

# newsnow

Thursday, February 26, 2026  
Vol. 14  
Issue 43

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## West Niagara councils pan Gale's amalgamation letter

By Mike Williscraft  
NewsNow

Blindsided.  
Insulted.  
Poorly handled.  
These are just a few words from some of West

Niagara's elected officials regarding an "out of left field" call for another push for regional amalgamation from the Region's recently appointed Chair, Bob Gale.

In a letter sent only to the

region's mayors last Thursday, Feb. 19, but dated Feb. 5, Gale said, "This letter highlights the ongoing issues Niagara's Niagara's fragmented, outdated and unwieldy governance struc-

ture continues to cause, including unsustainable tax increases that hurt residents and threaten the loss of jobs and investment, delayed decision making and a lack of coordination on

priorities like transit, housing service delivery and economic development."

"This letter makes clear the urgent need for change, but it also makes clear that any changes must be locally informed and supported here in Niagara. Based on previous consultations with many of you, and previous reports, I am deeply contemplating a 4-city or a 1-city model to maximize efficiencies and benefits to the communities we serve."

Gale gave all Niagara councils 10 days - by March 3 - to respond to his letter, noting he will then be sending a report to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Rob Flack.

In another letter dated Feb. 19 directly to Flack, included in the package to mayors, Gale alluded to potential cost savings as a key reason the time is now for amalgamation.

Regarding the Region's recent budget deliberations, he cited tax increase issues.

"Throughout our deliberations and public reporting, several patterns have emerged that, taken together,

See REGION, Page 3



### Vineland envisioned

"Cozy but not cramped" says Nick Pennelli during a visioning public meeting last Thursday with local planners to discuss the redevelopment of the Vineland Central Business District. For full details, please turn to Page 8. McDonald - Photo