

Editorial: Too much duplication in government

With Victoria and Saanich voters casting ballots this fall on a referendum to study amalgamation, salary figures for the region's top bureaucrats should be one of the factors they consider.

As the Times Colonist reported on Sunday, the 13 Greater Victoria municipalities paid their chief administrative officers a total of \$2.2 million in 2017. That compares with the \$391,058 Surrey paid its CAO, despite Surrey having 130,000 more people than Greater Victoria has.

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Along with the CAOs come other senior officials: 13 directors of finance (2017 salary cost \$1.44 million), 11 directors of planning (\$1.5 million), 10 directors of engineering (\$1.36 million) and six CRD executives (\$1.2 million).

One can make the argument that there are benefits to having as many elected officials as the region does. Smaller councils dealing with a smaller number of local issues can respond more quickly than might be the case in large municipalities. Such councillors are closer to the people they represent.

However, even if voters reject full amalgamation and keep their plethora of politicians, there is no need for the massive duplication of systems that we have. Many of the common functions of local government, such as human resources, purchasing, finance and policing, could be delivered more effectively if they were combined across some or all of the municipalities in the region.

The salary figures are a reminder that if voters approve formation of a citizens' assembly to study amalgamation, the assembly should look at

more than all-or-nothing options.

The region could carve away a lot of inefficiency by consolidating functions.

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