



City says it is shortchanged by district

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BY VANCOUVER SUN JUNE 20, 2014

The latest bid to amalgamate the two North Vancoovers, or at least study potential amalgamation, came to a halt at a familiar roadblock Monday - City of North Vancouver council chambers.

And, spiking the debate, the city says the District of North Vancouver isn't paying its full share of North Vancouver's policing bills.

Coun. Guy Heywood had been pushing council to reconsider its long-held position that a potential amalgamation would benefit only district taxpayers. Though he had initially put forward a motion for council to join the district and province in carrying out a restructuring study, council instead passed a motion Monday directing city staff to review existing shared services and report back on other opportunities to expand cost sharing.

Heywood called the motion a disappointment and questioned how well the shared services between the two municipalities are working now, let alone whether they can be expanded.

"The level of collaboration, I hear, at multiple levels is actually quite low and there is friction across the board in those that we consider shared services. That really happens as a result of the selfish political interests in maintaining autonomy in a jurisdiction that should never have existed in the first place," Heywood said.

A previously unreleased report from city staff confirms there is some basis to Heywood's claim as it relates to the RCMP contract between the two local governments.

The report offers no details on what the disagreement is about, but the city's perceived financial hit is clear.

"There is still a significant disagreement on RCMP administration cost sharing; to date, the District of North Vancouver owes the City of North Vancouver over \$1.2 million, and the amount is increasing by over \$400,000 every year," the staff report said.

A second motion passed by council calls for city staff to "resolve the outstanding financial cost-sharing arrangement with the district related to public safety." Resolving that conflict would likely require a third-party mediator who would be given full access to the RCMP's policing data, according to chief administrative officer Ken Tolstam.

Coun. Pam Bookham also questioned how there can be any more cost saving co-operation when the two governments can't make the policing deal work.

"I would like the district to be invited to provide their perspective on why they have not seen fit to pay what we feel they owe. I would like similar information for firefighting costs, which I understand is the other aspect to public safety that is under dispute," said Bookham. "I think until they are resolved, the opportunities to find additional cost savings may be limited. I think once we clear these unresolved matters, then it is appropriate that we should be looking at additional cost savings."