

north shore news

LAUTENS: North Shore amalgamation is but a dream

[Trevor Lautens](#) / North Shore News

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North Vancouver City Coun. Guy Heywood and North Vancouver District Coun. Doug MacKay-Dunn are pressing for unity of the three North Shore municipalities.

Enlightened. Logical. Sensible. **Won't happen.**

The Three Jealous Sisters would never agree. If they somehow did, I'd propose that name for the united one - if Canada can tolerate weird names like Moose Jaw, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, and Toronto, why not Three Jealous Sisters? Derrick Humphreys, who, rarely, was both a City alderman and later West Van mayor, ran for mayor of NVC on an amalgamation platform in 1961. Failed.

Humphreys later blamed the dug-in fire departments. (His proposed name for the unified city: Capilano. Not bad.) Coincidentally, WV council is currently looking at its own richly manned and womaned fire department, budgeted for \$13.2 million this year compared with geographically much smaller North Van City's \$9 million.

But that's just one bump on the road to amalgamation. Where would the new city hall be? Police - RCMP, ditching proud West Van's own police? Who's to be king, er, mayor? You could sell tickets to watch present councillors' turf-protecting. And a staff money-saver? You kidding - when did bureaucrats ever willingly agree to that? Nice try, Couns. Heywood and MacKay-Dunn, but 53 years after Humphreys' stab at it, **North Shore amalgamation is still a dream. Or nightmare.**

Speaking of bureaucrats: In 2012 Grant McRadu, now departed West Van chief administrative officer - for a smallish municipality of under 45,000 - was paid \$233,349.56. The mere finance minister of a vast and fiscally admired country of around 35 million, Jim Flaherty, is paid the standard cabinet salary of \$236,900 - a bare gap of about 1.5 per cent above McRadu's. Yep, folks, **Canada's closely knit mandarins have the taxpayers by the short-and-curly.**

West Van preened that its 2012 annual report won "the" Canadian Award for Financial Reporting for clarity and full disclosure, conferred by the Government Finance Officers Association.

Well and good. Council under fiscal conservative Mayor Mike Smith deserves warm praise for freezing local tax rates in the last couple of years. But, curiosity raised, I called Jim Phillips at GFOA headquarters in Chicago: Were any other Canadian cities so honoured? Phillips replied: Not all the tallying has been done, but about 50 of them were.

Not quite the exclusive award it seemed to be.

By the way, the GFOA, with 17,500 members in the U.S. and Canada, holds its annual convention next month in, wait for it, Fort Lauderdale, Fla. You were expecting Inuvik? Ha, ha, what would Marxist mass murderers Lenin and Stalin say about an exquisite Russian couple dancing on Sochi's ice to "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend?" Possibly: The revolution's over, comrades.

Or not. The old tyrants might say: Patience. The Western capitalist nations are collapsing, just as Marx predicted.

As I've found in my last three or four years of university classes, neo-Marxist theory is valiantly kept on life support in Western academe. Meanwhile post-Soviet Russia has maintained a few old evils while adopting some of the West's.

Nothing as decadent, though, as the growing legal acceptance of drugs. Marijuana, already touted as the next big investment thing, followed for sure by a high-priced regulatory and health system bureaucracy paid for by the squares, will become kid stuff. This shy voice long ago predicted: Legalizing pot is nearer to the beginning than the end of the drug disaster.

Latest idiocy: CTV's Jeff Lawrence discovered that for six months the Portland Hotel Society's Drug Users Resource Centre has been providing two crackpipe vending machines - the better, you see, to protect addicts from reusing pipes and thus getting and passing on diseases. A bargain for only 25 cents a pipe, and another Vancouver first that we don't need - like the taxpayer-funded "safe" injection site championed by its enablers and enthusiasts.

David Berner ran X-Kalay, a pioneering addiction therapeutic community, in the 1960s before becoming a top radio show host. Read his *All the Way Home*, available as a book and online. He's dead set against marijuana and other drug use. He writes: "There are people who give addicts heroin or methadone and claim that they then do counselling work with the buzzed client. They are more delusional than the addict." Berner headed his email on the pipe business concisely: "We have lost all good sense."

Toward certain human stupidities, I have a heart of stone. Which is preferable to brains of the same material.

How can people think they're informed without local daily papers? Example: Stephen Hume's exhaustive, clear-graphics story on BC Ferries and its projected cutbacks in last Saturday's *Vancouver Sun*. It was superb journalism that no TV, radio and least of all "social media" can possibly match.

And an otherwise grouchless happy Valentine's Day to you, too.

[rtlautens@gmail.com \(mailto:rtlautens@gmail.com?subject=LAUTENS: North Shore amalgamation is but a dream\)](mailto:rtlautens@gmail.com?subject=LAUTENS: North Shore amalgamation is but a dream)

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