

Comment: Regional governance: Metro Victoria's way forward

Over the past few years, it has become increasingly evident that our present system of regional government is fractured.

We know there is growing discontent in the region, despite what some of our elected leaders might suggest. Whether we are talking about police, fire and transportation services or land development, it appears that we are failing fundamentally to deliver efficient, well-planned services that benefit the quality of life in the region.

Regional governance cannot continue in its present undemocratic form. The current partisan and self-interested approach to governance has defined how “business was done” for too long.

After the 2008 municipal elections, we began to look at how the system of governance could be improved. We came to the conclusion that a different model was needed that was more inclusive, democratic, accountable and transparent, and less bureaucratic. “Metro Victoria” or “Metro Vic” for short was born.

At the core of the new governance model is a directly elected governing body — directors who do not owe allegiance to a specific municipality. This would be another fundamental shift from the current model, where almost all directors of the Capital Regional District are appointed by their municipalities.

We believe Metro Victoria must be based on a clear vision with a mission statement that reflects that vision. The Metro Victoria vision could look like this:

Metro Victoria is a regional government that is tasked with co-ordinating

and managing regional responsibilities, transportation systems, overall land-use planning, liquid- and solid-waste management, environmental standards and other regional services.

Metro Victoria's draft mission statement:

“Metro Victoria is a new, emerging group of people who are looking at defining processes that will move us away from the narrow confines of our existing political culture.

“Metro Victoria wants to engage everyone in developing community shared values. Now is the time to ask questions that make the connection between today and tomorrow.

“The region faces important issues that require unified, forward-thinking, innovative and focused solutions. Metro Victoria's underlying principles are governed by sustainability. Sustainability is not simply an environmental proposition. Until now, decision-makers have not understood the social and economic dimension. Sustainable development must take into account environmental, social and economic factors.

“Metro Victoria believes that sustainable communities are vital to the future of our regional development. The region is perfectly positioned to allow for what could be described as a ‘model’ for the province and perhaps the rest of Canada.”

We are confident that by reforming the present regional governance model we can develop, change and lead the way in clean energy, low-carbon emissions, affordable housing, transportation and land use.

Metro Victoria is also about “thinking outside the box.” New ideas about how our communities can work without borders for common benefits will be the foundation for Metro Victoria. This is the potential for change, and Metro Victoria is a community where change is possible.

If we continue “business as usual,” we will find ourselves unable to focus on the serious regional issues that face us and will deliver politically driven piecemeal solutions without accountable democratic decision-making and without real leadership. Metro problems need Metro solutions.

We are dedicated to working with the community and across municipal boundaries to build on this mission statement to create a better governance model because we believe we are at a crossroads that will define the economic and sustainable future of the region.

Look for us on Facebook at [metrovic.ca](https://www.facebook.com/metrovic.ca) and on Twitter at [@MetroVicInfo](https://twitter.com/MetroVicInfo).

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