

Big cost differences for major services in capital municipalities

[See chart below]

The province doesn't plan to study amalgamation in the capital region, saying it's satisfied with a report released Wednesday that reviews integrated services but requires no action.

In a letter sent to advocacy group Amalgamation Yes in advance of the election, the B.C. NDP criticized the B.C. Liberal Party for delaying the release of the integrated services report and committed to commissioning its own review of amalgamation.

Education Minister Rob Fleming, who represents Victoria-Swan Lake, said the government is focused on other priorities, including affordable housing, expanding transit and building infrastructure — not perfecting governance in the region.

“But we're certainly open to a discussion with local government leaders and citizens, once they've had a chance to digest the report, on any ideas that may be coming forward, whether it's improving the integration of policing or other ideas around, for example, transportation and how we can align decision-making,” Fleming said.

Fleming was speaking in place of Municipal Affairs Minister Selina Robinson, who was not available for an interview.

The \$95,000 review of integrated services was commissioned by the former Liberal government.

It followed the 2014 municipal election, in which 75 per cent of voters in eight of the 13 municipalities in the capital region said they supported the

study of some form of amalgamation.

The report, released Wednesday, describes how the 13 municipalities are already working together — as well as ways that they aren't.

It does not review amalgamation as an option.

“This is not a study of municipal amalgamation, although it is designed to provide information that could inform subsequent interest of some municipalities in discussions on amalgamation,” the report says.

Its recommendations include creating a “leaders forum” to discuss integration, using a standardized workbook to review potential service sharing and continuing initiatives that have been started, such as a shared 911 dispatch centre and South Island Prosperity Project.

Amalgamation Yes spokeswoman Shellie Gudgeon said she was happy to see existing problems affirmed in the report.

“It clearly, clearly confirms what the public has noted, which is that we are Dysfunction-by-the-Sea. There's no doubt — it spells out repeatedly throughout the report that we must do better,” she said.

But, she said, without requiring action, the report has no teeth.

“There's lots of suggestions, but other than growing government more, there's not much else. ... It is, relatively, a piece of fluff.”

The report highlights a number of areas where the region is not working together and where costs vary widely.

Transportation needs higher-level co-operation, it says. Currently, local governments, the Capital Regional District and the province work together on an ad hoc basis.

Another example is policing: The per capita cost is highest in Victoria at

\$574, in part because it carries the burden of the downtown core, it says. View Royal residents pay \$115.

Gudgeon said she wants to see incentives from the province to merge municipal services, as well as a comprehensive governance review.

“What the report is incredibly short on — which is very disappointing — is the fact that the current minister whose government promised us a comprehensive review, seems satisfied with this report,” Gudgeon said.

Langford Mayor Stew Young said he was happy the report didn’t require any action. The ad hoc method of working with neighbouring municipalities works, he said, since each municipality has different needs.

It’s unfair to make his neighbours in Metchosin and Highlands pay into sewer and water services that they don’t want, he said. And many services, such as policing, are already shared among West Shore communities. Plus, the idea of forming a leaders forum or designing a workbook is unnecessary bureaucracy, he said.

“My general take on this thing is that we’ve actually done a good job of integrating on the West Shore already. If there are ways and opportunities to do it, we don’t need a bunch of bureaucracy to tell us how to do it,” he said.

“I believe the best thing to do is have a good relationship with your neighbours and respect them.”

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COST OF DELIVERING POLICE SERVICES BY MUNICIPALITY

	2015		
Organizations	Total expenditure	Population	Cost per capita
Central Saanich	\$6,979,638	16,046	\$434.98
Colwood	3,181,721	16,955	187.66
Esquimalt	7,332,628	16,697	439.16
Highlands	754,026	2,270	332.17
Langford	5,927,341	37,275	159.02
Metchosin	1,137,721	4,972	228.83

North Saanich	1,632,227	10,994	148.47
Oak Bay	4,401,950	17,474	251.91
Saanich	35,154,473	110,803	317.27
Sidney	2,386,267	11,065	215.66
Sooke	1,531,039	12,181	125.69
Victoria	48,643,985	84,793	573.68
View Royal	1,250,251	10,834	115.40

Source: +Local Government Data Entry Forms. (2016). Local Government Statistics. Ministry of Community Sport and Cultural Development and Responsible for TransLink; 2015 statements of financial information

COST OF DELIVERING FIRE SERVICES BY MUNICIPALITY

2015

Organizations	Total expenditure	+Population	-Cost per capita
Central Saanich**	\$1,481,483	16,046	\$92.33
Colwood	1,605,677	16,955	94.70
Esquimalt	3,508,647	16,697	210.14
Highlands	166,593	2,270	73.39
Langford	2,836,359	37,275	76.09
Metchosin	471,478	4,972	94.83
North Saanich	905,336	10,994	82.35
Oak Bay	3,758,657	17,474	215.10
Saanich	16,106,282	110,803	145.36
Sidney	1,042,346	11,065	94.20
Sooke	1,325,170	12,181	108.79
Victoria	15,219,329	84,793	179.49
View Royal	1,263,960	10,834	116.67

*The actual cost per capita will vary for this service as some residents may not receive fire services.

**Central Saanich was shown to have \$0 in fire services costs in the 2015 Local Government Data Entry Forms, so estimates were retrieved from 2015 financial statements.

Source: Local Government Data Entry Forms. (2016). Local Government Statistics. Ministry of Community Sport and Cultural Development and Responsible for TransLink.

COST OF DELIVERING PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES BY MUNICIPALITY

2015

Organizations	+Total expenditure	Population	Cost per capita
Central Saanich	\$2,392,284	16,046	\$149.09
Colwood	3,603,488	16,955	212.53
Esquimalt	8,629,648	16,697	516.84
Highlands	623,347	2,270	274.60
Langford	10,967,338	37,275	294.23
Metchosin	1,162,554	4,972	233.82
North Saanich	1,206,141	10,994	109.71
Oak Bay	11,178,146	17,474	639.70
Saanich	34,829,050	110,803	314.33
Sidney	2,333,775	11,065	210.92
Sooke	931,930	12,181	76.51
Victoria	22,889,555	84,793	269.95
View Royal	2,463,857	10,834	227.42

*It should be noted that expenditures for parks and recreation services, generally do not account for

offsetting revenues and recovery through fees and fines.

Source: Local Government Data Entry Forms. (2016). Local Government Statistics. Ministry of Community Sport and Cultural Development and Responsible for TransLink.

COST OF GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION SERVICES BY MUNICIPALITY

	2015		
Organizations	Total expenditure	Population	Cost per capita
Central Saanich	\$2,756,205	16,046	\$171.77
Colwood	3,131,609	16,955	184.70
Esquimalt	3,547,829	16,697	212.48
Highlands	662,658	2,270	291.92
Langford	4,215,659	37,275	113.10
Metchosin	675,135	4,972	135.79
North Saanich	2,755,501	10,994	250.64
Oak Bay	4,654,925	17,474	266.39
Saanich	13,339,234	110,803	120.39
Sidney	2,018,967	11,065	182.46
Sooke	2,069,939	12,181	169.93
Victoria	16,022,155	84,793	188.96
View Royal	1,829,721	10,834	168.89

Source: Local Government Data Entry Forms. (2016). Local Government Statistics. Ministry of Community Sport and Cultural Development and Responsible for TransLink.

SOURCE: URBAN SYSTEMS, CIRCLE SQUARE SOLUTIONS