

Beware of promises of municipal savings

Re: "\$2.2 million," July 29.

Sunday's front-page story trumpeting the combined costs of chief administrative officers in Greater Victoria certainly will have raised a few eyebrows. While amalgamation might well reduce that top-boss total, it would be more instructive to compare the full staffing costs of Surrey, say, with the total currently paid in the 13 municipalities.

article continues below

Amalgamation might bring some minor efficiencies, but, given the documented experiences across Canada, it does not necessarily reduce costs because current staff are already working to capacity, full-time.

The total body of work is near constant, before and after any amalgamation.

There might be fewer CAOs but more administrative assistants earning greater salaries. If staff numbers are reduced in a combined municipality, it would likely mean worse service.

One promised saving might seem to come by reducing the total number of elected officials, but that also comes at a price to service levels. The attempt by Ontario Premier Doug Ford to slash the number of Toronto city councillors would nearly double the number of constituents each councillor represents. When I was an elected office-holder, I knew that residents' issues I wasn't tackling eventually had to be addressed by staff.

Like much in life, you get the government you pay for. Beware of promises of large savings.

Tom Pater

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