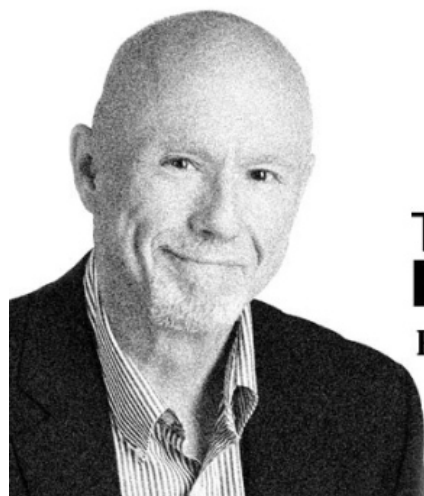


SULLIVAN: Hey there, mayors, We the People have a wish list

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Paul Sullivan

When you think about it, Oct. 20, 2018 is not that far away. Only two years and eight months until the next municipal election!

Time to start thinking about re-electing our esteemed representatives to continue the good work they're doing.

Or throw the bums out on their ears, mangling a metaphor.

However you see it, we could at least start thinking about the big issues we face here on the North Shore. Here, to get us started, are my top five:

Development

This is easily No. 1, as everything else follows suit. If you freeze development, which has been suggested at various times and in various ways, you don't have to worry about its impact on traffic or the environment.

There's no way that's going to happen, but the North Shore is interesting because there's no rapid transit line around which to develop density. There are other factors (mountains, ocean, etc.) but it's pretty much up to We the People where we want development to occur.

Oddly, We the People are divided into three distinct jurisdictions, even though any fool can tell it's just one place, so development comes in three flavours. Unless there's an unprecedented alignment of vision and an unprecedented spirit of co-operation, we could end up with three conflicting plans.

Traffic congestion

We have a number of new parking lots on the North Shore these days such as the Upper Levels highway. Then there's the old reliable parking lot, the Lions Gate Bridge. So far, the politicians' answer to creeping (leaping?) congestion has been to agitate for another SeaBus. That's like offering to improve bike lanes: a good idea for Nanaimo.

It's time to get serious about a rapid transit tunnel to and from Vancouver, or maybe a new bridge with rapid transit. A big job, to be sure, but has anyone noticed we live in a big city?

The environment

The North Shore is the most awesome place on earth to live. Who else gets to live so close to both the Tour de Feast and a hinterland that stretches all the way to Alaska? If there's a better combination of wild and civilized, I don't know it. The problem is keeping it that way. The problem is also that there are so many jurisdictions, from First Nations to the feds with the municipal governments in between, everybody wants a piece of it. Who's standing up for the firs, flowers and fish?

Amalgamation

This issue is usually confined to city hall nerds, who love to figure out how many angels dance on the heads of three separate pins, as opposed to the number on a single amalgamated pin. The rest of us just want to leave it alone even if it means electing three separate councils and three separate bureaucracies with three separate visions. So what if Vancouver has a population of 603,500 and just one government, while the North Shore has three for a population of 176,000? We get the government we deserve. And then some.

Our identity

This is probably the most important issue we face and the least likely to be addressed. It's that vision thing. What is the North Shore? A perpetual bedroom community for that shining metropolis – over town – so near, yet so far (in terms of travel time)? Or is the North Shore something special, a unique presence on earth? And while we know where it begins, where does it end? Horseshoe Bay, Lions Bay? Britannia Beach? Squamish?

That's not such a wild question, now that Squamish comes with traffic that funnels through the Lions Gate and the Ironworkers Memorial Bridge. But let's just confine ourselves to the three traditional North Shore jurisdictions. Do we want to be Vancouver plus a compass detail? Or do we want to be something else?

I'm not sure any North Shore vision can be realistically drawn as long as three separate councils see the other two as inconveniences at best, threats at worst. But there's lots of time, two years and eight months to be exact, for a leader to emerge who wants to take on the vision thing and at least get the conversation started. Of course, that's after she addresses the four other problems.

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