

# Amalgamation key to better region

BY CHRIS EDLEY, TIMES COLONIST    SEPTEMBER 26, 2010

I recently read about our policing problems which are partly caused by multiple jurisdictions. Like gridlocked traffic, this is a symptom of ill in Greater Victoria. One cure for our ailing region is amalgamation of our 13 municipalities.

Last spring, Saanich hosted community meetings to discuss the Wilkinson/Interurban intersection mess. It turns out they had not co-ordinated with View Royal, the municipality through which most of the traffic flows.

I felt sorry for the engineer. With almost no budget, he was trying to solve a regional traffic problem. Many drivers in the gridlock don't pay their taxes within the bunged-up municipalities that need fixing. So while they crawl to work, View Royal makes View Royal beautiful, the airport creates "international calibre" access, and the Sooke Highway is re-paved to speed your approach to the Colwood crawl.

We need a single traffic department, focusing regional tax dollars on regional traffic flow.

Beyond traffic, consider the Buziak murder case. Saanich police declined help from the Island's Integrated Major Crime Unit. How about a single police force, managed and run by the best the region has to offer?

Why do we pay for multiple park boards? Fire departments? Finance departments? Whole administrations? Don't forget multiple mayors and councils. They'll oppose amalgamation and spread fear about such a bold move -- but once the egos settle and the power struggles subside, we might actually have regional management that makes sense.

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