

**Subject: Fwd: Welcome to The Maple Ridge Times Online - Opinion**

**Date:** Sat, 4 Oct 2003 22:35:49 +0100 (BST)

**From:** Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

**To:** Mayor and Council <council@district.north-van.bc.ca>, Cathy Adams <cathyadams@canada.com>, Eric Andersen <eric\_g\_andersen@hotmail.com>, Maureen Bragg <m.bragg@shaw.ca>, "Clr. E. Crist" <criste@district.north-van.bc.ca>, Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>, Allan Orr <allandorr@shaw.ca>, Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>, Bill Tracey <wrtracey@telus.net>

**CC:** Mike Boileau <mboileau@shaw.ca>, fonvca@fonvca.org

4 October 2003

Dear Mr. Boileau:

Thank you for forwarding this very interesting material.

You will have noted from the 'rationale' I sent off last Friday, in support of my question to The Province, that you and I are on the same page with respect to GVRD and TransLink. [The Province had solicited questions from the public with respect to governance.]

While I heartily endorse the concept of a cooperative, coordinated regional approach to the provision of some specific services, I cannot support the *status quo* in GVRD.

Don't get me wrong, I do believe there to be many hardworking, dedicated politicians and staff members involved in the process - men and women whose sole focus is the provision of a cost-effective efficient service. However, from personal experience and from conversations with others in a position to know whereof they speak, many of those people see things that are very, very wrong within the GVRD hierarchy but feel they can say nothing for fear of losing their jobs. In the absence of strong protection from whistleblower legislation, they have nowhere to turn.

Moreover, GVRD has become an ever-expanding phenomenon [some would say club], which is not directly accountable to taxpayers. With the advent of the Community Charter, which is predicted to offer local government even more protection from the public, my fear is that things can only get worse.

Again, I go back to one of the points in my own earlier piece: The people should not accept any taxation by, or on behalf of any entity "without [direct] representation."

In closing, much lip service is being paid to the concept of "Smart Growth" - a concept which planners increasingly claim to be falling significantly short of its goals. In my opinion, the reasons for this failure are twofold and simple: (1) Not everyone wants to live in densely-populated communities where, often, societal problems are magnified and concentrated; and, (2) attempts to escape the attendant increased levys and taxes [such as we see/hear about from TransLink] have the effect of forcing people farther and farther away and beyond core regional boundaries.

If those who move - from GVRD for example - must still be employed within core boundaries then, in the absence of efficient, non-polluting public transit the only effect of current GVRD/TransLink policies, is that more, not less congestion/pollution will result.

If the people are to have any hope of turning this situation around, we must be able to elect politicians who are prepared to be directly accountable at the regional level.

Thank you, again, for forwarding me your most useful article; in my opinion, it should be required reading for all regional bodies in BC but, most particularly, for GVRD councils.

Sincerely,

Liz James  
[604] 988-2066

**Mike Boileau** <mboileau@shaw.ca> wrote:

Date: Fri, 03 Oct 2003 19:42:41 -0700  
From: Mike Boileau  
Subject: Welcome to The Maple Ridge Times Online - Opinion  
To: Elizabeth James



Site updated Friday, October 03, 2003 11:54 AM

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## OPINION

### GVRD must change with the times

By Mike Boileau

In January of 2001, an Issues Brief was prepared by (the GVRD) regarding direct elections of GVRD directors versus the current system of appointed directors. It essentially goes as follows.

Public opinion of GVRD governance, as reflected in the media and in debate surrounding the TransLink vehicle levy, has focused on a perceived lack of accountability. Appointment of GVRD directors by member municipalities is cited frequently as contributing to that public perception.

As a consequence, media editorial writers, some members of the general public and a number of GVRD directors have called for direct election of the board.

Most recently, a motion to implement direct elections was put to the board (in 1999) and was defeated.

In 1967, when the regional district was formed, the legislation governing it emphasized administrative function over board representation and political amalgamation.

Regional districts were, according to municipal affairs minister of the day Dan Campbell, "not a government."

The GVRD's initial board was made up of municipal representatives already selected to sit on the Greater Vancouver Hospital District Board. At that time, the regional district had no functions assigned to it.

Fears were noted prior to the establishment of the region, and they included the concern that Vancouver would dominate, that municipalities would lose autonomy, and the GVRD would evolve into a costly fourth level of government.

Changes to the Municipal Act in 1974 called for the election of directors to regional districts, but required that candidates for the GVRD also be elected to local councils. A separate ballot was included with the municipal elections in 1975.

Media coverage at the time quoted GVRD Chair Allan Kelly as calling elections to the GVRD "ridiculous," and the Burnaby council calling for the provincial government to "...revert to the appointment of directors by their respective councils."

Political scientist Paul Tennant wrote at the time, "The new procedure was highly confusing to the public. It did not in any sense increase board accountability... (and became) an amorphous public lottery among council members."

Vancouver council called for a system that would see one-quarter of the directors elected - representing areas of about 100,000 residents each - with the remainder from specific municipalities being appointed by their respective councils and not elected by the voters.

In May of 1978, the provincial government again made changes to the Municipal Act and reinstated the system whereby municipalities appoint directors to the regional district board. Interesting to note that the GVRD board of directors disagreed with the change from election to appointment.

Popular opinion viewed the reinstatement of the municipal appointments as the provincial government favouring the municipalities over the regional districts. A Vancouver Sun story of the day noted that "...having directors of regional districts appointed...instead of elected at large was hailed by most Vancouver-area mayors as a positive step.

This will make regional directors more responsive to their council's policies and attitudes."

In November of 1978, a provincially struck, independent Regional District Review Committee recommended, among other things, direct election of regional board members (with mayors being automatically appointed) and the board chair by the population as a whole. No action has been taken on that recommendation, and municipal appointment of directors has been the governance system since.

My view of all of this is simple: Now we are living in different times.

The GVRD is now in control of not only water, sewer, housing, parks, etc. but it also has transit, roads and bridges as part of its responsibilities. No other regional district in B.C. has these responsibilities. With these

responsibilities they now have a taxation authority hitherto not afforded them. This very fact alone requires a sober second look at the 1978 Regional District Review Committee's recommendation for direct election of regional board members, at least as far as the GVRD is concerned. What say you?

Mike Boileau is a Maple Ridge resident.

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