head of council; regional chair; mayor.

This explores the merits of directly-elected heads of council versus appointed heads of council in Ontario's upper-tier regional governments, and specifically, Niagara Region. A comparative literature review of academic papers and government publications was undertaken, principally by examining the local government reforms introduced by the Blair government in English municipalities, and namely, the creation of the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the position of mayor of London. Based on the literature review, four separate theories were developed in favour of directly-elected heads of council: improved voter turnout; improved calibre of candidates standing for office; enhanced soft powers; and improved economic development efforts. Each theory was tested by speaking with elected officials and administrators from Niagara Region and other area Ontario upper-tier municipalities. Ultimately, this paper debunks the myth about the merits of directly-elected heads of council and the Blair government's zeal for them. Based on the feedback provided, it was concluded that having a directly-elected Niagara Region chair would not improve local government and that the existing appointed system should be maintained.

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Section 1A - Introduction:

"An elected politician has political authority which an appointed official, no matter how powerful, lacks" (Howard and Sweeting, 2007). This paper seeks to further understand this quote by exploring whether or not the council appointed position of Niagara Region Chair should instead be directly elected by voters. In particular, an analysis is undertaken of the perceived benefits and drawbacks a head of council enjoys from having a directly-elected mandate from the voters.

This research question is timely. It should be of interest to practitioners of Ontario's upper-tier regional governments, which include: Durham, Halton, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo, and York, respectively. There continues to be ongoing debate about the election method used to choose heads of council for these six local governments. The debate has been initiated by politicians and members of the public.

Currently, there are two methods used to select regional chairs: direct election or appointment by regional council. The selection process is evenly split among the upper-tier governments. In Durham, Halton and Waterloo, electors vote for candidates contesting the position of regional chair during annual local elections, similar to electing school board trustees, councillors and mayors. Durham Region is the latest municipality to make the switch to direct election. The first direct election for Durham Chair was held in 2014. Niagara, Peel and York appoint their chairs at the inaugural regional council meeting of each new council term. These candidates for chair are both nominated and voted on by sitting regional councillors. Whether directly elected or appointed, all regional chairs serve a renewable four-year term.

Beyond discussions held around council chambers, in the general public, and in the media, the debate surrounding the regional chair selection process has also been taken up by the Ontario Legislature. Some Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP) have introduced private members' legislation to bring about reforms. In 2010, MPP David Caplan initiated a private members' bill (PMB) that would have had made all regional heads of council directly elected without requiring local consent.[1]

Newmarket-Aurora MPP Charles Ballard recently brought forward legislation to amend the *Municipal Act* to introduce a directly-elected chair for York Region. This PMB had bi-partisan support from all three recognized parties. Although, in 2016, York Region Council voted against a Council initiated effort to adopt the direct-election selection process, it remains uncertain if the province's Legislature will override the directive of a regional council decision, and pass MPP Ballard's PMB.

A leading rational by proponents who favour switching to direct election is that it is more democratic than the appointment process. Ajax Mayor and Durham Regional Councillor, Steve Parish, has said "It comes down to basic principles of democracy."[2] Pelham Mayor and Niagara Regional Councillor, Dave Augustyn, is quoted saying "We need to move to a more democratic system in Niagara for electing the top leadership role."[3] Brampton Mayor and Peel Councillor, Linda Jeffrey, said during her 2014 inaugural address to Peel Council that "Today we chose a Chair for the Region of Peel through a process that I believe is flawed. I look to all of my council

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[1] Accessed from: http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&Intranet=&BillID=2294
[2] Elected chairs risk politicizing GTA regional councils, critics say: The Toronto Star, published January 20, 2014: http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/01/20/elected_chairs_risk_politicizing_gta_regional_councils_critics_say.html
[3] Pelham mayor wants regional chair elected by the public: St. Catharines Standard, published December 26, 2014: http://www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/2014/12/23/pelham-mayor-wants-regional-chair-elected-by-public

colleagues to consider a more transparent and accountable method of choosing the chair for the 2018 term."

Section 1B - The British Context:

Academic literature exploring the issue of directly-elected heads of council in Ontario is limited. However, there has been a tremendous amount of research published over the last 25 years from the United Kingdom which has explored in-depth the topic of municipal administrative reform. The Blair government, elected in 1997, set off a frenzy of new proposals designed to modernize, strengthen and improve local government, as stated in the government's Local Democracy and Political Leadership whitepaper (DETR, 1998). At the heart of the government's efforts was the creation of directly-elected mayors, who the government believed, would be instrumental in improving the delivery of local public services (Game, 2003).

The Blair government's campaign manifesto resulted in the publication of a wealth of government position papers, along with think tank and scholarly publications, which have provided arguments both for and against the directly-elected mayor model. It should be noted that these local government reforms have also been endorsed by the subsequent Conservative-Liberal Democratic coalition government. Reforming English local governments has bi-partisan support in Parliament.

Before proceeding further, it is worth noting the parallels between the appointment process for selecting regional chairs and the council leader system commonly used in the United Kingdom, and the target of the Blair government's reforms. Similar to the regional chair selection process in Niagara, Peel and York, the council-leader system involves members of an English municipal council electing a leader to serve in the top position. Whether you are a mayor, chair, warden or council leader, you are the political head of a local government.

Although, the Ontario and English examples do not perfectly complement each other, the British reforms provide an important foundation to undertake research of this kind.

Section 1C - Research Methodology Explained:

The purpose of this research study is to answer the following question: *Should the Niagara Region Chair be Directly Elected*? From the literature review undertaken about the merits of directly-elected mandates for municipal heads of council, four separate evaluation theories were identified to help answer the abovementioned research question. These evaluation theories are identified in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Evaluation Theories
Research Question: Should the Niagara Region Chair Be Directly Elected?
Evaluation Theories
1. Yes, because a directly elected-chair will improve voter turnout.
2. Yes, because a directly-elected chair position will attract more qualified candidates to run for the position.
3. Yes, because a directly-elected chair will be empowered with greater soft powers.
4. Yes because a directly-elected chair will improve local economic development prospects.

These evaluation theories were used to develop the executive interview survey questions. Executive interviews were chosen as the suitable research methodology because they were used in the literature review of scholarly articles. Executive interviews allowed for research participants to share their attitudes and opinions about the issue.

Participants were drawn from three separate research groups, drawn principally from Niagara Region and Ontario's five other regional governments. They include: 1) upper and lower-tier municipal administrators; 2) Niagara regional councillors; and 3) current and former regional government chairs from other Ontario regional governments. Group 3 is notable because it includes heads of council who have gone through the transition of being an appointed regional chair to a directly-elected chair. Survey questionnaires were adjusted for each group. However, the questionnaires did follow the same themes from the four evaluation theories.

Participants were chosen, in large part, through an analysis of public comments made by participants in media publications and in Council documents (staff reports and meeting minutes). The interviews were an opportunity to further flesh out ideas and opinions already in public domain.

Contact information for research participants was acquired by gathering public information from municipal websites and from other professional network sources. Interviews were principally conducted by telephone to better accommodate the schedules of participants and to help heighten participation. Research participants were sent two notification emails about participating in the research survey and two follow-up phone calls. Since some participants are currently employed practitioners in Ontario local government, interviews were conducted confidentially with no responses attributed to participants. This allowed for more forthcoming responses and also improved participation.

Section 2A - Evaluation Theory 1 - A Directly-Elected Chair Position Will Improve Voter Turnout:

The first theory I wish to explore is that a directly-elected chair position will improve voter turnout. This was the belief held by proponents of introducing directly-elected mayors into English municipalities. As Orr (2004) wrote "The aspiration was to introduce mayors who would transform the exercise of power at local level, improve dynamism in policy-making, increase the popularity of local government, improve its ability to extract resources from the centre and remedy the decline in local voter turnout." Martin (2002) notes that "turnout for local elections in the UK are significantly lower than in most other European countries". Weak voter turnout was a catalyst for the British government to bring about reforms and propel the position of directly-elected mayors onto English municipalities.

Even before Tony Blair became prime minister, the Thatcher government explored opportunities to reform local government with a study by Member of Parliament (MP) Anne Widdicombe, who found that "participation" is a valuable part of elected local government. The New Local Government Network, a London-based policy think tank, argued that "directly elected mayors have huge potential to improve civic engagement" and that this would especially translate into higher voter turnout among young voters (New Local Government Network, 2010).

According to the Blair government, democratic renewal (Game, 2003) would be ignited in large part because mayoral campaigns would heighten public interest and engagement, and improve participation in local elections (Orr, 2004). There was talk of re-igniting "enthusiasm" in local government (Rao, 2003). Elected mayors would "reinvigorate interest in local democracy, providing a high-profile electoral contest which would increase British local government's notoriously poor turnout" (Sandford, 2004). This idea was echoed by the country's Electoral Commission which reported that "visibility of elected representatives and institutions are key motivators to voting" (Sandford, 2004). The existing council-leader system was seen as too inward looking and provided "no basis for the development of community leadership (Game, 2003)."

In response to the Blair government's push for directly-elected mayors, Rao (2003) asks "Will that greater visibility encourage people to vote as the government hopes?" Research participants were asked whether or not they believed voter turnout, and public engagement more generally, would improve. Despite the hopes of the Blair government it was generally believed that voter turnout and public engagement, more broadly, would remain the same.

One Niagara-area elected official reluctantly conceded "yes" when asked if voter turnout would increase but added that "a directly-elected chair would not improve public engagement" and that "burning issues are what heighten public engagement." Another elected official said they "did not know if it would improve voter turnout", while two other respondents simply replied "no" that voter turnout would not increase. One elected official was more adamant in their opposition to this notion responding "an increase in voter turnout is unproven" and that "we need to ask ourselves is it worth the risk and reward if we change the selection process but only see an increase of 10% voter turnout, for example?"

One municipal administrator said that "regardless of the voter turnout you were given a mandate by the people." Among some participants they said direct election, for all its drawbacks "is the way to go" and that there could be "increased turnout". However, this idea was again countered by one person who said changing the system would result in "a lot of additional efforts for very little gain" and another participant who said "elected from the elected is still elected." One regional councillor raised concerns over the first-past-the-post electoral model insisting that being elected chair, with less than 50% of the vote, is less democratic than the council appointment process which requires multiple voting ballots ensuring the final winner has achieved a majority of support.

The ideas shared by research participants on this issue are in line with voter turnout data. Arguably, one way to measure if directly-elected heads of council races improve voter turnout is by reviewing official voter turnout results from election campaigns. This was the case with both English municipalities and Ontario regional governments. Despite the personal enthusiasm and ambitions of actors outside of local government, directly-elected mayors have only produced modest improvements in voter turnout. The English town of Middlesbrough became one of the

first municipality's to switch from the council-leader position to a directly-elected mayor. In 2002, Middlesbrough held its first campaign for mayor. The Electoral Commission found modest improvements in voter turnout saying that "While there is no doubt that turnout at this election was higher than under the most traditional ballot" (Orr, 2004).

In 1999, the Blair government passed the *Greater London Authority Act* which created the Greater London Authority (GLA), to be run by a new directly-elected mayor. Like Ontario's regional governments, the GLA is an upper-tier body which encompasses 32 area boroughs governed by separate lower-tier councils. Since 2000, the GLA has had five campaigns for mayor. As Table 2 demonstrates, like Middlesbrough, the GLA has also produced modest voter turnout results, despite these first-ever elections for mayor. On average, voter turnout for the position of mayor has been 40%. Less than a majority of electors consistently choose not to vote. The 2008 and 2016 elections are outliers, where voter turnout reached highs of 45% participation.

In both elections there were high profile races because of the candidates who put their names forward; in 2008, Conservative Party candidate Boris Johnson, a Member of Parliament (MP) and journalist with a celebrity cult-like following; and in 2016, the Labour Party's Sadiq Khan, an MP and the first Muslim to be a serious contender to lead a major European municipality. This is noteworthy because in the second evaluation theory, which will be explored later, argues that direct elections would entice more "qualified" individuals, not career politicians, to stand for office.

Table 2. Voter Turnout – Mayor of London (Greater London Authority)[4]	
Election Year	**Voter Turnout**
2000	34.43%
2004	36.95%
2008	45.33%
2012	38.1%
2016	45.3%
	Average Voter Turnout: 40%

Building on the Blair government's arguments, we can assume that municipalities with directly-elected chairs have higher voter turnout because of more competitive races which would result in far greater public interest and participation. Table 3 provides voter turnout for each of Ontario's six regional municipalities from the two most recent elections held in 2014 and 2010. The voter turnout information provided was compiled from clerks' offices and by conducting a scan of local media outlet online publications.

Table 3. Regional Government Voter Turnout		
Region	**2010 Election Result**	**2014 Election Result**
Durham*	37%	31%
Halton*	34%	34%
Niagara	42%	41%
Peel	37%	35%
Waterloo*	34%	35%
York	40%	38%

Indicates regional governments with directly-elected regional chairs.
Note: Durham had an appointed chair in 2010.

A review of voter turnout in the most recent two elections suggests that having a directly-elected chair does not "re-invigorate" the democratic process, as the Blair government had hoped. A former regional chair who was appointed and then subsequently elected to their post said "voter turnout did not change" during the first election cycle in which they had to run region-wide for the position. Across the board results demonstrate dismal voter turnout. In 2010,

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[4] Voter information was compiled from the website London Elects: https://www.londonelects.org.uk/

the two regional municipalities with the highest voter turnout were Niagara (42%) and York (40%), both of which appoint their regional chairs. Interestingly, both Halton and Waterloo had the lowest voter turnout of the six regional governments with (34%), respectively. Both of these municipalities have directly-elected chairs.

Arguably the most telling figure is the drop of six percentage points for Durham Region from the 2010 election (37%) to the 2014 election (31%). Based on the Blair government's assumptions, we should have seen far greater turnout because now the contest for Durham's head of council was a more "public, engaged and connected campaign". Clearly this has not happened. Once again, the two municipalities with the highest voter turnout are Niagara (41%) and York Region (38%), while the two lowest ones are Halton (34%) and Durham (31%); again, two regional governments with directly-elected chairs.

In 2010, there was an even split between regional governments that appointed their heads of council and those who directly-elected theirs. Voter turnout was 33% among directly-elected regional governments and 38% among appointed governments. It should also be noted that in 2010, Halton Chair Gary Carr was acclaimed in his re-election campaign. This further undermines those proponents who believe that popular elections for heads of council positions would increase voter turnout.

Section 2B – Evaluation Theory 2 – Direct Election Will Attract Qualified Candidates:

As Sandford (2004) notes, one of the goals of having directly-elected heads of council in England would be to "stimulate greater interest in local politics through the prospect of a high-profile local politician and a more visible electoral contest, hence raising turnout" and that the new process "would attract candidates of a higher caliber and different type, than current elected councillors, many of whom are disliked within central government for perceived incompetence."

This idea is echoed by the a select committee report that found the Blair government's push for directly-elected heads of council would encourage more people to pursue elected office (Game, 2003).

There appeared to be contempt on the part of the Blair government for "career politicians" who rose through the ranks of elected office to lead their municipalities. Rather the Blair government wanted to entice people from the private sector to seek public office. Clearly, the Blair government had become enamoured by the principles of New Public Management (NPM) and its call for more market-logic in shaping government policy. To counter the appeared "problems" with these particular actors, Orr (2004) writes the government believed that reforming the system and introducing the mayor model would be led by "extraordinary figures" and furthermore, that they would be:

> *"Superb negotiators, networkers, innovators and developers, with fantastic reflective and analytical capacities combined with excellent interpersonal skills. Conceptually this suggests their technocratic capacity to influence central government, to create space for the local, to set agendas. It evokes images of urbane technocrats dining with prime ministers: large figures, with large ideas, thinking large thoughts; as opposed to small people doing small things in small places."*

Therefore, it was believe that introducing elections for mayors would achieve two goals: it would attract more people and more "qualified" candidates" and the election campaigns would heighten public engagement and increase voter turnout. In his analysis of directly-elected heads of council in German municipalities, it was found that mayors enjoyed political prestige from being chosen by the public (Wollmann, 2004). As we found with Evaluation Theory 1, voter turnout does not increase notably when looking at past election result data and research participants simply did not coalesce around the idea that a direct election for chair would improve turnout and voter engagement in the Niagara Region.

In response to Evaluation Theory 2, research participants were asked: "It's possible that a directly-elected chair would have the largest elected mandate in Niagara Region. Do you believe an election campaign for Niagara Region Chair would interest more people to run for the position?" and "Do you believe an election campaign would attract more people, who don't have experience in politics, to run for the position? For example, people with extensive careers in business." A Durham Region staff report from 2010 found that the larger municipalities tend to attract more candidates per seat.

Over and above what was shared, these particular questions led to serious concerns by respondents about parochialism undermining the ability for Niagara Regional government to represent the needs of all municipalities. Niagara Region is home to 12 lower-tier municipalities and covers a vast area geographically. There were concerns by both Niagara-area administrators and elected officials that "candidates from smaller communities would feel marginalized and intimidated because of the scope of the election." One former regional chair said "big campaigns put smaller municipalities at a disadvantage" while another respondent said "the current system safeguards the small-large community divide"; and that "the voices of smaller municipalities are protected under the current appointment system." Interestingly, these sentiments were echoed by a mayor from one of Niagara's larger municipalities who said "it would be highly unlikely to ever see a chair directly-elected from a smaller municipality and that direct election would result in "90% of future regional heads of council coming from Niagara Falls, Welland and St. Catharines."

Another participant said "a directly-elected regional chair would make it harder for smaller municipalities to be represented and that "because of Niagara's diverse economy (agriculture and tourism), the number of communities, and its population, the council

appointment process allows for the regional chair to be better positioned representing the Niagara Region as a whole." One Niagara Region politician said that "under the current appointment process, the voices of smaller municipalities are protected."

Since the Region of Niagara was founded in 1970, there have been seven individuals serve as regional chair. As Table 4 notes, two individuals from Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Region's tenth smallest municipality, have served as chair for 19 years. The longest serving chair, John E. Campbell, was from Lincoln, the sixth smallest of the 12 lower-tier municipalities. Debbie Zimmerman, the only female to serve as chair to date, was from Grimsby, the fifth smallest municipality. The two largest regional municipalities, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, have both had three chairs appointed from their municipalities, serving a total of 17 years (following the conclusion of the 2014-2018 election). Ironically, one research participant said "the issue of making the switch to a directly-elected chair comes from the largest municipalities – advocated by elected officials from St. Catharines." The current appointment system appears to have not hurt larger municipalities.

When looking at the history of regional chair appointments, the results are mixed. Despite concerns of parochialism and smaller communities being left out, a chair has never been appointed from West Lincoln or Wainfleet; Niagara's two smallest municipalities. However, 34 years out of Niagara Region's 46 year history have seen the appointment of a chair from a municipality with a population smaller than 25,000 residents.

It should be noted that Waterloo Chair Ken Seiling and Durham Chair Roger Anderson both went from being appointed to directly-elected regional chairs. Chair Seiling is from the Township of Woolich, the fourth largest municipality in Waterloo Region. Based on the respondent feedback, we would have assumed that once Waterloo moved toward direct-election,

larger municipalities like Kitchener, the City of Waterloo and Cambridge, would have produced candidates who dominated the race for regional chair. That has not been the case. Chair Seiling has served as chair since 1985 and from 1997 onward he has won direct election for the position in six consecutive campaigns.

Chair Anderson is from Ajax, Durham's third largest municipality, and was originally appointed to this position in 1997. Again, based on respondent feedback, we could assume that Chair Anderson would have been more likely to face strong challengers for the appointment process from smaller Durham municipalities like Brock or Uxbridge. Furthermore, we could have assumed challengers from Oshawa or Whitby, Durham's two largest municipalities, who have emerged during the 2014 election campaign. In both scenarios this did not happen and Chair Anderson continued to be re-elected.

Table 4. Regional Chair Municipal Representation[5]				
Municipality	**Population**	**Rank**	**Number of Chairs**	**Collective Years of Service**
St. Catharines	131,400	1	Peter Partington (2003-2010)	7
Niagara Falls	82,997	2	Alan Caslin (2014-Present) Brian Merrett (1991-1997)	Expected 10
Welland	50,631	3	No Chair	NA
Fort Erie	29,960	4	No Chair	NA
Grimsby	25,325	5	Debbie Zimmerman (1997-2003)	6
Lincoln	22,487	6	John E. Campbell (1970-1985)	15
Port Colborne	18,424	7	No Chair	NA
Thorold	17,931	8	No Chair	NA
Pelham	16,598	9	No Chair	NA
Niagara-on-the-Lake	15,400	10	Gary Burroughs (2010-2014) Wilbert Dick (1985-1991)	19
West Lincoln	13,837	11	No Chair	NA
Wainfleet	6,356	12	No Chair	NA

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[5] Information compiled from Niagara Region's website: www.niagararegion.ca

There was also clear consensus by all three research groups that the actual campaign process for a directly-elected chair would be seen as a real problem. Respondents were generally concerned about the cost and campaign infrastructure needed to contest a race for Niagara Regional Chair. It was believed that two types of candidates would be attracted: those with links to political parties and "outsiders" from the business world. As one respondent said "most people would never have a chance at being elected" and that contrary to the Blair government's insistence that more qualified people would be interested in standing for these heads of council positions, one respondent said "direct elections would exclude good candidates from putting their names forward." This same respondent added that "regional government is where political careers go to die so I can't imagine someone being enticed to run for the position." Another participant said "with direct election, you could elect an ineffective beauty contest politician. It happens all the time."

Respondents were in agreement that candidates for chair would "have to have the money to run for Chair because Niagara Region is a large area to cover." One administrator said "the problem with direct election is that you have to now campaign over such a large area." This was echoed by elected officials as well. One lower-tier mayor said "running region wide in a place like Niagara is just too big of a task to develop a profile," while another lower-tier mayor said "Niagara Region is very large and this makes the election dynamic very challenging" adding that "the cost of running and funding a campaign would be a serious issue."

These sentiments were echoed by both sitting and former regional chairs who confirmed that "when you run for regional chair you need to raise a considerable amount of money" and that you need to create "multiple campaigns because residents in one lower-tier municipality could have different priorities from those living in another." Some regional heads of council

even said that the provincial government needs to change the fundraising rules to allow for larger donations to be made because "the elected chair candidates are running in larger areas and in order to run an effective campaign contributions need to be higher so you can raise the money." A Niagara-area politician said "the campaign for chair would exclude anyone without a high profile or access to six-figure sums of money."

One participant suggested it would be "an expensive campaign to run and that because of the large election period held for municipal campaigns candidates would need to raise nearly half a million dollars to compete." Some respondents insisted that greater outside influence would come about. One respondent added that "if you have to rely on corporate donations to fundraise, you are actually taking away power of the people." A regional councillor insisted that "campaigns would be fuelled by special interest groups." One administrator said "if big business has a candidate there are risks to how regional government will operate and possible risks of parochialism"; this sentiment was shared by a regional councillor who was adamant that the campaign for chair would result in "serious concerns about outsiders buying the influence of local politicians."

Candidates for the directly-elected chair position would "attract individuals with deep connections to political parties" who would be better positioned to raise money, organize volunteers and oversee the entire management of the campaign. One administrator said the process could see "more political party influence in local government" and that "voting blocs could emerge on Council and this would be very dangerous". Another respondent said "party politics would bring bad decision making to Council." On multiple occasions there were concerns raised about partisan politics creeping into non-partisan local government as a result of changing the selection process.

One individual commented that "Niagara-area MPPs would use their position as a stepping stone to one day run for chair." It should be noted that former Niagara Chair Peter Partington served as an MPP before being appointed the region's head of council. Nonetheless, these points are very well taken when you consider the number of heads of council with prior partisan politics experience. As Table 5 notes, the heads of council for some of Canada's largest municipalities all had previously been elected either to provincial or federal office, including:

Table 5. Previous Partisan Experience of Canadian Heads of Council (Currently Serving)		
Name	Municipality	Partisan Elected Experience Prior to Becoming Head of Council
Maurizio Bevilacqua	Mayor of Vaughan	Liberal MP and federal cabinet minister
Gary Carr	Halton Regional Chair	Ontario PC MPP Liberal MP
Dennis Coderre	Mayor of Montreal	Liberal MP and federal cabinet minister
Bonnie Crombie	Mayor of Mississauga	Liberal MP
Linda Jeffrey	Mayor of Brampton	Liberal MPP and provincial cabinet minister
Gregor Robertson	Mayor of Vancouver	NDP Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) British Columbia
Mike Savage	Mayor of Halifax	Liberal MP
John Tory	Mayor of Toronto	MPP, Ontario PC Part Leader and Leader of the Official Opposition
Jim Watson	Mayor of Ottawa	Liberal MPP and provincial cabinet minister

During the 2014 election cycle, former MPPs Brad Clark and John O'Toole ran for mayor of Hamilton and Clarington, respectively. Other notable examples include former Ontario Deputy Premier George Smitherman who resigned from cabinet to run for mayor of Toronto in 2010 and high-profile MP Olivia Chow resigned to run for that same position in 2014. Christy Clark ran and lost for the position of Mayor of Vancouver in 2005 following her tenure as Deputy Premier and a senior cabinet minister in the Campbell Government.

In defense of the Blair government, partisan politics has an extensive history in local government which is why the issue of partisan politics was not considered an inhibitor to the introduction of the mayor system. At the time of this writing, high-profile Labour Party MP, Andy Burham, a twice party leadership candidate, has since expressed interest in resigning his MP position to contest the position of Mayor of the Greater Manchester; the first election to be held for this position is to take place in 2017.

Whereas the Blair government believed a directly-elected position would attract candidates from outside of government and from the world of business, and that this would improve local government as a whole, research participants saw "business outsiders" as a threat to good government. It should be noted that at the time of undertaking this research report, there continued to be widespread media coverage of Donald Trump's campaign for president. This produced a "Trump factor" in the comments of some participants. Multiple participants specifically mentioned Donald Trump during their interview with one person concerned that with a directly elected position "we might end up with some big business owner who becomes the chair and has a separate agenda." It is arguable that had this research been undertaken at a different time the reservations toward business-oriented candidates may have not been as negative.

One elected official believed a directly-elected chair position would attract "retired, extremely wealthy and well-connected people"; that candidates need to "run for the right reasons; and those who run for office should "run on principles and do good for the community." There was a general consensus that being an "outsider was a real problem" and that "someone needs experience in local government before putting their name forward to be chair." One respondent said that under the direct-election system "someone could come out of nowhere",

while another insisted that "we want people to put their names forward for chair who have local government experience."

One person replied that candidates "need at least general knowledge of how the region works." Although, one elected official said "I definitely think more people would seek the position of chair if directly elected and that's not a bad thing." They also added that "you need to have the finesse that comes with running government" and that people from the private sector could be "impatient" adding that "we have to follow process and odds are when you're appointed, you serve the council." One individual said "you can't run regional government 100% like a business."

Section 2C - Evaluation Theory 3 - A Directly-Elected Chair Has Greater Soft Powers:

The third evaluation argument reviewed has to do with soft powers. Soft powers are not formal powers prescribed in legislation. Rather, they are additional authority that a head of council enjoys because they have a directly-elected mandate derived from the people. According to proponents of reforming the council leader system, these mayors would be better positioned to overcome legitimacy crises plaguing their appointed counterparts (Howard and Sweeting, 2007).

Beyond the United Kingdom, Gladys Kammerer found that in the case of Florida municipalities, the "mayor's role is significantly enlarged if he/she is directly elected" and that these political actors enjoy greater influence over council business than their appointed counterparts (Leach and Wilson 2004). Wilkstrom (1979) speaks of how direct election can improve the "status" and that it can improve a mayor's ability to agenda set.

This sentiment was echoed by Durham Chair Roger Anderson when discussing whether or not Durham Region should proceed with changing its selection process: "It's a totally different position once you become elected" and "whoever comes in and sits in that chair will have a pretty solid, strong mandate." A 1998 Durham Region staff report sought to explore how the election of a regional chair would "change the philosophy" of the office before proceeding with any reforms.

These hopes and aspirations were also echoed by the New Zealand government whitepaper study on reforming the governance structure of Auckland, the country's largest municipality. The Commission undertaking the reforms argued in favour of a directly-elected mayor, insisting that "a mayor, who is voted in on a platform of well-understood and well-articulated principles has real visibility, a real mandate, and a proper basis on which to exercise power." It was further argued that direct-election would give "enormous legitimacy" to lead this new amalgamated super-municipality.

The Blair government believed that their new mayors would be emboldened with soft powers because they had been legitimized by the public with their win (Sweeting, 2002); that they would provide clear public visibility and accountability (Howard and Sweeting, 2007). This would allow them to improve local government and better coordinate public policy decisions and cross-cutting issues unlike the council leaders, who they believed were beholden to their colleagues on council who elected them (Elcock, 1996). This was echoed by the National Local Government Network (NLGN) which argued that "with a unique mandate, derived from their direct election across a locality, mayors can be better placed to lead an area rather than just the council (New Local Government Network, 2010)."

This coordination of policy priorities would also improve with local government administrators who would better understand council directives for the implementation of policy objectives (Fenwick, Elcock and McMillan, 2006). One government white paper raised concerns that locally-elected officials lacked profile and visibility (Stoker and Wolman, 1992) within their own communities and that there was a "leadership deficit"; these problems could be corrected, in part, by having directly-elected heads of Council (Orr, 2004).

Soft powers would allow directly-elected mayors to better negotiate with their council colleagues to pass legislation, be facilitative leaders who could more effectively build effective governing coalitions both on council and in the broader community (Sweeting, 2002). They would champion legislative initiatives that were part of a candidate's election platform that won the support of the public. The elected mayor, who would be held accountable by the public to deliver on campaign promises, would be committed to seeing these ideas become law and be a far more effective and decisive leader. Naheed Nenshi, mayor of Calgary, has said his public mandate has given him the "moral authority" to lead his council and set the policy direction (Warwick Commission, 2012).

These public endorsements of a mayor's election manifesto would "better focus" a council's priorities to be more responsive to what the public wants, which could help improve the passage of legislation. Steve Bullock, who was the first directly-elected mayor of the London Borough of Lewisham, found that his public mandate further legitimized his ability to deal with council and outside organizations (Stoker, 2004). As Bebout (1955) found in his analysis of mayors in large American municipalities "the mayor, who will be directly accountable to the people…will be the chief policy maker." It is possible that council as a sign of "goodwill" would be more inclined to support a mayor's initiatives because the mayor is perceived to enjoy

public support (Fenwick, Elcock and Lilley, 2003). There is a general acceptance that mayors are elected by a public that has goodwill intentions to see their new head of council do well in their post (Stoker, 2004).

They would also help elevate a mayor's presence and visibility with the general public and external stakeholders (Institute for Government, 2011). Elcock (1996) highlights how proponents of the elected-mayor system saw this actor as someone who could more effectively work with other regional government agencies and negotiate in the best interest of their municipality. Mayors would be well equipped to weigh in on issues of importance that are not directly linked to a mayor's jurisdiction (Leach and Wilson, 2004). Bringing stakeholders together was highlighted as one of the many benefits of having a directly-elected mayor for London, according to the NLGN. Fenwick and Elcock (2005) interviewed mayors in the English system who had been elected and who reinforced the importance of building wider networks to execute on policy objectives and in forging closer relations with outside public and private organizations.

The direct-elected mayor would also be far more effective at generating earned media attention, thereby having a larger public profile (Sweeting, 2002) and platform allowing them to be a more effective agenda setter and bring people together (National Local Government Network, 2006). Morgan and Watson (1992) echo this argument that direct election enhances the offices of the mayor with the general public and that mayors can exert greater influence in setting policy direction as a result. Leach and Wilson (2004) insist that mayors need to maintain contacts with media in order to successfully do their jobs as heads of council. A more engaged relationship with the media was also highlighted in a 2012 Durham Region staff report that examined how the Durham Chair position, and chair-council relations, would change were the

position to become directly-elected. It is rightly perceived that elected heads of council, and especially those who are more "media savvy", can use their position with the media as a "bully pulpit" to shape policy (Wilkstrom, 1979). The NLGN insists that "Mayors are very well placed to play an effective advocacy role, whether they are raising the profile of their area in the corridors of power in Westminster, in the national media or on the international stage (New Local Government Network, 2010)."

It was also believed that these mayors would be far more effective "public-facing champions" for their municipalities in helping to attract and retain economic development opportunities. It was believed that directly-elected mayors would be more effective at undertaking government relations advocacy efforts with the central government to broker deals in that municipality's best interests (Sandford, 2013) and (Fenwick, Elcock and McMillan, 2006). Stoker and Wolman (1992) write that "An elected mayor could speak on behalf of the community with much greater authority than could an appointed ceremonial mayor." This last point will be further explored under Evaluation Theory 4.

It was not only the Blair government that believed this but also the successor Conservative-led government by David Cameron, who was enamoured with local elected officials like former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg. A Conservative Party policy paper from 2009 spoke of the need to "give citizens in each of England's twelve largest cities the chance of having an elected mayor. Big decisions should be made by those democratically accountable." This is echoed by Orr (2004) who wrote that "Mayors have tended largely to be advocated on the basis that they would be the visible face of power and have the clout to get things done" (Orr, 2004).

Based on the abovementioned literature review about the merits of soft-power, survey questions were developed to generate feedback from the research participant groups to further understand whether or not a directly-elected regional chair would also enjoy soft powers. Participants were asked to comment on the following: council relations; upper and lower-tier dynamics; chair and bureaucratic staff relations; office budgets and political staff; intergovernmental affairs and relations with external organizations.

2D - General Comments about Soft Powers:

In their responses, municipal administrators were nearly unanimous that despite the fact that a directly-elected chair has authority from the public, in the end, they remain just one vote on council, and that municipal bureaucrats will respond to directives that only have a majority of council support despite perceptions of having soft powers. One administrator responded that "the election platform gives a chair a little bit of an edge to set policy" however, they also conceded that "in the end you need a mandate of council to execute on and not just the chair." Another lower-tier CAO said that "one time my mayor came to my office to undertake an initiative and I responded by telling him that he needed to go back to council and get a majority of votes before we moved on it." Another respondent said "direct election does not change the authority of the chair." One CAO was far more pessimistic about the prospect of having a directly-elected chair, saying that "the chair cannot get too out of line with council even if they were directly-elected." Another said that "if the elected chair sees them self as a higher authority this could worsen dynamics with the lower-tier municipalities."

Elected officials were equally reserved or pessimistic about a chair emboldened with soft powers. One lower-tier mayor said "what if we end up with a Rob Ford type candidate elected?" These comments are consistent with previous concerns raised about the prospect and drawbacks of having an "outsider" elected to council. One lower-tier mayor said "someone could come in with a separate agenda from council"; that "council would become less cohesive"; and that although they acknowledged a chair would have a mandate from the public, in the end, "the chair is only as strong as their council." To that point, another respondent said "having council on side is of the utmost importance to deliver quality local government services" and that "the results of council votes do not necessarily need to be unanimous but they have to be strong."

One regional councillor raised concerns about the "possibility of conflicting agendas between the chair and mayors (who serve at regional council) not aligning", while another added to this point saying "council relations could change because the elected chair would be motivated to get their mandate out – I see it as a negative." Another said that "with a directly-elected chair some lower-tier municipalities would be simply left out". Another respondent said "if vote count was low in Niagara Falls, maybe that chair wouldn't be as interested in the city and this could hinder upper and lower-tier relations." There would be a disproportionate amount of time spent on certain municipalities over others. Another respondent said "the appointed chair is about garnering consensus as oppose to dictating issues"; while another lower-tier regional councillor added to this point saying "the chair helps to carry out our agenda with the appointment process."

Current and former regional chairs did not hold the same pessimistic views as the other two research groups. Whereas lower-tier elected officials were concerned about parochialism, one regional chair respondent said "being directly elected has given me the opportunity to promote the vision of the region as a whole"; that "being directly elected has brought regional issues to the forefront" and that "regional issues are now a greater focus." One chair who went from being appointed to directly-elected to the same position said "I now focus on promoting a regional vision versus stick handling local issues through regional council" and "that upon being directly elected, I certainly found that there were greater expectations for the regional agenda."

Another regional chair who went from being appointed to directly-elected echoed a similar sentiment insisting that "I can take more of a regional perspective toward addressing regional government issues because no mayor or regional councillor determines if I am elected." This respondent added that with being appointed "there are too many IOUs and that the appointment process "doesn't allow for strong leadership." This individual much preferred the direct election process because "being elected can strengthen your hand" however, they also conceded that with no additional powers being granted to a directly-elected chair, they still need to have council onside to advance their policy priorities.

Another regional chair who also served in their role as an appointed official was adamant that "even though I pushed for the chair's position to be a directly-elected post, after being elected nothing changed to me about the way I did my job." However, this respondent did note that relations with their colleagues on council did sour saying that "the mayors on regional council behaved differently" and that "they became nasty towards me and felt threatened by my presence on council." Despite the animosity, this participant noted that "during the election campaign mayoral and council candidates' paid close attention to what the chair ran on and how

the public was reacting to my election commitments." Upon being elected, this respondent said that some of their campaign proposals easily became law because "council followed the train out of the station" and supported initiatives put forward by the elected chair and endorsed by the public.

2E - Support Staff and Media Relations:

For the chair/former chair research group, there was a general consensus that relationships did not change with the bureaucratic administrative staff. To this point, all research participants were asked whether or not they believed that the change to a directly-elected chair would require the chair's office to have an increased budget and political staff to support the responsibilities being undertaken by the chair because it has now become a more public-facing position presumably with greater soft powers.

Based on the literature, we would also assume that directly-elected chairs would have bigger support staff because they would want to exercise their soft powers by undertaking such things as greater media relations efforts to shape public opinion, influence council and to help achieve their policy initiatives. This theory was equally raised in a Durham Region staff report which suggested that "an elected Regional Chair may wish to undertake significantly more public events and public speaking than under the present system. This may require dedicated resources to manage events, prepare speaking notes, provide transportation and media relations."

As one regional chair said "I certainly get invited to a lot more events now that I am directly-elected" while another chair said "media have certainly taken greater interest since I became elected and I now do more interviews." Interestingly, those chairs first appointed, and who then went on to become elected, showed very little interest to increase the size of their budgets after being elected.

One participant said "there was no increase in my staff size or my office budget and I had no interest to do so" whereas another individual said "council did increase my budget for the creation of one new position – a chief of staff – but I haven't gotten around to hiring someone because I have better things to do." Reservations to grow staff budgets might have to do with maintaining council relations. One elected officials showed contempt saying "oh yeah, the staff budget would have to increase for an elected chair's office and I don't know if that's money well spent." It is not always politically palatable to increase office budgets which might explain the reservations of some chairs' to request more funding from council.

Table 5 helps us better understand the realities of soft power. If we assume that directly-elected officials have greater responsibilities because of their elected mandates, we would also assume that they would have more political support staff to undertake their responsibilities. However, there is no notable difference in the size of the staff between appointed and elected chairs. In a review of staff reports and other online sources, only the Chair of Niagara Region has listed a dedicated political support staff position of Director of Communication's in the Chair's Office. The mayor of the Greater London Authority has a political support staff of five, including a Mayoral Director responsible for communications.

Table 6. Regional Chairs' Offices[6]		
Regional Government	**Number of Employees (Full and Part-Time)**	**Selection Method**
Durham	4	Elected
Halton	Unknown	Elected
Waterloo	3	Elected
Niagara	3	Appointed
Peel	4	Appointed
York	3	Appointed

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[6] Peel Region Chair Staff Report, Budget 2016: http://www.peelregion.ca/council/agendas/2015archive.htm

Another way to determine the exercising of soft powers is to compare and contrast the social media presence of regional chairs. Arguably, we would assume that the directly-elected heads of upper-tier regional governments would be more inclined to be active on social media outlets because it would allow them to communicate with the very public that elected them and promote their participation in public events. As Table 6 notes, with the exception of Chair Caslin, directly-elected chairs are more likely to have an active social media presence than their appointed counterparts. Chairs Emerson has no formal presence on social media. This information was compiled by doing a social media scan of different social media channels.

Table 7. Regional Chairs' Social Media Presence				
Regional Government	**Selection Method**	**Facebook**	**Twitter**	**LinkedIn**
Roger Anderson, Durham	Elected	No	Yes	Yes
Gary Carr, Halton	Elected	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ken Seiling, Waterloo	Elected	Yes	Yes	No
Alan Caslin, Niagara	Appointed	Yes	Yes	Yes
Frank Dale, Peel	Appointed	No	Yes	No
Wayne Emerson, York	Appointed	No	No	No

2F - Government Relations and Stakeholder Relations:

Another way to understand soft powers that apparently come from having a directly-elected mandate was by asking participants about government and stakeholder relations engagement. On these topics, respondents were for the most part in agreement that changing the selection process would improve things. *The Municipal Act* also clearly states that the head of council serves as the principal spokesperson for their respective municipality. We asked

participants whether or not they believed that voice would be louder by changing the selection process and allowing for a directly-elected mandate?

Over and above comments shared, they were in agreement that the personality of the chair has more to do with his or her success to undertake external relations, than the process which saw them become head of council. The importance of personality, in explaining the success of directly-elected mayors, was echoed in the literature review with case studies from the United States (Wilkstrom, 1979) and the GLA (Sweeting, 2002). The New Zealand government's efforts to reform local government in Auckland also reiterated these points saying "plainly, the personal characteristics of individual leaders matter. Qualities such as vision, strength, stamina, energy, inventiveness, commitment, personal integrity, and charisma are associated with successful leadership (Auckland Governance Report Volume 1, 2009)."

Beginning first with elected officials, one lower-tier mayor said "whether it's another government, a post-secondary institution or a Fortunate 500 company, these stakeholders have no interest or care on how the head of council was chosen. They are interested in one thing and that is: take me to your leader so that they can advance their own priorities and agendas." Another lower-tier mayor added that "a chair's effectiveness in dealing with other levels of government depends on how well they can carry the vote. Other levels of government will be less engaged about working with a municipality if they know the chair has no support from their council and will not be able to get things passed." One regional councillor went back to the issue of party politics, noting that "since the race for chair would be so big, what would happen to our regional priorities if a card-carrying member of the Conservative Party gets elected but then has to go off and deal with Liberal governments at Queen's Park and in Ottawa?"

Responses from both former and current regional chairs, along with administrators, were mixed and slightly more positive at the prospect of dealing with other levels of government. One small-town CAO believed that "absolutely, the chair would be more effective at dealing with other levels of government" and that "the chair is not just there representing council but is present on behalf of the people." Another administrator echoed this sentiment saying that "a chair would be more effective at dealing with other levels of government because they have that mandate derived from the people."

Our regional chair respondents were more inclined to be optimistic about the changing relations. One chair who went from being appointed to directly-elected said that "the provincial government realized that there was no one person elected in an area that is also represented by half a dozen members of provincial parliament" and that "this had made the provincial government more aware." One former regional chair said that after being directly-elected "I had more political parties take notice of me. I was approached by both major parties and encouraged to run for them during a provincial by-election." However, another chair noted that "there should have been a greater difference because I share a common constituency with MPPs and MPs."

One way to further understand the soft powers of regional chairs is by reviewing their participation in external advocacy organizations. Whether elected or appointed, regional chairs are not invited to participate as members of the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus of Ontario (LUMCO), a leading new regionalist intergovernmental relations organization, originally founded by former Mississauga mayor Hazel McCallion. Mayor McCallion is remembered for trying to have Mississauga separate from the Region of Peel.

Membership to this organization is open to any municipality with a population of more than 100,000 individuals. In the case of Niagara, the Chair does not get to participate in meetings even though he represents a constituency of nearly half-a-million people. However, the only Niagara presence is from the mayor of St. Catharines because his municipality's population reaches the threshold for members.

Another noteworthy example is the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) – a national advocacy organization that lobbies on behalf of all Canadian municipalities – and this organization's Big City Mayors' Caucus (BCMC). BCMC brings together the mayors of Canada's largest municipalities from each province. Despite repeated attempts by some of Ontario's regional chairs, namely Durham Chair Anderson, FCM has never agreed to let Ontario's regional chairs participate in BCMC meetings even though Ontario's regional upper-tier governments represent a combined population of over four million people; a population larger than six Canadian provinces. Despite the efforts of directly-elected Chair Anderson, his soft powers did not make a difference and he faced resistance from Ontario BCMC members who did not want the chairs present, namely former Brampton Mayor Susan Fennell.

Section 2G - Theory 4 - A Directly-Elected Chair Will Improve Economic Development Opportunities:

The fourth evaluation theory explored builds on the previous research about the relationship elected heads of council have with external stakeholder organizations. In this case, it is about a head of council using their soft powers of "visibility" and legitimacy" to work with private companies and chambers of commerce to improve the economic development prospects by selling the attributes and merits of their jurisdictions (Warwick Commission, 2012). This soft power is articulated by Feiock (1987) who identifies: how local officials undertake different

types of economic development strategies and tactics including promotional and marketing activities and service coordination to strengthen their local economies. In their research on US mayors, Wolman and Spitzley (1996) note that:

> *"a mayor is seen as a focal point for leading an economic development effort and for negotiating deals with development interests, a potential political entrepreneur able to step forward and create effective coalitions, and a provider leadership, a critical factor. When mayors are not directly elected and when they have few formal powers…they may not have the resources base to put together pro-growth coalitions."*

A policy paper by the UK-based think tank New Local Government Network, found that English municipalities that chose to do away with the council-leader system in favour of a directly-elected head of council had a number of commonalities including economic decline (Randle, 2004). This helps explain why Niagara Region was chosen as the case study for this research. Not only does Niagara Region handle economic development issues at the regional level (whereas Peel Region does not and defers to the lower-tier municipalities), Niagara continues to have an unemployment rate (7.6%) above the provincial average (7%) and national averages (7.1%), respectively. Wolman and Spitzley (1996) in there an analysis of elected mayors in the United States identify how mayors focus their attention on economic development when economic prospects weaken.

The Greater Niagara Region Chamber of Commerce, for example, is a proponent of directly-electing the regional chair. In September 2015, the organization made a public deputation encouraging councillors to reform the system insisting that a directly-elected chair would better prioritize the Region's needs to support the business community. The position taken by this Niagara Chamber is in line with Fenwick, Elcock and McMillan's (2006) research that elected mayors are focal points for "businesses and other partners" and that these heads of council "endeavour to secure public involvement in policy development." Wolman and Spitzley

(1996) argue that cities, like companies, have to compete with one another and this means having in place top-down leadership setting and driving economic development priorities.

The feelings expressed by the Greater Niagara Region Chamber are also common among other bodies as well. The UK-based Institute for Government Centre for Cities argues that "cities with strong and effective civic leadership that are well placed to make the most of local economic assets and compete better in a global economy. And mayors create an opportunity to have exactly this type of strong and effective leadership" (Institute for Government, 2011). Orr (2004) details another Blair government white paper that argued thriving local leadership is well positioned to "boost local economies." The New Local Government Network (NLGN), another think tank group, was equally excited about the prospect of directly-elected mayors insisting that they would serve as ambassadors who could attract and retain foreign-direct investment. A growing role for mayors in international relations, described by Martins (2006) as the rise of "urban internalization", is tied directly to a greater role with how economic development is handled (Leach and Wilson, 2004).

These sentiments were echoed by the UK government white paper that said "the Government believes that elected mayors will bring a range of benefits to these cities including the ability to drive improvements in local city economies." Former Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, who served as the lead-cabinet minister responsible for local government reforms stated the introduction of a mayor for London "is essential to preserve and enhance London's competitiveness."

Beyond the Blair government, the subsequent Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government was equally supportive of the economic boost mayors could provide. Greg Clark, then the coalition government's cities minister suggested that: "The great challenge before us is one of economic growth, and I'm convinced that the battle for Britain's prosperity will be won or lost in Britain's cities…the world's great cities have mayors that lead their city on the international stage, attracting investment and jobs" (Warwick Commission, 2012).

George Osborne, Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer (finance minister) laid out in a speech the Cameron government's plans to transform the northern English municipalities with the creation of the new Greater Manchester Municipal authority as a "northern economic powerhouse" that will be "with the accountability and leadership that an elected city-wide mayor will provide[7]."

Section 2H - Research Participant Responses about Economic Development:

As was the case with the three other research evaluation questions, participants simply did not buy into the theories presented by the Blair government, supportive think tanks and the other literature reviewed. Current and former regional chairs were the most telling. One regional chair said "mayors kept me out of participating in international trade missions because they were threatened" and that "as a result my role in economic development remained the same from when I was appointed." It should be noted that members of the Greater London Authority do not serve both at the lower-tier and upper-tier; they are only members of the GLA. This might help explain why there appears to be a lack of resistance on the part of lower-tier London boroughs from objecting to the Mayor of London's participation in international affairs and

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[7] HM Treasury, 14 May 2005, Speech: Chancellor on building a Northern Powerhouse: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-on-building-a-northern-powerhouse

global economic development. As previously noted the Mayor of London has a dedicated staffer responsible for handling international affairs.

Another regional chair said that "the area municipalities blocked creation of a regional economic development corporation" and that "I guess it's because my mayors like to travel"; adding that this was a set back because "as a directly-elected regional chair I come to the job with an agenda I ran on and job creation continues to be an ongoing priority for my residents." On the issue of international trade missions, this respondent said "I haven't done any" and "I believe these trade mission are more show than substance." Another regional chair said "the economic development process was effective before we moved to direct election" and that "the selection process made no difference because chambers and businesses know which government they have to deal with."

When asked about the merits of a directly-elected head of council improving the prospects of local economic development, one Niagara-area lower-tier mayor said "that notion is simply pie in the sky". This participant found this rationale to be "baseless" adding that "it has to do with the personality of the chair, and most importantly, having a council that is working together toward achieving economic development goals." The importance of personality was also echoed by one regional councillor who said "on economic development a lot of it is personality and the chair is only as strong as their council.

Another lower-tier mayor returned to the theme of outsider interference that would emerge from the campaign for electing a regional chair saying "when it comes to economic development, being directly elected would be a detriment as the chair could be financed by businesses with business interests." Concerns surrounding parochialism re-emerged with this participant adding that direct election would actually produce a chair who "did not look at

regional issues" and that "a campaign where a chair relies more on one area over the other for voters, could produce lopsided government – pandering to one community over another."

Similar sentiments were also shared by municipal administrators. One CAO reiterated the importance of personality to get results adding that "whether you are directly elected or appointed the regional chair is the conduit on economic development." Another administrator emphasized that "ultimately it wouldn't matter about the chair because what matters most is the level of service provided by economic development staff. Staff are the ones with the expert knowledge to work with businesses." However, this same participant identified the importance of "elected official serving as boosters and promotes for the region."

In 2015 it was announced that the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance, a new regionalist body dedicated to attracting and retaining foreign-direct investment throughout the Greater Toronto Area, would be transformed into a renewed economic development body known as Global Toronto. To help manage and oversee the transition and establishment of this new entity an Interim Board of Directors was created consisting of private-sector representatives and local government representatives. Not one regional chair serves on the Interim Board of Directors. Based on the literature review we could assume that Durham Chair Anderson would be more likely to have been appointed because of his direct-election and the number of lower-tier municipalities he represents but this is not the case. Rather, Pickering Mayor David Ryan is the representative for Durham Region and the Eastern Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie represents the Western GTA and not directly-elected Halton Region Chair Gary Carr.

Section 3A - Should the Niagara Region Chair Be Directly Elected? No. Concluding Analysis and Research Criticisms:

Table 8 is captures the overall responses of the three research groups based on their feedback to the four separate evaluation theories. Based on the research and evidence presented here, the Niagara Region Chair should not be directly-elected and the appointment process should remain the same. Over and above everything that was shared, the respondents disagreed with the arguments brought forward in the literature review.

Table 8. Overall Research Responses (Select Responses)			
Evaluation Theories	**Municipal Administrators**	**Niagara Regional Councillors**	**Current/Former Regional Chairs**
Voter Turnout	"The campaign for a directly elected chair position would not increase voter turnout."	"No."	"Voter turnout did not change."
Calibre of Candidates	"Party politics would creep into our local government system and that can be dangerous when voting in blocs."	"A campaign for directly-elected chair would make it harder for candidates from smaller municipalities to compete for these communities to be represented."	"I had an opponent with unlimited money."
Soft Powers	"An elected regional chair could see themselves as a superpower, when instead, the regional chair needs to be a leader among peers."	"The way a regional chair manages agendas and governs has to do with the personality of the chair. The current appointment system has worked quite effectively."	"The selection process made no difference as to whether or not I was more effective at my job."

Economic Development	"I don't think direct election will make a difference. Economic Development staff has the expert knowledge, whereas elected officials should be the boosters and promoters."	"That's pie in the sky; it seems like a baseless notion."	"My role in economic development remained the same after I went from being appointed chair, to being directly-elected to the position."

Section 3B - Voter Turnout:

On the issue of voter turnout and public engagement there was a consensus by all three respondent groups that voter turnout and public engagement would not increase as a result of introducing a region-wide campaign for Niagara. As one regional councillor said "we do not elect a prime minister or premier so how can we say the current regional chair process is undemocratic?" There were concerns that only lower-tier municipalities that supported a candidate for chair would receive preferential treatment from the chair. This would undermine doing what is in the best interest of Niagara Region as a whole. The voter turnout argument is further undermined when we compare and contrast results between upper and lower-tier municipalities from the previous two Ontario municipal elections. As Table 3 shows, voter turnout actually went down for Durham Region in 2014, when the first direct-election for regional chair took place.

Section 3C - Calibre of Candidates:

This brings me to our second point: calibre of candidates. In 2014, Durham Chair Anderson went from being appointed to directly-elected. In 1997, Waterloo Chair Ken Seiling went from being appointed to directly elected, as did former Halton Region Chair, Joyce Savolaine, in 2000. These three examples further undermine the Blair government's beliefs that outsiders from the private-sector would be attracted to run for these new elected mayoral positions once created. Incumbent "career politicians" continued to dominate local government.

Ironically, the notion of an outsider becoming chair was seen as a detriment. Respondents raised serious concerns about "outsiders" being elected and how conflicting agendas of council and the chair could undermine the business of regional government. Issues of conflicting agendas and poor relations with council and corporate staff were raised as possible drawbacks of having elected outsiders "in control" of council business. The timing of this research study also undermined the calibre of candidate theory. The ongoing drama of the Donald Trump presidential campaign played out parallel to when these interviews were taking place. One wonders how respondents would have reacted to these particular questions had there been no Trump factor present?

There were repeated concerns raised that because of the sheer size of Niagara Region, a "party creep" could emerge into local government because of how difficult it would be to run a campaign for regional chair. Respondents generally believed party candidates or wealthy businesspeople would be the only ones capable of undertaking, competing and winning an election campaign of this size and scope. As Table 5 notes, these sentiments are entirely justifiable. Six out of the ten largest municipalities in Canada are currently lead by a head of council who held previous partisan elected office either provincially or federally. The largest city in Atlantic Canada, Halifax, is led by Mayor Mike Savage, a former Liberal Party MP.

Local government in British politics has partisan involvement. It is understandable that the Blair and Cameron governments would not have raised concerns about this in their government whitepapers about pushing for directly-elected heads of council. The parallels between local government in England and Ontario are not identical and this was always a drawback when undertaking this study.

What is very interesting is the lack of concerns raised by these British governments over the issue of parochialism. The Greater London Authority shares powers and preside over 32 different London boroughs. Borough populations range from 150,000 to 300,000. The government seemed to overlook entirely concerns about the emergence of parochialism as a result of mayoral campaigns. This was not the case for research respondents. It should be noted that populations in Niagara Region vary significantly more than they do in the Greater London Authority, which helps us better understand the consistency of concerns raised about smaller communities being placed at a disadvantage. Wainfleet is the smallest municipality with a population of 6,356, whereas St. Catharines is the largest municipality with a population 131,400. As Table 4 notes, smaller municipalities have been well served by the existing appointment process. The threat of parochialism could undermine relations between the region and the 12 lower-tier municipalities.

One of the quirks of the Niagara Region appointment process, unlike other Ontario regional governments, is that only candidates who have been elected to regional council can put their names forward to stand for regional chair. When interviewing regional councillors it is not entirely surprising that they would be resistant to changing the very system that could see them get elected to the position of chair at some point in their careers.

Section 3D - Soft Powers:

In response to the issue of soft powers there was a consensus among all research participant groups that the effectiveness of a regional chair has more to do with the occupant's personality and approach to the job. As one regional councillor said "the success of our chair comes down to the function of the person." Empowered chairs were those who could build consensus, networks and coalitions and effectively steer initiatives through Council with the goal

of supporting the entire region. It should be noted however that two of the regional chairs interviewed, who had both gone from being appointed to directly-elected, did highlight how the region-wide campaign led them to take more of a region-wide approach to setting policies.

We can assume that because of the mandate derived from the public a directly-elected chair would need more staff, like a dedicated communications professional, to build networks with the media to help agenda set. Furthermore, Table 7 demonstrates that there is no discrepancy between using social media channels. Again, based on the ideas of soft power, we could assume that elected chairs would be more outward looking in their communications efforts. Only Halton Chair Carr (elected) and Niagara Chair Caslin (appointed) used all of the three social media channels presented.

On the issue of building relations with external stakeholders and other levels of government, respondents were again generally dismissive of the idea that being directly-elected would make a difference. There were repeated comments that the personality of the chair is what matters and that stakeholders, whether governments, public or private-sector organizations, were astute enough to know how to engage the region about their own issues and concerns.

Section 3E - Economic Development:

This brings us to economic development. Generally, the idea that a directly-elected head of council was better positioned to help foster an environment of greater economic prosperity was outright dismissed. What is most interesting is how previous and sitting regional chairs ran into resentment from their regional council colleagues over this file. One regional chair said that regional council blocked a proposal to create a regional economic development agency, whereas another chair said they had been blocked by the lower-tier mayors from participating international trade missions.

One way to further clarify and understand the value of directly-elected heads of council participating in local economic development initiatives is by interviewing economic development office staff for their ideas and opinions. Department staff may be more inclined to speak about the merit of having heads of council be more hands on, especially in the realm of building relations with international governments and businesses. French President Francois Hollande welcomed Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre to the Élysée Palace in Paris. Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson travelled to the Vatican for a climate change conference, hosted by Pope Francis. During her first year in office Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie has participated in investment missions to South America, Portugal, India and Japan. The City of Brampton has a comprehensive International Marketing Strategy which details the dates and destination of places the mayor is to travel to help attract and retain foreign-direct investment. Clearly something must be working. However, this paper failed to capture and articulate what exactly that is.

Section 3F - Final Thoughts – Governance Structures:

Even though the Blair and Cameron governments were enamoured with American municipal leaders like Chicago's Richard Daley or New York's Michael Bloomberg, when introducing the mayor system to English municipalities, neither government chose to empower mayors with the authority of their American counterparts. The Mayor of London has no veto authority unlike many of their American counterparts. In fact, the council-manager model was one of the recommendations championed by the Blair government when first introducing its reforms. The council-manager model, unlike the mayor-council (strong mayor) system, found in places like Chicago, might help explain why British voters ultimately did not accept the Blair government's reform proposals the way the government had hoped, further noted in Table 2.

These sentiments were echoed by research participants. One regional councillor said "I would be in favour of a directly-elected chair if they were empowered with executive powers." One lower-tier mayor said "why change the system when the chair is only allowed to vote when there is a tie?" One CAO said that "we cannot talk about the chair selection process without having a bigger discussion about governance including reducing the number of regional councillors or even studying regional amalgamation."

It is worth exploring whether or not regional governments have matured enough, since their formation, to have developed an identity of their own. The mandate of regional government was to help with coordinating planning efforts. It was a top-down approach brought about by the provincial government.

Based on the feedback shared in this research undertaking, the opening quote in the introduction of this paper that "An elected politician has political authority which an appointed official, no matter how powerful, lacks" (Howard and Sweeting, 2007), simply does not hold true. To reiterate what one Niagara Regional Councillor said "the risk of changing the system is not worth the reward."

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