



## Book Review

*Governing Greater Victoria: The Role of Elected Officials and Shared Services.*  
Fraser Institute, March 2016. By Robert Bish and Josef Filipowicz

Review by Zachary Spicer

In November 2014, seven of the municipalities in the Victoria area voted in a non-binding referendum to explore the idea of amalgamating the region. The debate about amalgamation had been raging for some time prior to the vote and still continues to this day. For some time, observers of local government in Canada have patiently waited for Robert Bish, Professor Emeritus at the University of Victoria and one of Canada's most prominent public choice scholars, to add

substance to the debate. Those of us waiting would not be disappointed.

In March 2016, Bish did indeed add his voice to the amalgamation debate in Victoria with *Governing Greater Victoria: The Role of Elected Officials and Shared Services*, released by the Fraser Institute and co-authored with Joseph Filipowicz. In *Governing Greater Victoria*, Bish and Filipowicz review the governance structure of the Capital Regional District, making an effective case that the system has too many benefits to simply abandon. Bish and Filipowicz examine nearly every service area in the region, demonstrating that the Capital Regional District effectively allows small municipalities to achieve economies of scale without creating large local bureaucracies. Bish and Filipowicz contrast the current regional district system with a series of amalgamations in British Columbia, arguing that consolidation would likely increase servicing and administrative costs and reduce service quality and continuity.

Bish and Filipowicz's report is certainly not the final word on Victoria's amalgamation debate, but it gives us a lot to consider. Bish and Filipowicz do not argue that the current system is perfect. Rather, they argue it can be improved and helpfully provide a path for doing so in the future. In this, Bish and Filipowicz provide an insightful look at one of Canada's most innovative and unique local governance systems. Students and observers of Canadian local government would be well served to review their work.