

LETTER: Rein in municipal budget to reduce tax burden

North Shore News

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Dear Editor:

The article titled [North Van Mayors Push for Property Tax Reform \(http://www.nsnews.com/news/north-vancouver-mayors-push-for-property-tax-reform-1.2280912\)](http://www.nsnews.com/news/north-vancouver-mayors-push-for-property-tax-reform-1.2280912), June 17, would be amusing if it weren't so sad. The two mayors did the usual hand-wringing and offered seemingly earnest suggestions on how property taxes can be reduced.

Not surprisingly, neither mayor offered any of the obvious, but career and compensation limiting suggestions over which they have direct control on how to reduce the property tax burden on the citizens of their individual municipalities.

How illuminating it would be for either of them to say that they are going to look at reducing the costs of running the municipality as a way of reducing property taxes. In the City of North Vancouver, the portion of property taxes charged to me that are under the direct control of the city, being property taxes and utilities, went up 87 per cent between 2002 and 2016. The Consumer Price Index, a widely used measure of inflation, went up 24 per cent over the same period.

There is something very wrong when property taxes increase by almost four times the rate of inflation.

In addition, developers are paying way more to the city and district for the privilege of developing, as development cost charges and community amenity contributions (which didn't even exist in 2002) have increased significantly, so politicians cannot blame municipal growth as an excuse for property taxes increasing, on average, close to seven per cent per year during a period when inflation averaged less than two per cent per year.

One of the reasons taxes are what they are in both the City and District of North Vancouver is subtly stated right in the headline, when the plural "mayors" of North Vancouver is used. There really should be only one mayor, and one council, and one city hall, and one works yard, etc. Amalgamating the two North Vancouvers would be a great first step in reducing taxes; however, that would mean one of them will lose their job.

Only once these mayors do everything in their own power to reduce the burden on property owners, and, indirectly, renters as well, should they start making suggestions to other levels of government.

Also, as the mayors are fully aware, changes in assessed values do not affect the taxes charged. It is the budget of the municipalities that does. If the budget stayed the same, and all the assessed values went up, the tax burden would remain the same.

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