Municipal Boundary Advice

From: Tom Reid [mailto:btreid@telus.net]

Sent: Tuesday, October 6, 2009 6:47 PM

To: David Towner; XT:Cowichan Valley Regional District PAB:IN; Brian Harrison; Dave Balding; Gerry Giles; Gordon Smith; Heather Broughton; Jens Liebgott; Lynch, Karen CD:EX; Ken Cossey; Margaret Symon; Mark Wyatt; Paul Laraman; Pauquachin First Nation; Robert Smethurst; Fraser, Sarah W CD:EX; Tim Parker; Warren Jones

Subject: South Cowichan Phase 2 study

I am happy to see the Ministry supports the idea of furthering the community's exploration of municipal status. I know the committee members have put a lot of time and effort into getting this far.

When the next phase starts, I think the matter of the boundary needs early examination. I am aware of the committee's recommendation that a Phase 2 study should include all of Area A and Area C and all the settled part of Area B.

However, it would be remiss of me not to raise once again the idea of a smaller boundary. You may recall that at the meeting in which the whole-area concept was selected, I provided several options, in map form, that left out some parts of the electoral areas.

Foremost among these exclusions were farm and ALR lands and some remote neighbourhoods. I have attached the "trimmed boundary" map showing one suggestion (we discussed this boundary at one of our meetings). I know there are reasons for the more inclusive concept the committee has recommended, but there are reasons against it too. After having done quite a number of municipal incorporation studies, I would ask you to keep an open mind on the selection of a smaller boundary. It is entirely reasonable to expect that taxpayers facing a larger tax rise are more likely to oppose municipal status than those facing a smaller tax impact, just as it is reasonable to expect that those living in more remote locations have chosen their locations because they are more remote. Farm and ALR properties are in the first group; residents of Renfrew, Kingburne and Sooke Lake Roads are in the second group.

The potential problem of including them is not just the imbalance between the above-average costs they would impose on a municipality and the lower tax revenues they would generate. It also includes the reality that many of them might not feel a benefit in being part of a municipality that shares community service values they do not share.

My goal in recommending that a smaller boundary be considered is to remind the committee that the selection of a boundary should reflect a balance between the notion of a whole-community municipality on the one hand and on the other, the reality of actually creating a municipality. The balance point will no doubt vary from individual to individual. I tend to lean on the side of practicality, and that is why I recommend consideration of a boundary that minimizes farm and ALR lands and excludes more remote neighbourhoods where practical.

I trust the Phase 2 work will be productive and innovative, and I congratulate the committee for securing provincial support for the local government concerns of South Cowichan.

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 Tom Reid Sussex Consultants Ltd.

 2953 W. 35 Ave. Vancouver, BC V6N 2M5

 (604) 801-5200 [www.SussexLtd.ca](http://www.SussexLtd.ca/)