



Robert E. Antonacci II, CPA
Comptroller

COUNTY OF ONONDAGA

Office of the
County Comptroller

John H. Mulroy Civic Center, 14th Floor
421 Montgomery Street
Syracuse, New York 13202-2998
(315) 435-2130 • Fax (315) 435-2250
www.ongov.net

James V. Maturo
Deputy Comptroller/Accounting

Thomas R. Schepp II
Deputy Comptroller/Audit

Did local leaders promise Governor Cuomo we would consolidate local governments?

Answer – No, there was no promise to consolidate local governments.

It was recently reported Governor Cuomo said we would have a “serious problem” if we did not consolidate local governments. Governor Cuomo is quoted as saying:

“You proposed consolidation from some Consensus committee. Now you're saying it looks dubious. If that's true, you do have a problem. Because then you're not fulfilling what you said you were in the application. And that was the basis upon which you won the \$500 million. If they're not going to carry forward with the plan that you put forth, yes, then it's a serious problem.”¹

The first mention of Consensus in the URI Application² comes on page 3 within the Message from the Council. “We will recognize that a critical success factor for our region’s long-term trajectory is our ability and willingness to address difficult issues head on, including the obvious challenge of local municipal fragmentation in New York State. Building on the Consensus initiative in Onondaga County, we intend to pursue a bold, collaborative and modern approach to governance in the heart of our region that will better position Central New York to compete in the 21st century.”

The Application introduces concerns with local government structure on page 31 and states “Through Consensus, partners have undertaken a multi-step process to better understand how government services are delivered in Onondaga County and to make recommendations, to be put to public referendum, on how to improve service delivery and modernization.” The report discusses Consensus in greater detail on pages 73 through 75.

It is important to note that government funds for a charter revision or amendment (as this office sees as the only mechanism available to achieve the goals of Consensus) may only be used for “education” purposes and may not be used for “advocacy” per New York State Department of State.³

The voters of Onondaga County and the various entities within the County’s borders are the only ones empowered to make a decision on consolidation. Even the relevant legislative bodies may only propose referendums and cannot bind the people to eliminating a government entity such as a village. While the URI application advocates consolidation, it states exactly what Consensus’s role is, to make recommendations on improving local government. Even were one to accept the URI’s advocacy of consolidation as a promise to act, the Governor of all people, should know the decision is ultimately the voters’ choice.

¹ http://www.syracuse.com/state/index.ssf/2016/02/gov_cuomo_on_syracusecounty_merger_thats_why_you_won_500m.html

² https://www.ny.gov/sites/ny.gov/files/atoms/files/CNYREDC_URI_FinalPlan.pdf

³ https://www.dos.ny.gov/lg/publications/Adopting_and_Amending_County_Charters.pdf