

Saanich – Victoria: The Invisible Border

The City of Victoria was incorporated on August 2, 1862 on the British Colony of Vancouver Island. When founded, it was the second city incorporated in Western Canada after New Westminster, which was incorporated on July 16, 1860. Victoria was 5 years old when the Dominion of Canada was created, and 9 years old when British Columbia became a Province and joined Confederation with Victoria as its capital city. Victoria remained the only incorporated municipality on the southern tip of Vancouver Island for 44 years until Saanich and Oak Bay incorporated on March 1 and July 2, 1906 respectively.

The original boundary between Saanich and Victoria is unchanged since Saanich's incorporation, when much of the land along the boundary was either undeveloped or farmland. The border between the two municipalities remains obscure to many area residents. Victoria has no signage indicating its boundaries when entering the City; conversely Saanich has have signage boundaries on major routes leaving Victoria. There are no geographical features of any kind defining the boundary that for the most part falls on various streets.

Let's take a tour of this boundary:

The eastern boundary begins on Foul Bay Road approximately 100 meters north of the intersection of Fort and Foul Bay Roads. It runs west through St. Patrick's School -- the northern portion of St. Patrick's is in Saanich -- the southern portion is in Victoria. The boundary continues west through the Royal Jubilee Hospital facilities -- the BC Cancer Centre and Parkade are in Saanich -- the Jubilee Patient Care Tower, Diagnostic & Treatment Centre are in Victoria, and a portion of the Archie Courtall Mental Health Centre is in both.

The boundary continues north for 6 blocks on Richmond Road, from Bay Street to Newton Street, where it turns west. It continues west on Newton to the back yards of homes on the east side of Shelbourne Avenue, where it turns north once again and continues through to North Dairy Road. The Esso Station & Service Centre at the corner of Hillside and Shelbourne are in Victoria, while the Esso Car wash is in Saanich.

At North Dairy the boundary continues west to Cedar Hill Recreation Centre where it does a short jog north on Cedar Hill Road to Tolmie Ave. It continues west along Tolmie to Douglas Street and then along Tolmie Lane through the light industrial area to Burnside Road E.

The boundary continues along Burnside Road E. to Harriet Road, where it turns south and follows Harriet Road to the Gorge.

This invisible line results in many neighbours living in different municipalities, receiving services from different providers (police, fire), different by-laws and uncoordinated development plans -- in some cases paying taxes to more than one municipality for a single property. Also, neighbours on one side of a boundary street, such as Richmond Road, have no means of direct input to developments across the street. As the two municipalities have built out, these challenges have become more evident.

Historical and map references for this article can be viewed at:

<https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/about/history.html>

https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/parks/our_parks.html

See also: Bizarre Borders <http://www.amalgamationyes.ca/bizarre-borders.html>