

Only Victoria has police-board problem

Re: “Province must fix impasse over police budget,” column, Jan. 31.

Police-board governance might be imperfect but, contrary to Catherine Holt’s suggestion, it is hardly the root cause of the budget and other issues plaguing Victoria and Esquimalt. Police-board governance generally seems to work effectively everywhere in B.C. except Victoria.

article continues below

Nothing in Holt’s suggested changes would preclude a municipal council from rejecting a police budget, which seems to be her immediate concern. Furthermore, the province already has the authority to resolve any budget impasse.

If the province wishes to go further, perhaps it should indemnify Esquimalt for the incremental policing costs it was forced to assume when the province dictated Esquimalt would be policed by VicPD. While at it, the province could also compensate Victoria for the impact on policing costs flowing from inadequate provincial investment in housing, addiction and mental-health services.

Whether one believes policing costs in Victoria are justifiable or not, they represent a real barrier to broader amalgamation and will almost certainly be a point of repeated conflict in the Victoria/Esquimalt relationship. The solution will not be found in Section 25.

James Murtagh

Oak Bay

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