

The Politics of Municipal Annexation: The Case of the City of London's Territorial Ambitions during the 1950s and 1960s

John F. Meligrana

Volume 29, numéro 1, octobre 2000

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016421ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016421ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Meligrana, J. F. (2000). The Politics of Municipal Annexation: The Case of the City of London's Territorial Ambitions during the 1950s and 1960s. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 29(1), 3–20.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1016421ar>

Résumé de l'article

Le réseau municipal du sud de l'Ontario a été considérablement ébranlé immédiatement après la Seconde Guerre mondiale lorsque le rapide essor urbain s'est mis à progresser au-delà des limites des municipalités existantes. Cette situation a engendré plusieurs tentatives de réforme sur le plan municipal. Cet exposé porte sur la politique que suscite un type de réforme particulier, soit l'annexion. La région de London-Middlesex fait l'objet d'une étude de cas destinée à illustrer pourquoi, comment et dans quelle conjoncture l'annexion en est venue à dominer le discours politique régional. On examine les tactiques, les stratégies et les moyens d'action politiques employés par la ville de London pour présenter et appuyer ses ambitions territoriales devant la Commission des affaires municipales de l'Ontario et dans d'autres contextes au cours des années 1950 et 1960. L'annexion du comté de Middlesex à London en 1961 a été l'enjeu de la dernière et de la plus acharnée des luttes que la Commission a eu à trancher à l'égard d'un tel rattachement. L'examen des procès-verbaux des assemblées des conseils locaux, des rapports gouvernementaux, des dossiers de la Commission et des articles de journaux révèle également la politique que cette annexion a fait naître. On conclut que le succès de la démarche entreprise par London a découlé de la remarquable habileté politique de son administration et du manque d'organisation des opposants ruraux, ainsi que des procédés et activités de la Commission qui, en ayant pour effet de séparer la question des frontières municipales de celle de la gestion publique, ont favorisé l'annexion.

The Politics of Municipal Annexation: The Case of the City of London's Territorial Ambitions during the 1950s and 1960s

John F. Meligrana

Abstract

Southern Ontario's local government system was under considerable stress immediately following the Second World War as rapid urban growth spilled over traditional municipal units. This situation generated a number of potential local government reforms. The paper focuses on the politics surrounding one type of reform, annexation. The London-Middlesex region is used as a case study to answer the question: why, how, and under what conditions did annexation come to dominate the regional political discourse? The paper examines the political tactics, procedures, and strategies that the City of London employed to support and articulate its territorial ambitions before the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) and other forums during the 1950s and 1960s. London's 1961 annexation was the fiercest and final annexation battle that the OMB decided between the city and Middlesex County. The paper also unpacks the politics surrounding the 1961 annexation by reviewing the minutes of local council meetings, government reports, records of the OMB, and newspaper articles. It concludes that London's annexation success resulted from the city's superior political skills, a disorganized rural opposition, and the proceedings and operations of the OMB that divorced the issue of municipal boundaries from local governance, thereby biasing the outcome in favour of annexation.

Résumé

Le réseau municipal du sud de l'Ontario a été considérablement ébranlé immédiatement après la Seconde Guerre mondiale lorsque le rapide essor urbain s'est mis à progresser au-delà des limites des municipalités existantes. Cette situation a engendré plusieurs tentatives de réforme sur le plan municipal. Cet exposé porte sur la politique que suscite un type de réforme particulier, soit l'annexion. La région de London-Middlesex fait l'objet d'une étude de cas destinée à illustrer pourquoi, comment et dans quelle conjoncture l'annexion en est venue à dominer le discours politique régional. On examine les tactiques, les stratégies et les moyens d'action politiques employés par la ville de London pour présenter et appuyer ses ambitions territoriales devant la Commission des affaires municipales de l'Ontario et dans d'autres contextes au cours des années 1950 et 1960. L'annexion du comté de Middlesex à London en 1961 a été l'enjeu de la dernière et de la plus acharnée des luttes que la Commission a eu à trancher à l'égard d'un tel rattachement. L'examen des procès-verbaux des assemblées des conseils locaux, des rapports gouvernementaux, des dossiers de la Commission et des articles de journaux révèle également la politique que cette annexion a fait naître. On conclut que le succès de la démarche entreprise par London a découlé de la remarquable habileté politique de son administration et du manque d'organisation des

opposants ruraux, ainsi que des procédés et activités de la Commission qui, en ayant pour effet de séparer la question des frontières municipales de celle de la gestion publique, ont favorisé l'annexion.

Introduction

Annexation is the legal means by which municipalities acquire jurisdiction over surrounding lands. From a planning standpoint, annexation represents a potential long-term solution to the management of urban growth. However, annexation's apparent planning goals can be clouded by the intense local and regional political conflicts over changes to the territorial status quo of local governments. Annexation is a zero-sum game that produces winners and losers. Any municipal territorial enlargement must come at the political and jurisdictional expense of another municipality or, as is usually the case, from a rural government such as a township and a county.¹ This political contest manifests itself in local government conflicts over the amount, direction, and type of urban growth. The conflict usually pits the urban support for annexation against the rural opposition.

This paper explores the political methods and tactics employed by the City of London to successfully gain substantial territory from the surrounding townships during the 1950s and 1960s. During the immediate post-World War II period, the amount of political capital invested by London in pursuing annexation and fighting boundary extensions by Middlesex County and the surrounding townships revealed deep, inter-municipal rifts. These rifts occurred in the interpretation of growth-management policies on urban development and supporting infrastructure services. The London-Middlesex region is used as a case study to answer the questions, why, how, and under what conditions did annexation come to dominate the regional political discourse? To answer this question, the paper unpacks the politics surrounding the 1961 annexation by reviewing the minutes of local council meetings, local and provincial government reports, records of the Ontario Municipal Board, and news reports published by the *London Free Press*. This material was supplemented by information gained from land-use and cadastral maps as well as census data.

The 1961 annexation in particular, and the London city-region in general, represent a useful case study for a number of reasons. First, London represents the largest municipality in southern Ontario. It has been suggested that the large annexation of 1961 precluded a regional solution imposed by the province on other counties during the early 1970s.²

Second, in 1991 London underwent one of the largest annexations in Ontario's history.³ This annexation can be traced to the earlier 1961 annexation, whose history has not been fully explored.⁴ In fact, the townships, prior to London's 1991 annexation, claimed the city "wasted" the township land

awarded to it in 1961 and, thus, did not deserve yet another increase in municipal territory. London, and Middlesex County and its member municipalities, therefore, have coped with urban growth through a long and bitter debate over London's annexation ambitions. There is little research on the uses to which the receiving municipality put the annexed lands.⁵ Further, there is little documentation on the impact that annexed land had on the pattern and rate of urbanization within Canadian city-regions.⁶

Third, London is an example of a dominant urban area surrounded by productive farmland, thus offering a geographical basis for demonstrating relationships between the city and countryside. The map of the London-Middlesex region reveals a large city surrounded by numerous rural municipalities (figure 1). Yet, profound differences among these municipalities can be discerned from the postwar growth trends (table 1). The presence of London has influenced the townships in several ways. In consequence, these townships have economic roles different from each other. Further, there are numerous small urban centres with distinctive histories. All of this created a political environment in which large-scale annexations by the City of London were met with strategies, tactics, and interpretations that make the story of London's annexation informative.

The paper begins with a brief review of the literature on the politics and other factors involved in municipal annexations. It then introduces Ontario's local government system and annexation procedures in place during the 1950s and 1960s. The next section provides a brief overview of the London city-region, which includes a description of the post-World War II regional growth pressures and political geography of the local government system. The following section documents the politics and procedures during the 1950s and early 1960s that led to London's substantial territorial gain in 1961. The conclusion identifies the main factors that led to London's 1961 annexation.

Background

Other studies have shown that annexation does not happen in a political vacuum but is grounded in the complexities of a region's institutional, historical, and physical setting. Annexation is largely found at the rural-urban interface. Research, both in Canada and other nations, shows it is part of the process of rural-to-urban land conversions.⁷ It is not common in areas completely built up, but rather in municipalities whose boundaries are not contiguous with another municipality of equal legal status. Annexation is clearly a part of the dynamics of the rural-urban interface commonly referred to as urban spillover from urban municipalities. Therefore, urbanization must have taken place within governmental units geared to rural environments, such as townships in Ontario.⁸ The conflict over annexation thus arises when a rural government begins to pursue urban policies and development practices. Alternatively, it occurs when rural governments cannot control urban subdivisions, especially those at the margins of an established or mature urban municipality. In fact, during the 1950s and 1960s,

the Government of Ontario instructed the townships to control urban subdivisions or risk having such urban lands annexed to the adjacent urban municipality.⁹

The redrawing of municipal boundaries is premised on the ability to introduce the mechanism of local government to areas deficient in certain respects. An example is Edmonton's repeated attempts to gain substantial territory from surrounding rural municipalities, especially Strathcona County.¹⁰ Historically, both residential and industrial developments occurred beyond municipal limits to avoid local fire and building code regulations. The result was "substandard" developments adjacent to established local governments.¹¹ Developments are sometimes driven by real estate interests and not out of well-grounded attempts at rational planning. Such developments occurred in many Prairie cities during the land boom of the early 1900s.¹² Therefore, annexation reflects the inability of a local government system to contain urban growth within established municipal units.

As a result, contested annexations have involved the attempt of an urban municipality to control planning of land use within other jurisdictions. They can come in the form of attempts to control regional services, most importantly water distribution and sewage disposal.¹³ Annexation occurs where regional governance over these two important hard infrastructure services is virtually in the complete control of one municipality, usually the dominant urban centre within a city-region. The attempt to employ extra territorial power can be motivated by perceived substandard fringe developments or to maintain land in its "vacant" state so that the municipality can annex those lands for development. Such an attempt can be seen in Toronto's policy between 1912 and 1952. Toronto did not extend services beyond its jurisdiction nor did it want to annex "fringe" property for the sake of providing services.¹⁴ In other city-regions, such as the Vancouver metropolitan area, municipalities created extra municipal boards and commissions to oversee and manage water and sewage distribution. At the same time, the City of Edmonton profited handsomely from being a regional supplier of water and waste management to peripheral communities.¹⁵

Annexation may also destroy the ability of regional institutional structures to evolve within a city-region that is responsible for inter-municipal planning. In fact, annexation may result because there is no strong regional institution. Or annexation may be symptomatic of poor inter-municipal relationships and poor regional governance. For example, the Edmonton metropolitan area, Smith notes that all municipalities lacked will to cooperate toward a regional vision. Further, Masson remarks on the animosity between Edmonton city politicians and municipal officials from surrounding surrounding areas that stemmed largely from long-standing boundary disputes.¹⁶ On the other hand, previous cooperation on water and sewer works paved the way for establishment of a cooperative regional federation in the greater Vancouver area.¹⁷

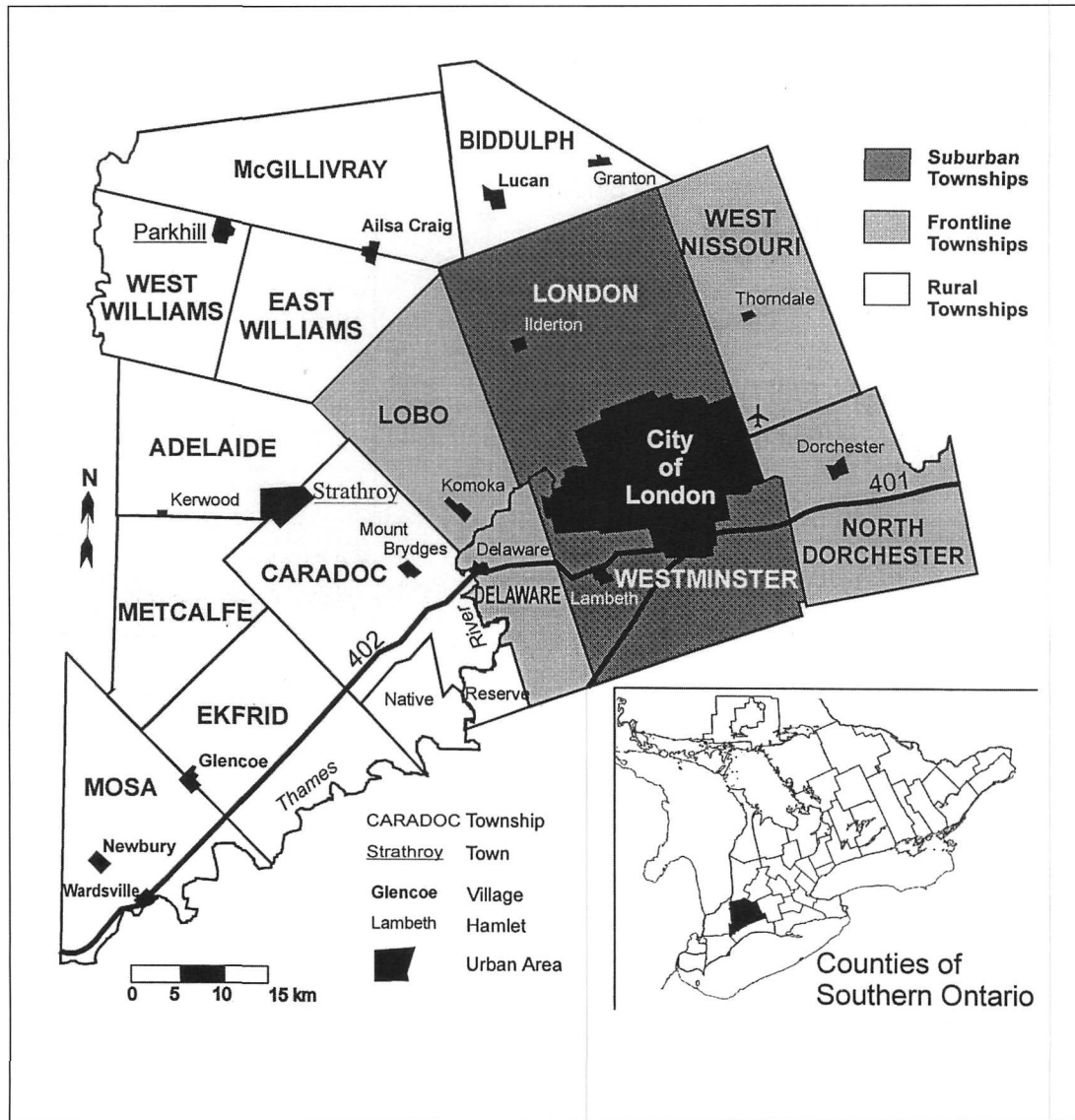
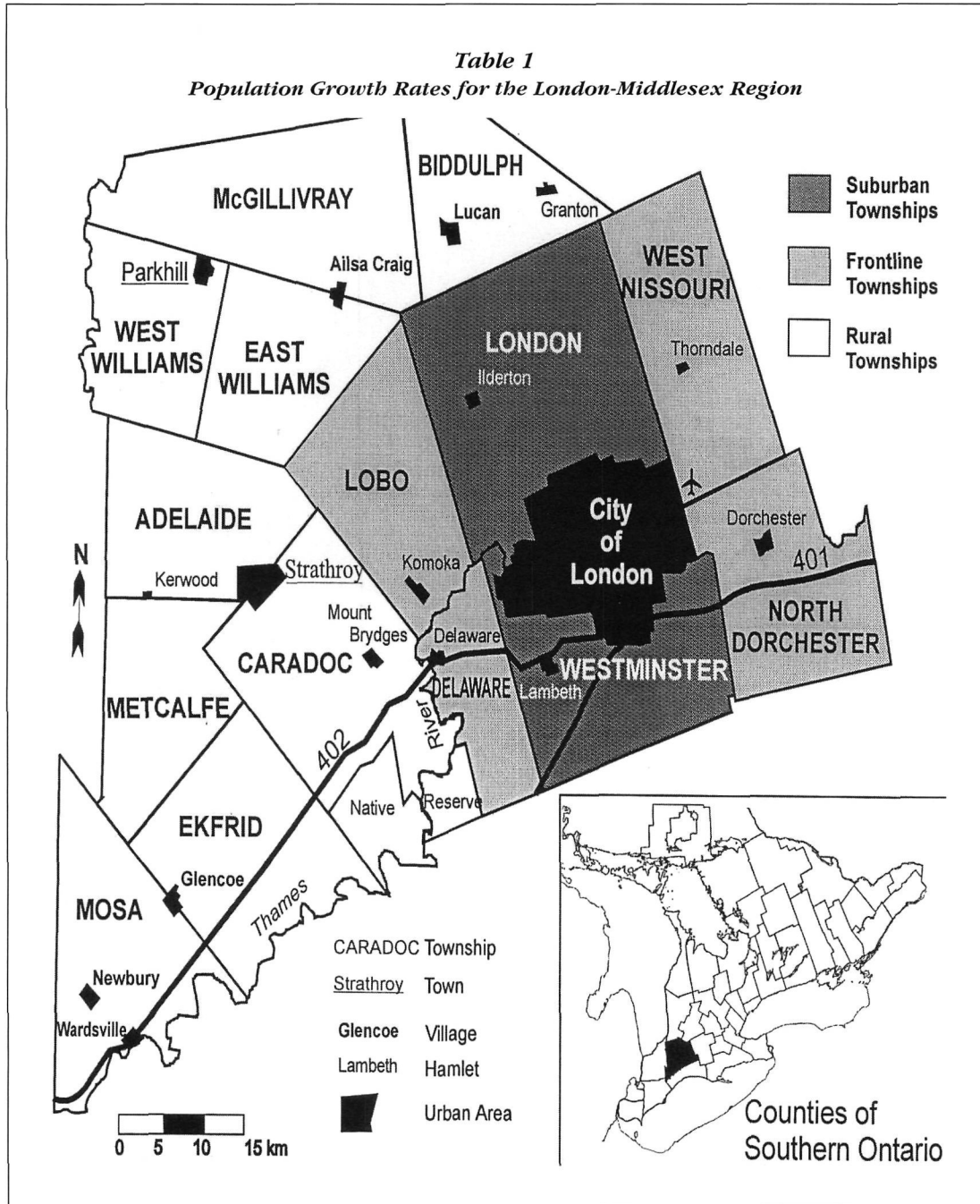


Figure 1: The City of London and Middlesex County (Note: Municipal boundaries as of 1961)

To some degree, regional geographic characteristics also shape the direction of expansion and the amount of lands annexed by a municipality. Specifically, the more complex the urban spatial structure in its social and political organization, the greater the opportunities for resistance to annexation. Such opportunities were discovered in a comparative case study of the differences in the historic rates of annexation between the cities of Calgary and Edmonton. Calgary was more successful in its annexation application because the surrounding settlement pattern was less complex and less dense than that surrounding Edmonton. Therefore, Calgary had fewer opportunities for resistance.¹⁸

A legal expansion of territory, however, requires adherence to the rules and procedures established by provincial legislation.

Most provincial legislation permits municipalities to petition for—or start—proceedings to expand or contract their territorial jurisdictions.¹⁹ So municipal boundaries are not assumed, in legal terms, to be fixed positions, but fluid demarcations subject to change, usually at the local initiative. (The province, of course, must ultimately give legal effect to any proposed boundary alteration.) However, provincial laws on boundary extensions are largely silent on the reasons that boundaries can or should be redrawn. So the reasons are articulated by the proponents of annexation and the provincial agent empowered to decide upon proposals for annexation. For example, research by Diemar on the role of Alberta's Local Authorities Board (LAB), a board analogous to Ontario's Municipal Board,



reveals that, over time, the quasi-judicial board developed a collective memory to apply standard working principles to annexation applications.²⁰ Plunkett and Lightbody, however, are critical of the LAB. They cite the adversarial and confrontational format of the quasi-judicial proceedings that do little to generate a meaningful debate on the broader issues of regional planning and municipal reform, so debate is restricted to the redrawing of municipal limits.²¹

Ontario's Local Government System and Annexation Procedures

The county and township survey undertaken during the early 1790s defined the structure of southern Ontario's system of local government. The passage of the Baldwin Municipal Act in 1849 made counties and surveyed townships into municipal units of government. The act created a strong legislative

distinction between rural and urban areas by separating cities, and some towns, from the direct political operation of county government. The county was to be an upper tier of local government, with a governing board comprising members appointed from the elected council of the lower-tier municipalities, i.e., villages, towns, or townships. The board was entrusted to make policies and regulations on, for example, the administration of justice, construction and maintenance of county roads, and the distribution of general welfare funds.²²

The underlying principles of the Baldwin Municipal Act and the spatial structure of the county system were not fundamentally disturbed or altered between its passage in 1849 and the mid-1960s. This period was one of rapid urban growth, which occurred in the form of rural-to-urban migration, and the rapid subdivision of property within rural townships on the margins of urban municipalities. Now there was pressure to provide an urban infrastructure within a system designed for a rural economy. Annexation, therefore, became a viable solution to amending an outdated system of local government. A number of local institutional structures were also created to provide a formal arena for inter-municipal interaction on planning and servicing of urban developments, and to facilitate communication among cities and rural municipalities.

Extra territorial powers were given by extending planning powers beyond a municipality's jurisdiction. For example, before the 1930s, the City of Toronto had subdivision approval in the adjacent York County. Or extra territorial financial power came in the form of municipal investment in property beyond its boundaries. For example, during the 1950s and 1960s, the City of Hamilton was given authority to raise money through additional property taxes to acquire parkland in nearby Barton Township. Overall, such powers have met the infrastructure needs of urbanization without actually changing the form and structure of local governments.²³

With the rising use of the automobile, county roads were increasingly used for inter-city trips rather than for rural travel. Prior to the construction of the major 400-series highways—a designation of freeway status, such as the 401 in 1959—county roads were used for such purposes. So cities acquired an interest in the way that county roads were maintained or upgraded. In some counties, a joint roads board or commission was established to coordinate planning of county roads that serviced the city.

The immediate postwar years brought tremendous growth pressures. Townships on the edges of cities found it impossible to adequately service the expanding subdivisions. As a result, joint servicing boards were created, to allow management and extension of city services into the fringe areas.

None of these boards or commissions was responsible for the comprehensive planning of the region. The joint service boards, joint roads commissions, and other forms of extra territorial powers often had a narrow scope, usually having been charged

with solving one problem or issue. In 1946, the province adopted a planning act that empowered municipalities to create and adopt an official plan.²⁴ It also allowed for the creation of a joint planning board to oversee inter-municipal planning. So perhaps forms of inter-municipal governance were responsible for urban sprawl.

One important institution that did coordinate and influence the inter-municipal relations and activities was the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), created in 1906. The OMB, made up of provincially appointed board members, was empowered to approve, among other things, the alteration of municipal boundaries.²⁵ There were three ways to initiate an OMB hearing on annexation. One was through application by a municipal council, initiated by passing a bylaw requesting an increase in municipal territory. Second was by application of the Minister of Municipal Affairs for municipal boundary extensions that were presumably in the provincial interest. Third, at least 150 electors of a town, village, or township, or 500 electors of a city, could petition their council to have their collective properties annexed to another municipality. Once it received the petition, the municipality had to pass an annexation bylaw, and if the bylaw received the assent of the electors, the municipality had to forward the annexation application to the OMB.²⁶

The OMB usually held a preliminary hearing to determine the information required and procedures to be followed. At this time, the board could dismiss an annexation application without proceeding to a full board hearing. The board also had the power to call evidence from local or provincial government departments and to retain experts to provide assistance. The conduct of each hearing varied by application, based on the circumstances of each application. In general, the hearings of the board were conducted in a quasi-judicially, with the board allowing written statements of claim or defence by the municipalities or local planning boards that had jurisdiction over the affected area. These statements were usually written by, and articulated to, the board by lawyers, and were subject to cross-examination by counsel representing other jurisdictions.

It was the board's practice, however, that the burden of proof in establishing the need for annexation rested with the municipality making the application. In other words, the board required the municipality seeking additional territory to make a *prima facie* case for annexation. As already noted, however, explicit reasons or standards for judging the merit of an annexation application were not readily forthcoming from provincial legislation. Furthermore, the decisions of the board were not bound by legal precedent. Thus, the board procedures on deciding annexations were rather open-ended.

The OMB order was not itself a legally binding regulation, but the province had to give it legal effect. Before 1960, enacted legislation gave effect to the OMB annexation orders. Thus, the annexation question would enter the provincial political arena and was potentially subject to amendments through parliamentary committees and readings. After 1960, an order-in-council

gave the OMB annexation orders legal effect, thereby removing the issue from the floor of the Ontario legislature.

For almost seventy years, from 1906 to 1982, a quasi-judicial tribunal, the OMB, was responsible for hearing and judging annexation applications. During the 1950s and 1960s, it handed down over four hundred annexation decisions.²⁷ Yet, little is known about the debates and processes that municipalities undertook in preparing annexation cases before the board, about the alternatives presented by opposing municipalities, usually townships, or about the fallout from the board's decision on inter-municipal relations.²⁸

Having reviewed the local government institutions and annexation procedures as they existed in Ontario during the 1950s and 1960s, it now falls to the case study to reveal how these procedures were interpreted and put into operation. And, more important, the case study shows how the City of London effectively utilized these procedures to acquire substantial territory.

The London-Middlesex Region

The political organization of the London-Middlesex Region (figure 1), critical to understanding the annexation disputes between city and countryside, can be summarized as follows:

1. *Dominant Urban Centre:* City of London
2. *County:* Middlesex County
3. *Suburban Townships:* Westminster and London
4. *Frontline Townships:* Delaware, North Dorchester, Lobo, West Nissouri
5. *Rural Townships:* Adelaide, Biddulph, Caradoc, Ekfrid, McGillivray, Metcalfe, Mosa, East and West Williams
6. *Rural Service Centres:* small towns, villages, and hamlets

Dominant Urban Centre

London, the dominant urban centre, occupies a central location in Southwestern Ontario—a geographic factor associated with its development as a transportation junction for rail and highway networks connecting Toronto with points in the United States. It lies on the banks of the Thames River, which flows through south-central Middlesex County. Middlesex and its member municipalities, therefore, had to cope with an emerging large and dominant urban municipality.

Middlesex County

Middlesex County has strong agricultural roots. The well-watered rolling county and excellent soils has provided the basis for the vibrant agricultural economy that dates back to early European occupation of this area. The several rural municipalities that comprise Middlesex reflect its rural economic base. As of 1991, the county consisted of twenty-one municipalities, including fifteen townships, two towns, five villages, and nine unincorporated hamlets (figure 1). The population of Middlesex County is small and has grown modestly during the

twentieth century. The current population of 70,000 is unevenly distributed among the constituent rural forms of municipalities. The shifting distribution of residents within the county is partially a result of the presence of London. Thus, the geographically large area and the politically fragmented county population, juxtaposed against the large City of London, created a dynamic rural-urban spatial structure driving the course of annexation disputes within the region.

Knowledge of this rural-urban dynamic is critical to understanding the 1961 debate over London's annexation. The townships can be divided into three broad classifications—suburban townships, frontline townships, and rural townships—defined by unique demographic pressures and territorial interests by the City of London (figure 1).

Suburban Townships

The suburban townships of Westminster and London stand apart from all other townships because of their distinctive growth trends that are due, in large part, to their proximity to London. Their population growth and economic activities were (and still are) firmly tied to the city, whether from the spillover of people, industrial activities, or transportation investments. Thus, their growth rates and patterns diverged widely from those of the other townships. The immediate postwar years saw growth escalate, as London Township's substantial population increased by more than 66 per cent between 1951 and 1956, even higher than Westminster Township's population increase of over 45 per cent. These figures stand in stark contrast to the comparatively meagre 7 per cent growth experienced by the City of London over the same period (table 1). By 1956, the townships of Westminster and London contained a quarter of the county population, and another half resided in the city. Thus, the City of London began to cast a covetous eye over the lands of its neighbours, with lingering attention paid to neighbouring townships of London and Westminster.

The suburban townships were "punished" for their urban demographic trends on the margin of a large city, when London in 1961 was awarded substantial territory from both Westminster and London Townships. With annexation came an immediate reversal of growth patterns within the suburban townships. The 1961 census reported a reduction in the populations of Westminster and London Townships by 81 per cent and 74 per cent respectively, since the previous census. However, the City of London increased in population from over 101,000 in 1956 to well over 160,000 in 1961, representing over three-quarters of the county's population (table 1).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the city absorbed an ever-increasing share of the county's population. At the same time, the total populations of Westminster and London Townships stagnated, falling well below the overall township growth rate in the county. Between 1961 and 1971, the growth rates of the suburban townships mirrored the historically meagre and declining population trends of the rural townships. This sudden reversal of fortunes was partially the result of London's policies

The Politics of Municipal Annexation: London's Territorial Ambitions

to seal off the suburban townships from the city's economic activities and public services that were needed to promote and sustain growth (as will soon be discussed). The postwar demographic trends suggest another period of municipal consolidation within London, analogous to the early decades of the century.

The Frontline Townships

The frontline townships are a geographic grouping of townships whose boundaries are contiguous with the City of London, but exclude the suburban townships. Growth rates of the frontline townships revealed a different pattern from that of the rural townships. The former recorded strong population expansions from the 1940s through to the late 1980s (table 1). This rather long period of sustained growth was a direct result of London's expanding economic influence in the surrounding rural areas. The rise of hobby farms, the subdivision of rural lots for estate housing, the affordability and increased accessibility of land for housing and industry fuelled the rural-to-urban land conversion in this fringe area.²⁹ Yet London's annexation desires did not seriously threaten the frontline townships. They were simply too far away and the urban growth too subtle and fragmented to warrant serious consideration. Thus, they escaped the dramatic declines in population experienced by the suburban municipalities during the late 1950s.

Rural Service Centres

Since the 1940s, the rural service centres have enjoyed sustained population growth (table 1). The small urban communities, such as Wardsville, Newbury, Parkhill, and Ailsa Craig have long histories of local self-governance within a rural agricultural setting. Strathroy is the largest urban municipality within the county and is responsible for much of the county's recent population growth. However, with limited debt loads allowed by law, these communities were (and still are) restrained in the number of urban services they could offer to incur population increases. Thus, the rural service centres were never a serious or viable option to absorb or challenge the urban population growth destined for the dominant urban centre of London.

Annexation Battles

Table 1, therefore, encapsulates the story of growth and annexation within the London-Middlesex region. With this empirical background, it remains to discuss the activities of the local institutions and their actors in promoting and defending against annexation. The cycles of urban growth and decline within the county must be understood in terms of their interpretation by local institutions, and through the formal and informal procedures for deciding annexation. The main period of investigation—the late 1950s—contains the events leading to London's large-scale annexations of 1961.

Population growth within the suburban municipalities during the 1940s and early 1950s brought annexation to the fore as a potential public policy to control growth. Population growth was the result of key public and private investments. For example, during the war, the federal government constructed a large

facility for the repair and maintenance of military aircraft just outside the city's boundaries, where London's international airport now stands. With the arrival of the General Motors locomotive plant on Oxford Street just outside London's municipal limits, industrial growth started moving to the northeast along the CN and CP railway lines. Other industries, such as Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, followed the lead of General Motors and moved to lands east of the city. The area surrounding Oxford Street, from the city limits to Crumlin Airport, became known as the Golden Mile—a reference to the prosperity accompanying the development of industry (figure 2).

The city, the local press, and academics also scrutinized the urbanization of London Township. All arrived at similar conclusions: that annexation provided the only solution to managing growth in the townships adjoining London. In particular, the *London Free Press*, in April 1950, devoted an entire section to what it termed the "annexation problem."³⁰ It concluded that the areal expansion of London was inevitable.

More important, London's municipal staff suggested that annexation was an appropriate municipal policy to manage growth. Initial reports, originating in the Municipal Engineering Department, argued for developable land to pay for badly needed infrastructure works. At the time, London was the largest municipality in Southwestern Ontario still drawing from groundwater reserves, which had limited capacity to recharge. Engineers started looking to long-term water solutions and cast their covetous eyes northeast to Fanshawe Lake, west to Lake Huron, and north to Georgian Bay. Investment in such infrastructure would have to be recouped through enriched municipal assessment. So these thoughts about water works stimulated questions about where such developments might be located. The city also began to question the wisdom of its policy of extending urban infrastructure services, specifically water, into surrounding townships if such services did not directly benefit London's finances.

Other cities surrounding London—particularly Toronto, Brantford, Hamilton, and Sarnia—were making substantial land gains through annexation, and it was apparent to London that it would lose out to other places if it did not obtain the land base needed to create a strong economic core. Elements of boosterism seemed to be at play.

The task of redrawing London's boundary for the first time in thirty-eight years commenced with the establishment of a joint City-Suburban Annexation Committee, comprising one representative each from the city, London Township, and Westminster Township, as well as three members from the London and Suburban Planning Board (LSPB). The committee reported in May 1951 that a servicing plan for the area was needed. The report posed three questions: (1) Should annexation take place? (2) If so, where should it take place? (3) How might it be carried out? The committee, however, did not provide answers to these questions and failed to indicate an "ultimate" boundary for the City of London. London itself was not prepared to

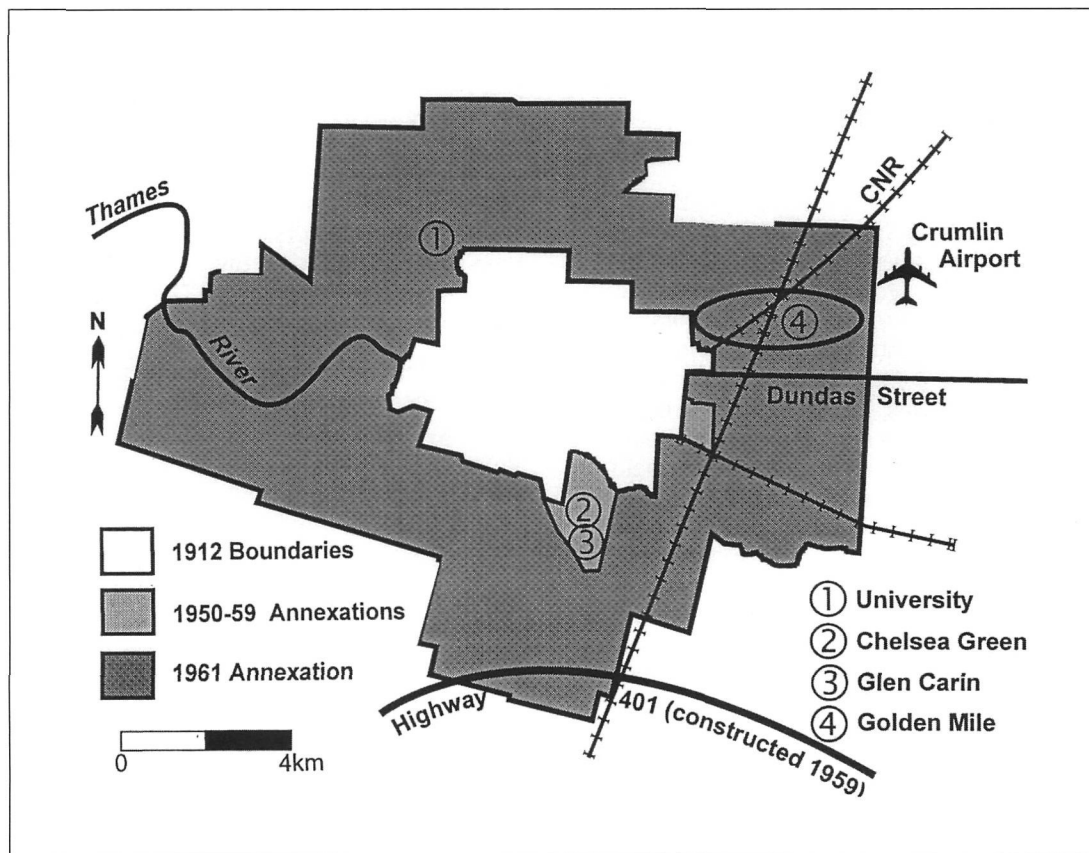


Figure 2: Annexations by the City of London during the 1950s and 1961. (Note: The 1961 annexation was ordered by the OMB in 1960, and became law on the first day of the following year.)

release a public statement on what lands the city would request for inclusion within its municipal limits.³¹

J. McClary Moore, London's representative on the LSPB, and the chair of the City Suburban Annexation Committee, proposed the first boundary line. His line followed the north and south arms of the Thames River east to the edge of Crumlin Airport, with the furthest extension along Dundas Street (figure 3a). The objective was to obtain the rich assessment base of the Golden Mile and to acquire potential development areas south of Dundas Street. His proposal generally followed natural topographical features. The eastern properties were flatter and generally easier to develop, while the Thames River and the rise in topography south of Commissioners Road provided a barrier to development and annexation. This proposal ignored development to the west and south of the city. The prime motive apparently was to capture already established development trends that, from an engineering standpoint, could easily be integrated into the city's infrastructure services.

However, an official boundary line was not released to the public until October 1951. Before then, the surrounding town-

ships, particularly London Township, knew that the city planned an attempt to annex certain lands. However, they grew uncomfortable about not knowing the scale and dimensions of the city's land needs.³² The townships grew increasingly suspicious of the LSPB for being pro-annexation, and both Westminster and London Townships threatened to withdraw in light of Moore's expressed plans for annexation.

In September 1951, the mayor of London, Allan J. Rush, released an annexation proposal that would more than double the city's land area (figure 3b). His proposal proved much more extensive than Moore's, because it included all lands between the south and north arms of the Thames, the airport on the east side of the city, and the lands occupied by the University of Western Ontario, west of the Thames River. He also included lands south of the Thames. His proposal forced City Council to debate and establish a formal position as adopted in October 1951. London Council's official boundary proposal was much more modest than either Rush's or Moore's suggestions. However, the common thrust of all the proposals was to capture lands to the east of the city, lands that were under intensive pressure to develop the Golden Mile (figure 3c).

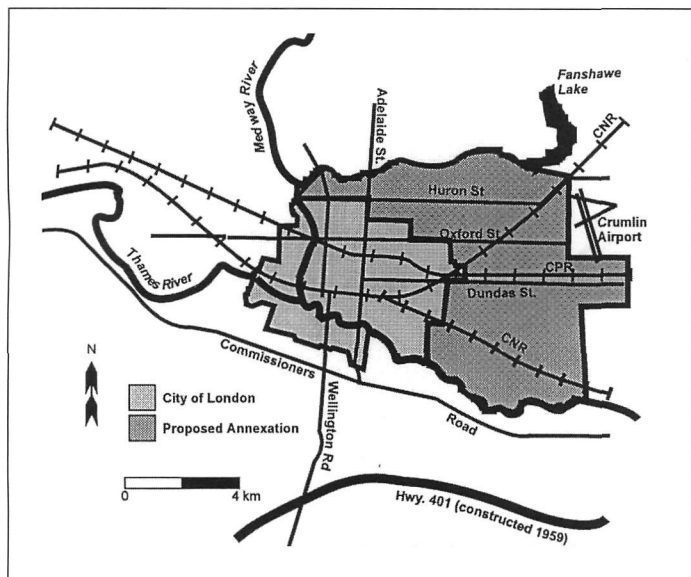


Figure 3a: J. M. Moore's annexation proposal

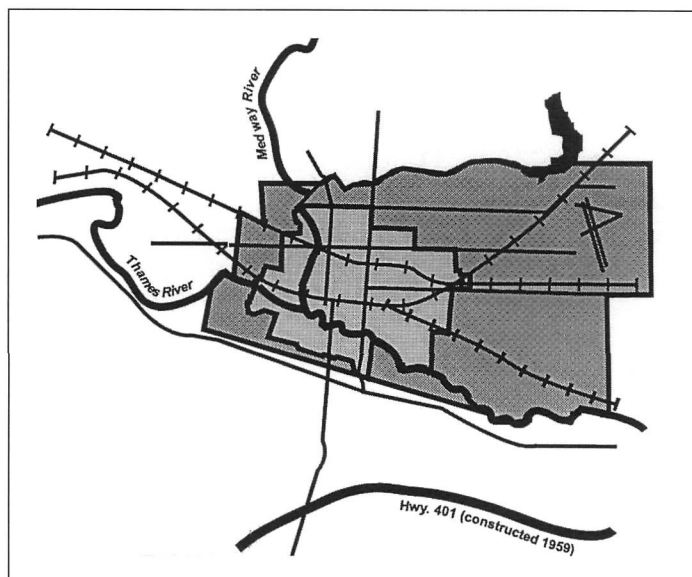


Figure 3b: London Mayor Rush's Proposal

Since the proposal cut severely into the land base of London Township and would dramatically reduce its assessment, the township held a vote on the issue. The vote was 1,491 for annexation and 1,650 against. Although the vote did not legally decide the annexation issue, it was a political move to warn the city that the township enjoyed the support of its population in fighting the city's land claim. Media reports and city arguments downplayed the meaning of this message, which was that most of the votes cast in favour of annexation came from areas the city had proposed to incorporate.³³ Sensing that the issue could become a political fight, the city prepared to send a delegation to meet with Premier Leslie Frost on London's annexation proposal before it made any formal application to the OMB.³⁴

Without an agreement between the surrounding townships and the City of London, the issue was bound for the OMB. London Township was legally obligated to take the matter to the OMB, since it received a petition from more than 150 residents within the township requesting annexation to London. A joint council session among the City of London and the Townships of Westminster and London revealed that the townships were in favour of an OMB hearing, believing, perhaps, that they could reduce the amount of land taken by London and save the Golden Mile from the clutches of the city.

The OMB hearing moved the discussion from the political to a quasi-judicial arena, where teams of lawyers now articulated each position. The strategy of London Township was simply to argue that a rich industrial assessment drove the city's motives. The township's strategy was neither comprehensive nor compelling. The city's case, prepared not only by the lawyer, but also the entire municipal staff, overwhelmed the townships' weak position. Several city departments reported on the impact

of the annexation proposal on their operations, with the city bill amounting to more than \$4 million in capital improvements needed in the annexed area.³⁵ The city outlined how it would invest the money in orderly and controlled growth. The city's lawyer listed nine planning reasons for London to incorporate the proposed area: (1) the divergent interests of rural and urban residents of the "fringe area"; (2) the township's "inability" to provide services, except at great cost; (3) duplicated overhead; (4) the township's failure to keep built-up areas compact; (5) waste from past piecemeal attempts to provide services; (6) a rural municipality's inability to deal with urban problems; (7) the need to control residential building and keep it out of industrial sites; (8) the need for areas of "common interest" for proper development, i.e., under the direction of one municipality; and (9) the township would increase farm taxation by developing the newly annexed lands.³⁶ The lawyer London staff presented the classic arguments favouring annexation.

The city was so confident of its case that it asked the board to delay consideration of annexing parts of Westminster Township because municipal staff needed time to make arrangements to absorb the land from London Township.³⁷ This further suggests that the city's motive was annexation mainly of the substantial industrial and suburban developments lying to the east. To counter any suggestion that their motive was an industrial land grab, the city pointed to a 1953 annexation of the Chelsea Green subdivision at the request of Westminster Township (figure 2). That area was residential and had required city services.

To no one's surprise, in its 1953 decision, the OMB awarded the City of London everything it asked for. In fact, any decision to the contrary would have greatly diverged from preceding board

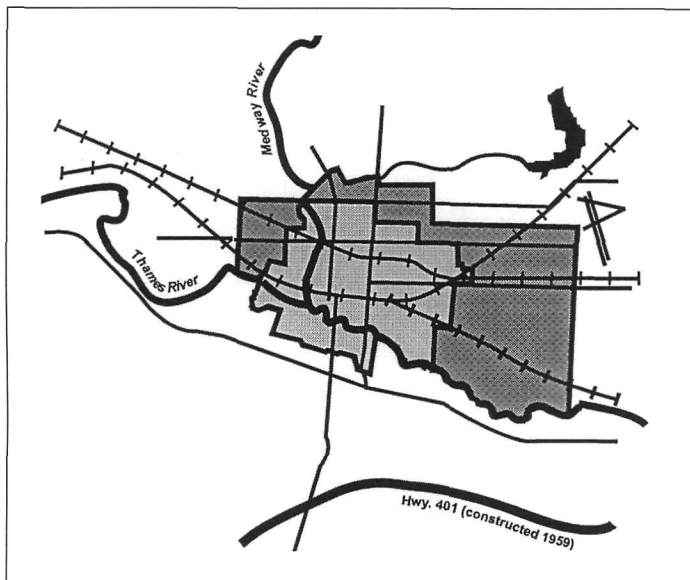


Figure 3c: London City Council's proposal

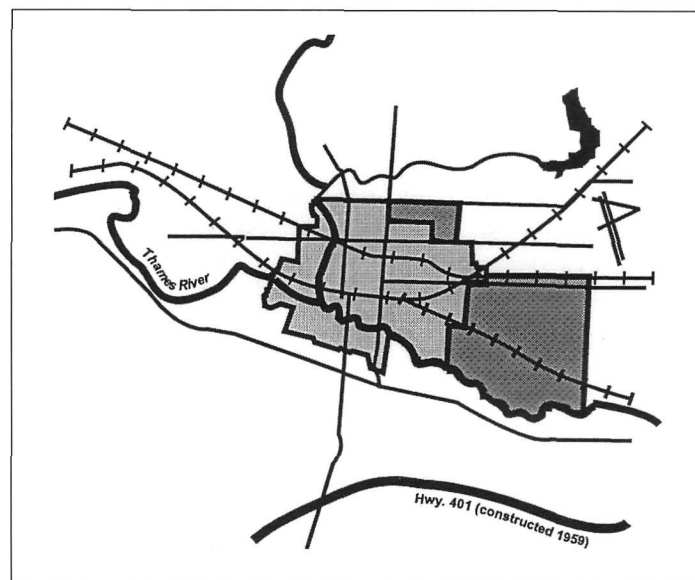


Figure 3d: Middlesex County MPP T. L. Patrick's proposal

decisions on annexation elsewhere in the province. Further, although the board was empowered to impose solutions other than annexation, it may have interpreted Premier Frost's remarks in the legislature on the need for "progressive annexation" as precluding any "metropolitan" solution for the London area.³⁸ Certainly that appeared to be the city's understanding of his remarks.

In its decision, the board noted the inability of the rural township to regulate urban land and building use, while the City of London had proved its ability to manage growth. Further, the board particularly noted the township's inadequate schools, general lack of sewers, and reliance on the city for its water supply and highway maintenance. Commuting patterns of workers revealed that 70 per cent of the employees at the GM Diesel plant resided in the city.³⁹ In essence, the OMB agreed with the city's planning argument and ignored the protests from the township, county, and residents of Broughdale.⁴⁰

The board's decision, however, did not enact the boundary extension. The city would have to wait for the provincial parliament to pass appropriate legislation. Council directed the city solicitor to draft the necessary private member's bill to give effect to the order of the OMB. The piloting of London's private member's bill through the Ontario Legislature fell to London North MPP, John Robarts.⁴¹ At the Private Member Bills Committee, a dramatic change of fortune awaited London's grasp for the Golden Mile. The bill introduced by Robarts that outlined the boundaries ordered by the OMB, was amended by T. L. Patrick, a Conservative MPP representing the rural riding of North Middlesex, which contained much of London Township (figure 3d). The amendment reduced the annexation by one-third and excluded the university lands, Broughdale, and the Golden Mile. In one fell swoop, Patrick's proposal circum-

vented the 400 pages and thirty-seven exhibits that went into the OMB decision and presented an alternative with little public scrutiny beyond the confines of the Private Member Bills Committee. He also generated a substantial majority, as his proposal won by a convincing margin of thirteen to seven. Apparently Patrick and his supporters won through their alliance not with the Conservative Party, but with their rural constituents, for private members' bills are not restricted by party discipline.

Having been blind-sided by his own caucus member, Robarts seemed to have no choice but to withdraw the entire legislation from the agenda. Evidently London had no appetite for expansion that excluded the Golden Mile. From London's perspective, the assessment from the Golden Mile would offset the capital and operating expenses incurred in developing and servicing residential properties, while for the township it must have revealed itself as the only reason for annexation.

The fallout from the failed annexation bid did not quell the City of London's desire for expansion. It merely delayed the matter. Immediately after the loss, the city threatened to stop sewer extension into the surrounding townships unless it received adequate compensation.⁴² Realizing its vulnerable position revealed by the OMB ruling, London Township acted to create a municipal structure more suited to urban development. In 1955, the township established a Township Planning Board and enacted an official plan that empowered the township to be the sole jurisdiction over subdivisions within its boundaries. Further, the township constructed the Pottersburg Sewerage Treatment Plant that began operation in 1956. Urban development continued in the township as it found favour with heavy industries such as Imperial Oil and the 3M plant.

The Politics of Municipal Annexation: London's Territorial Ambitions

These developments created a sense of urgency in the city. If development was allowed to continue, annexation would be increasingly difficult to achieve. The London mayor's inaugural address to council alluded to this: "... it is now most imperative that a decision be reached so that proper planning can be made for the future. From every reliable authority we have been able to consult annexation or amalgamation would appear to be the only answer."⁴³ From its failed bid to annex parts of London Township, London also learned the need for more energetic study of the actual land needs of the city, rather than blind reaction to development in the periphery. The peculiar statements made to the media right after the city's favourable outcome at the OMB in 1953 support this view. The chair of the LSPB stated that the annexation gave the city commercial and industrial land, but the city did not consider strong residential development beyond the limits of the annexed area. The city planner added that annexation "... has solved only half our problems."⁴⁴ All these developments led the city to hire outside expertise in 1957 to study the matter of municipal boundaries.⁴⁵

Toronto-based Project Planning Associates were given the task of examining the municipal boundary, but London Council gave no explicit instruction about formulating boundary options. Further, their entire report was intended not for public disclosure, but for the eyes of council members only. The report highlighted growth trends in the areas immediately surrounding London. It made particular mention of the accessibility and suitability of London Township lands to urban development. It also astutely recognized the growing importance of the automobile on the spread of urban development, specifically in relation to the planned construction of a superhighway (401) through Westminster Township, just two kilometres from London's southern boundary (figure 2).

The report noted that London was rapidly running out of developable land, and that there was "haphazard growth rather than compact and planned growth in the townships, strip development and overall lack of urban goals by the townships with respect to the patterning of urban growth."⁴⁶ Although the report made no boundary recommendations, it went so far as to isolate four key areas to consider for annexation: Fanshawe Lake, Crumlin Airport, Highway 401, and the University of Western Ontario. Thus, the area of consideration presented to London Council was far larger than the proposed annexation made to the OMB just four years earlier.

The city's boundary investigation prompted several reactions within the adjoining townships. Because the report was kept secret, it fuelled speculation about the direction and scale of London's annexation desires. Such speculation affected the townships' ability to plan capital budgets for urban services and infrastructure, for no township was willing to spend tax dollars on municipal works that would ultimately end up within the city. At the township's inaugural meeting, the reeve commented that he "... could not recommend spending money in the township until the City of London declares openly what it wants, where it wants it, how it wants it."⁴⁷ Thus the lack of urban objectives, as

noted by Project Planning Associates, could be interpreted by the township as a result of the secretive annexation policies of the City of London.

The issue of secrecy was a theme throughout London's annexation history. The subject was first mentioned in 1953 by the London mayor who pledged a more open style of boundary decision making. These were hollow words, for the secrecy surrounding project planners' boundary study came to a head when London City Council denied the editor of the *London Free Press* a copy of the report. The newspaper launched a legal battle all the way to the Ontario Supreme Court, arguing that documents held by council are subject to public scrutiny. Justice McLennan ruled in the city's favour. However, public pressure for release of the boundary study grew as more than one hundred people attended the next council meeting and demanded its distribution. The subject became an election issue with London voting the incumbent, Mayor Ray Dennis, from office and bringing in a new mayor, Allan Johnston. Johnston's first act was to make public the report, despite the fact that the London City Council defeated his motion. The next day the *London Free Press* printed the complete text of the boundary study.⁴⁸

Perhaps the strategy to stonewall the release of the boundary study was a tactical error by London Council. Maintaining the report's confidentiality was more controversial than the contents of the study, which contained no explicit boundary options. It was largely seen by both the city and townships as a comprehensive planning report on urban trends and issues already quite evident within the landscape. The apparent arrogance of London's City Council in refusing meetings with the townships on the contents of the report worked further to poison the relationship between the city and townships.

Publication of the boundary report forced City Council to prepare a case before the OMB for the largest municipal expansion ever suggested by the city. The project planners' study had the effect of creating, in the collective mind of City Council and staff, the impression that piecemeal annexations were no longer the solution to developments in the rural-urban periphery. The study's scope implicitly suggested an expansive boundary adjustment to meet the raw land needs of the city and to give it control over land use development adjacent to its municipal boundary. The frontline townships and the city were on a collision course. The OMB hearings started on 27 April 1959 and ended with a decision on 4 December 1959 after the filing of 334 exhibits and testimony totalling 2,000 pages.

In February 1958, the City of London made an initial application to incorporate more than 60,000 acres of land from the townships of London, Westminster, North Dorchester and West Nissouri.⁴⁹ The province, however, deferred the matter for over a year, without giving any reasons. This created some impatience in the city. The mayor stated to council in 1959, "... this is the most important issue facing council, ... [yet] the city's application has been deferred and deferred ... [There has

The Politics of Municipal Annexation: London's Territorial Ambitions

been] no further advancement than at the beginning of 1958 . . . [yet the matter has been] deferred by the province, no reasons given."⁵⁰ Perhaps the size of the annexation bid created uncertainty within the provincial government, as an order-in-council was issued instructing the OMB to " . . . inquire into and report on the municipal organization and structure of the area comprising the City of London, townships of London, Westminster, West Nissouri and North Dorchester."⁵¹ Similar instructions had been given to OMB Chair Cummings in the case of the City of Toronto's annexation/amalgamation application in the early 1950s. These matters leave to speculation whether the province might have been contemplating some type of metropolitan or regional solution for the greater London area.

The board's interpretation of the order-in-council was perplexing. The board chose first to hear arguments and render a decision on London's municipal boundary expansion. Later, in a separate hearing, it invited submissions on municipal organization and governmental structure of the greater London area. In deciding to conduct the hearing in this manner, the OMB practically sanctioned the enlargement of the city and precluded any solution to municipal organization and governmental structure that did not involve redrawing municipal boundaries. The OMB apparently saw no relationship between the issue of municipal boundaries and the organization of local government.

At the hearing, the city contended that a single socio-economic community justified a single municipal unit of government. It pointed out that the absence of substantial annexation since 1912 had created a serious land shortfall within the city. Further, the rapid growth of both London and Westminster Townships was beyond the means of rural township control. The 1958 population of the proposed annexed area was approximately 167,000. By the mid-1980s, its projected population was between 300,000 and 375,000. This meant that the clear distinction between rural and urban would no longer apply between city and township. Therefore, the application for annexation was being made in order to gain more developable land for the city, and to bring the newly urbanized areas within city jurisdiction, leaving the townships to govern land use that was rural only. The city requested 60,000 acres to create a greenbelt and an urban land reserve that would clearly separate the countryside from the city.

In preparing statements of defence against the city's claim for land, the affected townships and Middlesex County collectively argued against the city's position. But their voices were not uniform, each providing a different rationale for London's application. Westminster Township claimed that, through existing land policies, its planning board had effectively maintained a distinct boundary between rural and urban uses. Westminster contended that on three separate occasions, during the previous seven years, it had been able to amicably arrange annexation of smaller parcels of land to the city. It feared that the size of London's request would bring too much rural land within the city's jurisdiction. In short, Westminster's

argument was, *mutatis mutandis*, the same as the city's: if the urban did not belong in the township, then surely the rural did not belong in the city.

North Dorchester Township based its argument on proximity. The township was too remote from London. The township was also entirely rural, with no municipal services such as water and sewerage supplied by the city. West Nissouri made a similar argument. However, West Nissouri had concerns about a large aeronautics industry, Somerville Limited, located east of Crumlin Airport and within the city's proposed area of annexation. The property was the single largest taxpayer for the township. Therefore, West Nissouri could not completely support Westminster's proposal to continue piecemeal annexation, because that might remove Somerville from West Nissouri. Collectively, North Dorchester, West Nissouri, and Westminster implicitly supported small piecemeal annexations in agreed locations. No one argued flatly against annexation or presented a viable alternative to it.

London Township had no tolerance for annexation as a policy for managing growth. Its argument rested on the right of the free market to operate without hindrance of changing local jurisdiction. It believed that industries were voting with their feet by deliberately establishing themselves in London Township and not the City of London. The township's defence stated that " . . . [annexation] forces people and industries into the city who voluntarily chose to establish themselves outside the confines of the city." Further, it suggested that annexation " . . . will not stop new urban development in the areas outside the annexed territory; there is no practical way to do so."⁵²

Middlesex County was most concerned about the impact of annexation on the assessment base, because any lands taken by the city would remove them from not only the township's assessment role, but the county's, as well. The county concluded that if the annexation proceeded as proposed by the city, it would lose approximately 95 per cent of its industrial assessment. In the county's opinion, this would result in dramatic increases in the property tax rate for all remaining county properties. The weakening tax structure of the county was coupled with arguments that the City of London was presently in a favourable economic and financial position with respect to its assessment, so the argument for extra territory could not be advanced for economic or financial reasons. At this point, the county suggested that annexation would provide neither efficient nor orderly development in township lands adjacent to the city. Instead, the county advised the establishment of a metropolitan planning body with authority over the entire region likely to experience urban growth during the next fifteen to twenty-five years. Middlesex County did not elaborate on the structure of such a body, but merely stated that it would present the solution in full, at a later date.

In view of the information presented, the board had no alternative but to side with the City of London. By divorcing discussion

The Politics of Municipal Annexation: London's Territorial Ambitions

of local government organization from the redrawing of municipal boundaries, what remained were vague alternatives and a wealth of land use data illustrating the severe underboundedness of London. The strongest argument against annexation was the resulting weakened tax base of the townships and county. To this the board responded that fear of rising taxes could not be the sole criterion for evaluating boundary disputes. In its decision, the board enumerated the concerns of the City of London practically verbatim: the limited land within the city, rapid growth in the townships, and reliance on city services within the townships:

A variation of the law of self-preservation seems to be at work when development has grown into a population of more than 30,000 and an assessment of more than \$40 million in a suburban portion of a rural township, there develops an almost natural opposition to being "taken over" by the neighbouring city.⁵³

The premise of the board's decision was that rural townships should not be allowed to evolve into urban centres; if possible, urban land should be annexed to the nearest municipality. In describing the townships' inability to govern urban uses, the board noted the poor administration, particularly of London Township, inadequate property assessment, inability to control growth, an unbalanced assessment between residential and non-residential assessment, and failure to forecast capital undertakings. Further, residents in the urban portions of the township had needs and demands different from those that the rural township could offer. The area in question was seen as ". . . a single community in that they have common needs, common interests, common problems, facility for municipal services, function as a unit and have common social and cultural advantages." Specifically cited interests held in common were shared uses of water works supplied by the London Public Utilities Commission, fire service, common drainage discharge into the Thames River, University of Western Ontario, overlapping school board, and other social services that residents of the urban township utilized, but were, or should be, located in the city.⁵⁴

In May 1960, the board ordered that London's territory be doubled through annexation of lands from Westminster and London townships (figure 2). The board agreed with the townships of West Nissouri and North Dorchester that these townships were predominantly rural, and as a result there was no basis for annexing any portion to the city. In the fall of 1960, the OMB decided on the form of government that would preside over this expanded London.

A variety of proposals were presented to the board on the administrative structure of the area (table 2). Collectively, the townships and the county argued in favour of an institutional structure that could oversee development throughout the metropolitan area and would preclude redrawing of municipal boundaries. As early as 1956, the suburban townships and the city established a joint committee on area development, which revealed a substantial gulf between city and township positions.

The city viewed it as essentially an annexation committee, while the townships saw the joint committee as performing a regional-planning function. The townships themselves had presented several solutions for metropolitan growth.

The county and townships agreed that annexation should build upon the existing LSPB. The board, established in 1951, had jurisdiction over and members from the City of London, and parts of Westminster, London, and West Nissouri Townships. The LSPB, dominated by the city, was the planning authority over the area of jurisdiction. The townships and county proposed the creation of an authority with equal municipal representation. However, for the city, the issue was not that of a municipality controlling the board, but the collective power of the townships in relation to the city.

London Township went the furthest in its explanation of an expanded LSPB by creating a federated or metropolitan local government with substantial planning authority. London Township's proposal was limited in area to the City of London and the Townships of London and Westminster, with no apparent thought to restructuring the county or the remaining townships. Its assumption was that urban development would be restricted to London and Westminster Townships.

Westminster's proposal was not as sophisticated as that of London Township. It suggested an inter-urban management board, with powers limited to sewage and water. Perhaps this reflected the position of Westminster to preserve the status quo and support a continued policy of piecemeal annexation.

The county's proposal reflected its chief concern that county roads would service the City of London. Further, the county wanted a board with not only broad legislative powers in matters of zoning, preparation of plans and bylaws, but also one that had "substantial employees."⁵⁵

The most radical proposal came from the chair of the London Township Planning Board, Edward Pleva, who suggested that local boundaries, however redrawn, would not create an acceptable division of jurisdiction to properly plan for county development.⁵⁶ He suggested that all local governments, including the City of London, be dissolved and their assets and planning functions be transferred to the county. Pleva's recommendation went against the grain of more than one hundred years of local governance in Southern Ontario, which sought to legislate different powers to rural and urban environments. The media dubbed the proposal the "noble experiment," but it was apparently not taken seriously in the debate on the future government structure of the area.

Having been awarded a substantial gain in territory by the OMB, the City of London argued for limited administrative changes. The size of annexed territory required considerable time to absorb into the daily and long-term planning and functions of the city. Further, changes to the administrative structure of the city would only complicate the absorption of the annexed area. With this line of reasoning, the city regarded

Table 2
Alternative Solutions to London's Annexation Proposal, 1957-1960

Author	Proposal	Description
London Township Council	Area Development Committee	Four members each from City, Westminster, and London Townships.
Robert Mann, London Township Planner	Federated Greater Urban Council	Nine members: four City, two Westminster, two London and one appointed Chair. Power over water, sewerage, elementary schools, major roads and regional planning
Dr. Pleva, Chair of London Township Planning Board	Unified County-wide Government "Noble Experiment"	Dissolve all local municipalities and transfer function to Middlesex County.
Westminster Council	Inter-Urban Management Board	Membership unknown. Power over water and sewers.
Middlesex Council	Metropolitan Planning Board Metropolitan Roads Commission	Fifteen members -no municipality with majority Complete authority over planning, zoning and Official Plan.
London City Council	Annexation The dissolution of London and Suburban Planning Board City of London Planning Board New Ward Boundaries	Status Quo

Source: compiled by the author from OMB reports and various newspaper articles.

annexation and the restructuring of municipal government as two separate and independent processes. Its only proposals were for creation of new ward boundaries to accommodate the annexed areas and dissolution of the LSPB through creation of a citywide board. Thus, the city saw no reason for the continued existence of the LSPB, since much of the "suburban" area was now within the jurisdiction of the city. Within the city's conclusion reached by the city, was embedded the assumption that urban development and the processes of suburbanization would not spill out beyond the newly expanded city. Therefore, county restructuring was unnecessary, and redrawing the municipal boundary was the final and only solution to effective management and control over the processes of urbanization.⁵⁷

Although the Townships of London and Westminster lost a great deal of land, they still moved to protect the township residents now annexed to the city by arguing for the creation of a London Board of Control. The townships implicitly argued that annexed areas represented by the addition of one or two wards, as suggested by the City of London, could be drowned out in any London Council debate. They felt that a substantial population base being annexed could be better represented by a Board of Control, elected at large, and thus more effective control could be realized across the entire expanded city. The City of London was adamantly opposed to this suggestion.

On this point, the OMB sided with the townships and ordered the establishment of a Board of Control comprising four mem-

bers elected at large. The duties of the board were to prepare current and capital budgets, nominate heads of departments, award contracts, call for tenders and consider, and report on matters relating to annexation. Only a two-thirds majority of City Council could reverse decisions of the board.

The Board of Control and its civic administrator evolved into a powerful institutional entity within London city politics. The political fallout of the annexation and the establishment of a Board of Control saw London politics change dramatically. Here, the township vote within the city proved to be a dynamic political entity commanding the attention of any candidate for civic office. A long-time board member observed that, in the first civic election after the annexation, incumbent Mayor Allan Johnston, a man closely associated with London's massive annexation, lost to a former township police chief, Gordon Stronach.⁵⁸ The election result exemplified the power of the township vote within the City of London.

The OMB, however, remained silent on the governance of the areas beyond the newly expanded City of London. The OMB ignored all discussion and ideas about restructuring the LSPB. Further, the board did not order any compensation to the county or townships for the loss in assessment, nor did the board order the matter to be placed on the ballot for the local electorate's consideration, although it was empowered to do all these things. With this inaction the OMB clearly violated its terms of reference, as instructed by the provincial cabinet through order-in-council. The OMB had ignored its responsibility to provide for the municipal structure of the townships surrounding London. The OMB could have built upon existing institutions, such as the LSPB, to create innovative solutions to metropolitan governance. Instead, it showed apparent shortsightedness and lack of imagination. Thus, it reinforced the perception that mere boundary delineation could solve the complex problems of urban governance.

The OMB order saw no obstacles to implementation, as the legislative process changed to have all board orders ratified by order-in-council rather than through the Private Member Bills Committee of the legislature. Thus a rural backbencher could present no danger, such as occurred almost a decade before, in 1953, when the Middlesex North MPP scuttled the OMB's initial order for annexation. Also, with John Robarts now firmly at the helm of Ontario's "Big Blue Machine," realization of the order was a virtual certainty.

The OMB's ignorance of its terms of reference and the establishment of a powerful Board of Control ultimately sowed the seeds of London's 1988 annexation proposal. Seeing the boundary as the "ultimate" solution proved to be very short-sighted. With the ink still wet on London's new boundary maps, the municipal engineers already found them lacking. For study purposes, the new boundaries did not recognize the natural drainage areas more suited to establishing a waterworks and sewerage infrastructure program. By an ironic twist of fate, the

boundaries the municipal engineers drew in 1962 virtually mirrored the boundaries of the city's 1988 annexation application.⁵⁹

Aside from the OMB order, the city, county and surrounding townships took a number of metropolitan planning initiatives collectively. The silence of the OMB, with respect to the LSPB, created a period of uncertainty about the fate of this institution. However, in 1962 the Central Middlesex Planning Board was established as an advisory body on such matters as how development trends affected the physical, social, and economic conditions. As well, the London Suburban Roads Commission remained to oversee the planning and maintenance of county roads serving the city. And in an effort to control development just beyond its municipal limits, London acted unilaterally to adopt a policy of not extending municipal services into the townships. The creation or continuation of these institutions, in addition to the new servicing policy of the city, demonstrates how important boundary adjustments need to be coupled with explicit methods to deal with planning issues at the city's margins.

Summary and Conclusion

This case study of London's attempts to annex lands from surrounding townships sheds light on how municipalities responded to urban growth through boundary adjustments, and how municipal governments interacted to deal with urban growth that transcended municipal limits. The case study reveals the political struggle between the annexing municipality and the municipalities facing potential loss of territory. London is just one case study, which is not necessarily representative of other cities—for example, Sarnia and Ottawa—that applied to expand their territorial jurisdiction during the 1950s and 1960s.⁶⁰ However, a number of generalizations can be attempted about the findings of this case study and cited research.

Dynamics of the Urban Spatial Structure

Site characteristics shaped the direction and, to a degree, the amount of land requested by the City of London. The city's annexation desires followed the path of least resistance to the northeast into the assessment rich areas of the Golden Mile in London Township. But more than this, the pattern of investment decisions and the position of townships within the city-region shaped the views, ideas, and strategies of the city's annexation attempts. In short, the pattern and characteristics of urban growth created varying views on local and county restructuring. For example, London Township was under the greatest threat of losing territory to the city, prompting the township to suggest more elaborate alternatives to annexation. The other townships remained content to minimize the land area lost to the city. Thus, the county and the townships were in no way united in their defence of London's expansionary plans.

Regional Governance and Inter-Municipal Relations

Fierce territorial disputes were premised on the existence of a historically dominant urban centre trying to maintain previous

trends of centripetal urban growth patterns. Emerging trends of suburbanization challenged the demographic dominance of the central city, with annexation employed to "recapture" historic population distributions among city, suburb, and countryside. However, annexation was more than a mere exercise in maintaining an ideal regional demographic distribution. It also represented deeper ideas of self-aggrandizement of the central city. The dominant urban centre has historically maintained an institutional posture of complete authority over its lowly rural surroundings. By maintaining the territorial status quo, the dominant urban centre would admit it needed regional governance, and hence power sharing, to solve the complexities of a growing and changing regional urban entity.

Annexation thus stemmed from the lack of regional governance and strong disagreement over institutions needed to facilitate inter-municipal communication and afford a degree of regional planning. London applied to annex adjacent lands in response to growth pressures within its boundaries, and the temptations of acquiring high-yield assessment areas from adjacent townships. Metropolitan growth forced the creation of institutional structures to afford some management between the city and adjacent townships. This structure became the London and Suburban Planning Commission and the Suburban Roads Commission.

Disagreement over the role and function of these institutions quickly developed. The City of London considered them as temporary structures prior to annexation, while the townships viewed them as a way London might garner control over township development. Responses to the city's annexation attempts and contravening solutions were not simply a polarized debate between formal regional government and annexation. They also generated a variety of solutions for regional planning objectives (table 2).

Urban Visions and Land Stewardship

Annexation disputes were fought over competing urban visions between the townships and the city. During the postwar years, some townships were as expansionist as the city. For example, London Township had explicit urban development policies. Such expansionism in the townships led to an intense annexation battle with the city. Thus, annexation created a gulf between the rural townships and suburban townships. Some townships saw themselves as not merely preservers of the rural economy and landscape but as active players in urban development.

Annexation debates centred on competing claims over which municipal government could more effectively control and manage urban growth. In this respect, the debates turned into a critique of other local governments' policies and institutional capabilities, rather than a simple request for more lands. Such debates fostered divisiveness that spoiled any chance of meaningful regional cooperation. Thus, annexation debates were couched in normative statements about who should govern urban development.

Infrastructure

During the 1950s, annexation was usually associated with a municipality's consideration to construct or expand water and sewage plants. With strong growth in London during this period, new water treatment and sewage disposal were needed. An expanded municipal boundary provided an indirect but effective way to pay for such facilities. Further, London used its strategic site and situation as leverage to expand its municipal limits, for the city represented the only feasible location for effluent discharge and water supply. The ability to control services in the surrounding area was the ace up the City of London's sleeve. Particularly in 1958, the size of the territories and populations affected by London's annexation application was directly related to engineering and planning reports. The information gleaned from these reports provided the empirical justification for municipal expansion.

Process and Procedures

A process that systematically closed the doors to all other forms of regional government or inter-municipal agreements assisted London's annexation request. It is apparent that the operations of the OMB sought to divorce the issue of municipal boundaries from local governance. The OMB completely dismissed the idea that a new institutional form capable of fostering regional cooperation and planning was required to solve the region's growth-related problems. The 1961 OMB annexation ruling, however, did impose a structural change to the operations of the City of London, by creating a Board of Control, at the request of adjacent townships. The power of London's Board of Control ultimately may have led to an even greater annexation application attempted just twenty-five years later.

Notes

1. W. L. Bately and P. J. Smith, "The Role of Territory in Political Conflict in Metropolitan Fringe Areas," in *The Rural-Urban Fringe: Canadian Perspectives*, ed. Ken B. Beesley and Lorne H. Russwurm. (Downsview, Ontario: York University-Atkinson College, 1981), 199-217.
2. Andrew Sancton and Montgomery Byron, "Municipal Government and Residential Land Development: A Comparative Study of London, Ontario, in the 1920s and 1980s," in *The Changing Canadian Metropolis*, ed. Frances Frisken (Berkeley and Toronto: The Institute of Intergovernmental Studies Press, University of California, 1994).
3. Andrew Sancton, *Governing Canada's City-Regions: Adapting Form to Function* (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1994).
4. Andrew Sancton and Montgomery Byron, "Municipal Government and Residential Land Development: A Comparative Study of London, Ontario, in the 1920s and 1980s."
5. Ibid.
6. Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto's American Tragedy 1900-1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); W. van Nus, "The Role of Suburban Government in the City-Building Process: The Case of Notre Dame de Graces, Quebec," *Urban History Review* 13, no. 2 (1984), 91-103; Bruce Elliott, *The City Beyond: A History of Nepean, Birthplace of Canada's Capital 1792-1990* (Nepean: City of Nepean, 1991).
7. W. L. Bately and P. J. Smith, "The Role of Territory in Political Conflict in Metropolitan Fringe Areas"; David Bromley and Joel Smith, "The

The Politics of Municipal Annexation: London's Territorial Ambitions

- Historical Significance of Annexation as a Social Process," *Land Economics* 49, no. 3 (August 1973), 294–309.
8. Bruce S. Elliott, *The City Beyond: A History of Nepean, Birthplace of Canada's Capital 1792–1990*.
 9. Steward Fyfe, "Local Government Reform in Ontario," in *Urban Problems*, ed. Charles R. Bryfogle and Ralph R. Krueger (Toronto & Montreal: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Ltd., 1975), 352–69.
 10. P. J. Smith and H. L. Diemer, "Equity and the Annexation Process: Edmonton's Bid for the Strathcona Industrial Corridor," in *Edmonton: The Emerging Metropolitan Pattern*, ed. P. J. Smith (Victoria: Department of Geography, University of Victoria, 1978), 263–89; P. J. Smith, "Community Aspirations, Territorial Justice, and the Metropolitan Form of Edmonton and Calgary," in *A Social Geography of Canada*, ed. Guy M. Robinson (Toronto & Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1991), 245–66.
 11. Richard Harris, "The Impact of Building Controls on Residential Development in Toronto, 1900–40," *Planning Perspectives* 6 (1991), 269–96.
 12. Alan F. J. Artibise, "In Pursuit of Growth: Municipal Boosterism and Urban Development in the Canadian Prairie West, 1871–1913," in *Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process*, ed. Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F. J. Artibise (Ottawa: Carlton University Press, 1982), 116–72.
 13. Kevin R. Cox, "Urban Development, Collective Consumption and the Politics of Metropolitan Fragmentation," *Political Geography* 12.1 (1993), 8–37.
 14. Peter Silcox, "The Metropolitan Council and Toronto's Metropolitan Problem 1953–1961" (master's thesis, University of Toronto, 1962).
 15. Paul Tennant and David Zirnhelt, "The Emergence of Metropolitan Government in Greater Vancouver," *BC Studies* 15 (Autumn 1972), 3–28.
 16. P. J. Smith, "Municipal Conflicts over Territory and the Effectiveness of the Regional Planning System in the Edmonton Metropolitan Area," in *Kulturgeographische Proxefforschung in Kanada* (Bamberg: Bamberger Geographische Schriften, 1982), 207–23; Jack Masson, *Alberta's Local Governments: Politics and Democracy* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1994).
 17. Robert W. Collier, "The Evolution of Regional Districts in British Columbia," *BC Studies* 15 (Autumn 1972), 29–39; Paul Tennant and David Zirnhelt, "The Emergence of Metropolitan Government in Greater Vancouver."
 18. P. J. Smith, "Community Aspirations, Territorial Justice, and the Metropolitan Form of Edmonton and Calgary."
 19. Ian Rogers, *The Law of Canadian Municipal Corporations*, 2nd ed. cumulative supplement to volume 1 (Scarborough: Carswell Thomson Professional Publishing, 1995).
 20. Hendrikus Lourens Diemar, "Annexation and Amalgamation in the Territorial Expansion of Edmonton and Calgary" (master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1974).
 21. T. J. Plunkett and James Lightbody, "Tribunals, Politics, and the Public Interest: The Edmonton Annexation Case," *Canadian Public Policy* 8.2 (1982), 207–21.
 22. For a review of local government in Ontario refer to Ian Rogers, *The Law of Canadian Municipal Corporations*; Romaine K. Ross, *Local Government in Ontario*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Canada Law Book Limited, 1962); C. R. Tindal and S. N. Tindal, *Local Government in Canada* 3rd ed. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1990); and Donald Higgins, *Local and Urban Politics in Canada* (Toronto: Gage, 1986).
 23. Stewart Fyfe, "Governing Urban Communities," *Queen's Quarterly* 67.4 (1961), 612.
 24. Planning boards and official plans were instituted in the Planning Act at the insistence of the City of Toronto, which was having difficulty enforcing zoning and planning regulations. For a detailed history of Toronto's Planning Board see Peter W. Moore, "Zoning and Planning: The Toronto Experience, 1904–1970," in *The Usable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City*, ed. Alan F. J. Artibise and Gilbert A. Stelter (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979), 316–42.
 25. A recent and brief article has traced the early history of the OMB. See Robert Shipley, "A Manner Less Rigid: One Hundred Years of the Ontario Municipal Board," *Ontario Planning Journal* 12.4 (July/August 1997), 8–9.
 26. On this point refer to "City of Welland versus Townships of Crowland and Thorold," *Planning and Property Reports* 1.7 (September 1960), 61–63. In this case the Township of Crowland's plebiscite recorded a strong opposition to annexation to the City of Welland, yet the board ruled in favour, citing the fact that the Crowland plebiscite had no legal effect on the board's determination of the annexation application.
 27. Stewart Fyfe, *Local Government Reform: Some Canadian Experiences*. (Paper presented to the Canadian Political Science Association, June 8, 1971).
 28. Gerald Adler, *Land Planning by Administrative Regulation: Policies of the Ontario Municipal Board* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971); Robert Shipley, "A Manner Less Rigid: One Hundred Years of the Ontario Municipal Board"; Bruce Elliott, *The City Beyond: A History of Nepean, Birthplace of Canada's Capital 1792–1990*.
 29. Lorne Russwurm, "Country Residential Development and the Regional City Form in Canada," *Ontario Geography* 10 (1976), 79–96; Michael J. Troughton, "Comparative Profiles of Land Holding Types in Rural Urban Fringe of London," *Ontario Geography* 10 (1976), 27–53.
 30. Ed Boles, "The Annexation Problem: City of London and Suburbs 1950," *London Free Press* (hereafter *LFP*), April 3, 1950).
 31. "City-Township Board Makes No Suggestion on Extension Limits," *LFP*, 11 May 1951.
 32. "Township Awaits Move on Annexation by City," *LFP*, 15 May 1951.
 33. "Application Will Go to Municipal Board for Early Hearing," *LFP*, 27 March 1952.
 34. City of London, Fourth Report of Number 1 Committee, 28 January 1952.
 35. Public Utilities Commission Report on effect of Annexation of Territory Outlined in Plan For Development Map. City Clerk's Office, Annexation file - City Clerk's files 1898 to 1979 City of London [microfilm], Regional Collections, University of Western Ontario Library, May 1980.
 36. *Ibid.* See also "Gravy Assessment Said London's Aim," *LFP*, 5 November 1952.
 37. City of London, Council Proceedings, 9 October 1952, 936.
 38. The premier's comments on Toronto's lack of "progressive annexation," and thus a need for a two-tiered municipal system may have signalled to other city regions such as London that metropolitan Toronto was a special case and annexation was still the preferred course of action. See Premier Frost. Third Session of the 24th Legislature of the Province of Ontario, Toronto, 12 February 1953, B7.
 39. City Clerk's Office, Annexation file - City Clerk's files 1898 to 1979 City of London [microfilm], Regional Collections, University of Western Ontario Library, May 1980.
 40. The Broughdale area, which appeared to be the most vocal in its opposition to annexation, was developing as an upper-scale residential neighbourhood near the university, northwest of Huron and Adelaide Streets.
 41. John P. Robarts served as an alderman on the City of London Council in 1950 and 1951. He was elected as a conservative MPP in 1951, and was premier of Ontario between 1961 and 1971.
 42. "War of Suburbs May Have Truce Result of Talk," *LFP*, 7 April 1954.
 43. Inaugural address of His Worship the Mayor, Council Proceedings, 17 December 1956.

The Politics of Municipal Annexation: London's Territorial Ambitions

44. "Predict Growth Outside Annex Area," *LFP*, 15 April 1953.
45. City of London. Council Proceedings, 18 February 1957. See also Project Planning Associates, *Municipal Boundary Study and Report for the City of London* (Toronto: Project Planning Associates, June 1957).
46. Project Planning Associates. *Municipal Boundary Study and Report for the City of London*.
47. "Gilles Withholds Move Until City Gives Annex Aim," *LFP*, 3 January 1957.
48. "Text of Annexation Report Released by Johnston," *LFP*, 7 January 1958; "Tapp's Prediction Not Contradicted," *LFP*, 21 November 1957; Norman Ibsen, "High Court Judge Says City Council 'Supreme in Field,'" *LFP*, 13 November 1957.
49. City of London By-law A-3300-64, 17 February 1958.
50. Inaugural address of His Worship the Mayor, Council Proceedings, 15 December 1958, 10.
51. Province of Ontario. Order-in-Council OC-1039-58, which reads: "... the OMB should direct an enquiry into and report on municipal organization and structure in the area comprised of the City of London and Townships of London, Westminster, West Nissouri and North Dorchester." The order was made under the provisions of Section 48(a) of the Ontario Municipal Board Act. See also Ontario Municipal Board Order P.F.M. 7054-58, Ontario Municipal Board Application and Appeal Files, Ontario Archives, RG-37-6-3 TB527. See also Joseph Cornish, "City of London and Township of London and Westminster," *Planning and Property Reports* 1.4 (April 1960), 30-33.
52. Ibid.
53. Ontario Municipal Board re: London Annexation, 1960. Decision of the Board, P.F.M. 7054, 6.
54. Ibid., 10.
55. Ivey, Livermore, and Dowler Solicitors, *An Alternative to Annexation: Middlesex County*, Ontario Municipal Board, P.F.M. 7054-58. 10 September, 1959.
56. Edward Pleva was also the head of the Geography Department at the University of Western Ontario.
57. City of London, *Thirty-first Report of the Committee of the Whole*, 19-20 September 1960, 15.
58. Arthur Cartier, *People's Choice* (London: Phelps Publishing, 1993), 5.
59. James F. MacLaren Associates Engineers, *Report and Technical Discussion on Sewage and Drainage Works for Areas Annexed in 1961 by the City of London* (Toronto: James F. MacLaren Associates Engineers, 1962), 7.
60. Byron Montgomery, *Annexation and Restructuring in Sarnia-Lambton: A Model for Ontario County Government* (Local Government Case Studies No. 4., Department of Political Science, University of Western Ontario, 1991); Bruce Elliott, *The City Beyond: A History of Nepean, Birthplace of Canada's Capital 1792-1990*.