

Collaborative Parks and Recreation Service Delivery in Greater Victoria

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Executive Summary

Introduction

A long sought-after objective of local government officials in Canada has been to determine how to best organize local governments and their operations to deliver services in an efficient and effective manner. As many populations of municipalities grow throughout Canada, so do demands on services. Maintaining sufficient levels of service has become challenging for many local governments in British Columbia.

In the Greater Victoria Region, which is made up of 13 municipalities, nine indigenous communities and three electoral areas, recent discussions of deeper regional integration to improve service delivery is often centred on municipal amalgamation involving some or all of the municipalities (Capital Integrated Services & Governance Initiative, 2017; Knox, 2014; Hopper, 2013). In 2014, during the last local government election, several municipalities conducted non-binding referendums, in which close to three-fourths of respondents were in favour of exploring options for increasing regional integration through avenues such as amalgamation (CivicInfo BC, 2017).

There are various strategies to address municipal service delivery challenges including contracting out services to a third party, privatizing services, collaborating on and sharing service delivery amongst various municipalities, and amalgamating municipalities.

This study provides a framework for how to approach cooperation among local governments (interlocal cooperation) based on interviews conducted with most of the local governments in Greater Victoria. While there are many ways to approach interlocal cooperation, this study focuses on services related to parks and recreation that municipal governments in Greater Victoria could consider for future collaboration and coordination. At the same time, this study also explored why certain services may not be conducive to collaborating with other municipalities. The main research question that was explored in this study was: How can municipalities of Greater Victoria provide parks and recreation service delivery in a collaborative, effective and efficient manner?

This research looks at the current state of parks and recreation service delivery in Greater Victoria. Analysis and recommendations focus on the potential for increasing integration and offers smart practices and considerations that need to be taken into account in order to develop successful shared services arrangements.

Methodology and Methods

A current state analysis was conducted to understand what services were being delivered by individual municipalities/local governments and jointly, and to the extent possible, the effectiveness of parks and recreation service delivery in Greater Victoria. The different service delivery models that were presented were examined to identify the benefits, challenges, and limitations of each mostly based on the interviews with the participant municipalities. A review of literature on municipal amalgamation, interlocal cooperation and parks and recreation services was also undertaken to identify effective service delivery options. Considerations of the key findings from the current state analysis and the literature review, contributed to the recommendations for smart practices on collaborative parks and recreation service delivery that are offered in this report. The smart practices can be considered by

municipalities to collaboratively deliver parks and recreation services in an effective and efficient manner.

The primary means of gathering research for this project was through conducting interviews with key informants who were divided into two groups. The first group consists of administrators heading individual parks or recreation departments and combined parks and recreation departments in Greater Victoria. The second group was locally elected politicians involved in parks and recreation, such as those who sit on a board of directors of a shared services arrangement. A total of 18 people were interviewed representing all of the municipalities of Greater Victoria with the exception of Oak Bay.

A review of relevant municipal parks and recreation documents that provide insights into the current state of parks and recreation and the priorities of the municipalities was also completed, as well a review of the Capital Integrated Services & Governance Initiative. The review of these documents contributed to the current state analysis and the recommendations for smart practices.

Key Findings

This research found multiple levels of parks and recreation service delivery practices that involve either independent or shared service delivery. The Capital Regional District (CRD) encapsulates all jurisdictions in Greater Victoria and offers parks and recreation services on a regional level. On a sub-regional level, there are two shared services arrangements for parks and recreation. West Shore Parks and Recreation Society (WSPRS) involves Colwood, the Highlands, Langford, Metchosin and View Royal, and Sooke and Electoral Area Parks and Recreation Commission (SEAPARC) involves Sooke and Juan de Fuca Electoral Area. There is also a shared services arrangement for recreation, Peninsula Recreation Commission (PRC), which involves Central Saanich, North Saanich and Sidney. These three municipalities offer parks services independently. Finally, the municipalities of Esquimalt, Oak Bay, Saanich and Victoria all operate independent parks and recreation departments.

Key findings from the research are:

- Independent service providers can be more responsive to the needs of the community and retain high levels of autonomy on local decisions than other models of service delivery.
- Independent parks and recreation departments have higher costs than shared services arrangements, but also have high levels of service.
- Shared services arrangements can offer economies of scale, reduce costs, and offer higher levels of service, particularly for smaller municipalities.
- Shared services arrangements are susceptible to transaction costs, which can negatively affect service delivery.
- Inter-municipal groups, which bring together administrative personal from across the region to discuss potential for collaboration, are effective means for the municipalities to deliver programs regionally and sub-regionally.

Recommendations: Smart Practices

The findings suggested that shared services are considered and implemented with the goal to improve operational efficiencies and to offer higher standards of service. Determining whether shared services is appropriate to achieve service delivery objectives requires careful, evidence-based analysis of potential

benefits and negative outcomes for all the actors and stakeholders involved. The research also noted that implementation should thoroughly address as many of the potential impacts, negative outcomes and unanticipated consequences as possible to ensure the model can effectively manage whatever circumstance may arise.

The following recommendations of smart practices emerged from review and analysis of the literature and the findings from the key informant interviews:

- Develop adaptive contracts or agreements to allow for the ability to address changing circumstances in a timely manner.
- Enter an agreement if there is potential and evidence to take advantage of economies of scale.
- Enter an agreement with partners whose interest and priorities are aligned with your own.
- Build and engage in informal inter-municipal groups.
- Partner with non-profits organizations and other public sector entities that have interests in parks and recreation services.

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1.0 Introduction

At a broad level, this report addresses service delivery issues facing metropolitan areas and specifically examines the potential of interlocal government collaboration to improve effectiveness and efficiency in parks and recreation service delivery in Greater Victoria. Collaborative mechanisms of municipal amalgamation and shared services arrangements are discussed and analyzed alongside parks and recreation service delivery.

A long sought-after objective of local government officials in Canada has been to determine how to best organize local governments and their operations to deliver services in an efficient and effective manner. To be efficient is to maximize productivity while minimizing expenditures and misused effort (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017a). To be effective is to successfully achieve “desired or intended results” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017b).

As many populations of municipalities grow throughout Canada, so do demands on services and maintaining sufficient levels of service has become challenging for many local governments (Sancton, 1996; Slack & Bird 2013a). In many cases across Canada, population growth meant that municipal boundaries often expanded beyond officially designated city limits and according to Sancton (2001), it is this outward expansion of an urban area that often leads to calls for municipal restructuring, as a means for more effective decision-making (p. 9). The rationale behind this action is that when a metropolitan area is fragmented into smaller municipalities, the governance structure may be ill-equipped to deal with complex urban problems that require regional perspectives or higher levels of coordination (Wikstrom, 1978, p. 2). Moreover, smaller municipalities often lack sufficient resources for investment in services, and this can lead to higher per unit costs, slower economic development, and uneven distribution of the tax base (Sancton, 2001; Vojnovic, 2000)

This structural reform is a technique that has been utilized on many occasions in Canada with the objective of improving efficiencies in municipal operations (Sancton, 1996; Slack & Bird, 2013a, Wikstrom, 1978). From 1953 to 1974, Canada went through a period of significant municipal structural reform with most of it occurring in Ontario (Slack and Bird, 2013a, p. 6). The most common method of municipal restructuring was the establishment of two-tier government (Sancton, 1996, p. 269). Two-tier government allowed for the municipal government to remain intact, while creating a regional government to encompass two or more municipalities. This allowed each tier of government to operate the services that would be most effectively and efficiently delivered at their level. During this period, structural reform was being considered as a means to improve municipal operations, elsewhere in Canada. For example, in British Columbia (BC) during the 1960s, the Municipal Act was amended to allow for Regional Districts (upper-tier government) to be established to deliver region-wide services such as economic development, water supply, sewage disposal and waste management (British Columbia, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (BC MAH), 2006).

The next stage of municipal structural reform in Canada occurred in the 1990s and early 2000s. This period witnessed many municipalities, including Canada’s two largest metropolitan areas, Toronto and Montreal, being amalgamated under a single government. There were various reasons given for amalgamation. According to Kushner and Siegal, proponents believe amalgamation will mean a robust and responsible government that will lead to increased efficiencies of service delivery, reduction in waste, and more equitable distribution of costs (2005, p. 251). This is deemed to occur since a more

unified administration is expected to relieve financial pressure, allow for improved service delivery, and offer effective and efficient government through streamlined decision-making and clearer accountability (Slack and Bird, 2013a, p. 4). Further, reducing the number of administrative components was expected to reduce expenditures, which would mean fewer tax requirements (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 386) and economies of scales would be expected to reduce average costs by expanding the scale or production, thereby making service delivery more effective and efficient (McKay, 2004, p. 24; Vojnovic, 2000, p. 387).

Conversely, there is a growing stream of scholarly work within Canada (Sancton 2000; Slack & Bird 2013a; Vojnovic 2000; Mckay, 2004) and beyond (Dollery et al., 2009; Noda, 2017) questioning the efficacy of amalgamation. Many governments around the world are abandoning the concept of forced municipal amalgamation and are seeking greater regional integration through inter-municipal cooperation to deliver services (Dollery, Kortt & Drew, 2016; Blair & Janousek, 2013; Spicer, 2015). Studies have been undertaken on the amalgamation of Toronto and the surrounding municipalities that finds amalgamation resulted in no clear cost savings or improvements in service delivery (Slack & Bird, 2013b; Kushner & Siegel, 2005). In their recent study of Greater Victoria, Bish and Filipowicz (2016) found that the current governance and service delivery models serve the region more effectively than would amalgamation by allowing for lower governing costs while maintaining effective services.

1.1 Context and Problem Definition

Municipalities in Canada, like local governments around the world, are under increasing pressure to be more efficient and effective than in the past. For example, in 2011, the Government of British Columbia (BC) established an Auditor General for Local Government to conduct performance audits on local government operations with objectives to increase financial accountability, and to provide recommendations about how to craft more efficient and effective service delivery (Auditor General for Local Government Act, 2011). Prior to this, the Government of BC had passed the Balance Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act in 2001 to encourage fiscal stability amongst municipal governments (Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act, 2001). This essentially means that BC municipalities must explore options to reign in expenditures while still delivering community needs. Therefore, municipalities have found cost-effective methods of service delivery that do not affect the quality of service become increasingly necessary.

The Greater Victoria metropolitan area has a population of 367,000 and is comprised of 13 separate municipalities and adjacent electoral areas. The municipalities include Victoria, Oak Bay, Esquimalt, Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich, Sidney, The Highlands, View Royal, Colwood, Langford, Metchosin, and Sooke. Each of these municipalities have their own elected officials and governance structure to manage operations and service delivery within their municipal borders. There are also nine separate First Nations communities in the region with their own governance structure. Arrangements have been made amongst the municipalities to collaborate and provide some services at regional and sub-regional levels. The Capital Regional District (CRD) is represented by all municipalities and provides governance in matters that cross municipal boundaries (CRD, 2017). The CRD provides service delivery to all Greater Victoria municipalities on regional and sub-regional levels, and has over 200 service, infrastructure and financing agreements. Other major regional service delivery arrangements include the Greater Victoria Public Libraries, BC Transit and West Shore Parks and Recreation Society (Bish & Filipowicz, 2016).

Within Greater Victoria, there are those who believe that 13 municipalities are far too many for the population size and advocate for a more integrated governance structure to achieve more effective and efficient local government operations. Municipal restructuring through amalgamation of Greater Victoria has been around in municipal governance discourse for decades, and currently, some are pleading passionately in favour of the idea, while others are standing adamantly opposed to it (Hopper, 2013). Referenda held in several municipalities in 2014 indicated that there is significant interest to at least explore options of municipal restructuring, that include amalgamation, on either regional or sub-regional levels (CivicInfo, 2017).

Municipal restructure is defined by the Province of BC as being “a boundary or governance change that has significant impact on a municipality, regional district, and citizens” (Community Charter, 2003). The restructuring process is outlined under the Local Government Restructure Program in which municipal authorities must take the lead on all steps of the process, with the Provincial Government providing support to the will of the local authorities (BC MAH, 2017a).

The Government of BC has so far not commissioned a fulsome study on amalgamation (“Greater Victoria Amalgamation,” 2016) although with the newly elected NDP-Green government, it remains to be seen what will be done regarding this issue. The fact that the Province is unwilling to take the lead on the issue and that municipal restructuring must be initiated by local governments, suggests amalgamation will not be a realistic option in the near future. Under the previous Liberal government, the Province did commission a study in Greater Victoria called Capital Integrated Services and Governance Initiative, in which opportunities for efficient service delivery were explored and shared services are considered (Urban Systems and Circle Square Solutions, 2017).

As an alternative to amalgamation, shared services are gaining increasing attention in the literature, to address issues related to municipal fragmentation (Dollery, Akimov & Byrnes, 2009; Tomkinson, 2007). Considering the difficulties of achieving amalgamation for Greater Victoria, this study considers making small incremental steps towards integration, through increased shared service delivery, as a more viable option for municipalities to consider in the short term, and possibly in the medium and long term.

The concept of shared services has been described in the literature as interlocal, intergovernmental or inter-municipal agreements or arrangements (LeRoux, Brandenburger, & Pandey, 2013; Chen & Thurmaier, 2009; Carr & Hawkins, 2013; Feiock, 2010; Spicer, 2017). These terms are interchanged throughout this study. In addition, municipal amalgamation is sometimes referred to as local government consolidation.

Within Greater Victoria, an array of municipal services is delivered independently, sub-regionally or regionally. Services include transportation, water, sewage, waste management, library, housing, policing, fire and parks and recreation. Under the premise that not all services under the spectrum of municipal responsibility may be ideal to be incorporated into a shared services arrangement, research was undertaken to determine what service is a preferred candidate for a shared services arrangement and how to best deliver that service in a shared services arrangement.

In many areas of municipal operations in Greater Victoria, such as parks and recreation, there is a lack of data on the current state of service delivery. The lack of data makes it difficult to identify how effectively the service is currently being operated, what sort of cooperation exists in delivering the service with other municipalities and local First Nations, or how to effectively implement a shared services arrangement. To move to a future state of greater regional integration for parks and recreation service

delivery, further research in the area is required and knowledge and feedback from management deeply integrated within the parks and recreations systems is necessary. Recognizing the deep historical and spiritual connection that First Nations have with the land around Greater Victoria (CRD, 2014) and the disputes that First Nations have had with parks and recreation authorities (Cleverly, 2017), knowledge is also required on the current state of parks and recreation relations amongst municipalities and First Nations to better understand the challenges and shortcomings. This research seeks to better understand what the current state of parks and recreation service delivery is in Greater Victoria, and how the current models of service delivery can be improved through increased collaboration amongst the different jurisdictions.

1.2 Research Question(s) and Project Objectives

The objective of this study is to provide smart practices for municipal governments to deliver parks and recreation services in a manner that is best suited for the municipality and its citizens. Parks and recreation is defined for this project as the public parks and recreation facilities that are available for use by the general public and are managed at a municipal level. These public parks and recreation facilities are used for a variety of reasons including leisure, activities, exercise, games and community events. This study has evolved out of the larger project undertaken by the District of Saanich to review its governance structure, including its relationship within the greater Victoria regional context. That study considered amalgamation and increased shared services or integration amongst Greater Victoria municipalities in terms of options for increasing efficiency of service delivery and effectiveness of the current governance model.

The purpose of the research will be to identify how parks and recreation services are currently being delivered in Greater Victoria, what works well, and where there could be improvements based on key informant interviews with those who work in this area in each of the 13 municipalities. The main research question of the study is: How can municipalities of Greater Victoria provide parks and recreation service delivery in a collaborative, effective, and efficient manner?

Providing the services in a collaborative manner means two or more jurisdictions coordinating amongst each other to offer parks and recreations service delivery within the boundaries of all the administrative units that are subject to the agreement. Doing so in an effective and efficient manner means parks and recreation services will be delivered in a manner which provides the most benefit while minimizing resource use, effort and cost.

The supporting questions to be asked are:

- What are the services that are delivered related to parks and recreation in each of the municipalities in the CRD?
- What are the strengths and limitations of shared services?
- What opportunities for shared services exist in Greater Victoria? What are the barriers? What are the ways to overcome those barriers?
- How are parks and recreation currently being delivered in the Greater Victoria? Who are they delivered by?
- Are there any parks and recreation services being jointly delivered? If so, which ones and why? What are the strengths? What are the limitations?

- What sort of collaboration of parks and recreation services exist with First Nations? How can these arrangements be improved?

The purpose of this research project is to ideally determine and substantiate approaches to shared services arrangements to realize the maximum benefit of collaboration amongst municipalities and First Nations.

1.3 Project Client

The client for this study is Jennifer Kroeker-Hall, the lead consultant for the Saanich Governance Review Project and PHD candidate at UVic's School of Public Administration. She is currently the President and CEO of Sirius Strategic Solutions, a Victoria based strategic management consulting firm specializing in public and road safety, security, governance and organizational development.

During the 2014 municipal elections, the District of Saanich put forth a non-binding referendum questions asking, "Do you support Council initiating a community-based review of the governance structure and policies within Saanich and our partnerships within the region?" With 88% of residents voting in favour of the motion, the District of Saanich initiated the Saanich Governance Review Project to review governance structure and policies (District of Saanich, 2017, p. 1).

To support the project the Governance Review Citizens Advisory Committee was established. Sirius Strategic Solutions was contracted to provide support "with respect to planning and facilitating public engagement, development of educational and promotional materials, and providing advice" to fulfil the objectives of the Committee and the Governance Review (District of Saanich, 2017, p. 1).

1.4 Organization of Report

The next chapter of this report will provide background on the issue by providing the historical context and current discourse around shared services and amalgamation in Greater Victoria, and the parks and recreation context of Greater Victoria. Chapter 3 details the methodology of this study. Chapter 4 offers a literature review on amalgamation, shared services and parks and recreation service delivery. Chapter 5 and 6 discuss the current state of parks and recreation service delivery in Greater Victoria. The key findings from the literature review and the current state analysis provide context for the recommendations of smart practices that are discussed in chapter 7. Finally, chapter 8 concludes this report.

2.0 Background

The purpose of this section is to provide greater context to understand issues and history specific to Victoria around the conversation on amalgamation and service delivery. The section begins with a brief overview on movements to deepen integration in Greater Victoria. This second section discusses the current state of the amalgamation conversation in Greater Victoria. This is followed by an outline of parks and recreation services in the Greater Victoria context.

2.1 History of Service Delivery in Greater Capital Region

Deeper integration of the Greater Victoria municipalities has been a part of the municipal discourse in the Greater Victoria region for decades. In 1958, Victoria and Saanich held referenda on amalgamating the two jurisdictions. At that time, Victoria voted two-to-one in favour of amalgamation, but Saanich voted almost two-to-one against, meaning the areas would not amalgamate (Knox, 2014). Another referendum in Saanich four years later rejected amalgamation once again, albeit by a much closer margin. In 1975, the Province led a movement to amalgamate the communities around the West Shore but was defeated and most recently, amalgamation was rejected for Sooke and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area (Urban Systems and Circle Square Solutions, 2017). Whenever amalgamation had been put forth in the Greater Victoria region, it has been unsuccessful.

In BC, amalgamation is rare in municipal restructuring (BC MAH, 2017a), owing to the fact that under the Community Charter, amalgamation cannot be forced upon a municipality and must be approved through a referendum (Community Charter, 2003). There has not been an amalgamation in BC since the consolidation of Abbotsford and Matsqui in 1995 (BC MAH, 2017a).

What is a more common approach to restructuring in BC are regional districts. Incorporated in the 1960s, regional districts are made upon agreement by two or more municipalities to provide governance and service delivery on regional, sub-regional or inter-municipal levels (BC MAH, 2017b). For the purpose of this study “regional” is considered the whole metropolitan area, “sub-regional” is a section of the metropolitan area, and “inter-municipal” is considered to encompass two or more municipalities. Currently there are 27 regional districts in BC. Regional governance is generally conducted by a board of directors from the municipalities within the region and a director from each electoral area.

2.2 The Greater Victoria Discourse on Amalgamation

Citizens and grassroots and business organizations have maintained the amalgamation conversation in the Greater Victoria Region, with organizations such as Amalgamation Yes leading the charge. There were enough voices expressing interest in amalgamation that 8 of the 13 Greater Victoria municipalities held non-binding referendums on deepening integration of the region, during the 2014 municipal elections (DeRosa, 2014). Although the questions centred on increasing regional integration, there was a difference of interpretation on the level of integration depending on the municipality (See Table 1) (CivicInfo BC, 2017). Almost all the municipalities voted in favour to at least explore options of deepening integration. Oak Bay asked its citizen to vote on being amalgamated into a larger regional municipality and was the only region where a vote on this issue was not supported.

Table 1: 2014 Municipal referendum results

| Municipality and referendum question asked | Yes | No |
|--|-------|-------|
| Central Saanich Should the District of Central Saanich petition the Province to fund a cost/benefit analysis of an amalgamation of Central Saanich, North Saanich and Sidney? | 70.7% | 29.3% |
| Esquimalt 1. Are you in favour of the Township of Esquimalt exploring options to achieve efficiencies by further sharing some services with other municipalities? 2. Are you in favour of exploring the reduction of the number of municipalities within Greater Victoria through amalgamation? | 86.6% | 13.4% |
| Langford Are you in favour if the City of Langford being amalgamated into a larger regional municipality? | 51.6% | 48.3% |
| North Saanich Non-Binding Question: Are you in favour of a study, provincially funded, to investigate the feasibility, costs and implications of amalgamating the three municipalities on the Saanich Peninsula of Sidney, Central Saanich and North Saanich? | 62.5% | 37.5% |
| Oak Bay Are you in favour of the District of Oak Bay being amalgamated into a larger regional municipality? | 37.7% | 61.2% |
| Saanich Do you support Council initiating a community-based review of the governance structure and policies within Saanich and our partnerships within the Region? | 88.5% | 11.5% |
| Sidney Non-Binding Question: Are you in favour of a provincially funded study to investigate the feasibility, costs and implications of amalgamating the three municipalities of the Saanich Peninsula? | 67.6% | 32.4% |
| Victoria Are you in favour of reducing the number of municipalities in Greater Victoria through amalgamation? | 80.0% | 20.0% |

(CivicInfo BC, 2017)

It should be noted that voter turnout for municipal elections tend to be low and the referendum had only 35% of the population participate. Therefore, the results of the referendum should be taken cautiously if attempting to transpose the results into the will of the region.

Despite the low turnout, the results of the referenda led pro-amalgamation organizations to claim victory and called upon the BC Government to commission a study on amalgamation (Harnett, 2014). Due to the sensitivity of interfering in municipal politics and because of a recent election won by the NDPs/Greens, the BC Government has not commissioned a study. The former Liberal government claimed that it would be inappropriate to do so without direction from local governments (“Greater Victoria amalgamation study, 2016).

As mentioned above, the Community Charter does not allow municipal restructuring to be forced upon a municipality, and any restructuring must be led by local government authorities. For the Province to initiate the study without municipal authorities leading the way can surely have the potential for backlash at the ballot box, and therefore it is unlikely to expect a provincially led initiative anytime soon. As

With amalgamation being much more difficult to achieve, local authorities have been exploring alternatives that can address service delivery issues. Increasing regional integration through avenues such as shared services arrangements are deemed to be perhaps more viable solutions to operational challenges related to municipal fragmentation than amalgamation. To respond to the results of the 2014 referendums, the BC Government initiated a review of integrated services. The outcome of this is the *Capital Integrated Services & Governance Initiative* report, developed by the policy and governance consulting firm, Circle Square Solutions, and the engineering consulting firm, Urban Systems. The initiative was designed to explore the current state of service delivery in the Greater Victoria and to provide recommendations on how to “better integrate services and governance in the region” (Urban Systems and Circle Square Solutions, 2017, p. 1). Rather than a study on amalgamation, the report examines where there are opportunities for further integration on a service by service basis. Services under the responsibility of municipal governments are reviewed, including parks and recreation.

With regards to parks and recreation, the report found that the outside of three sub-regional shared services agreements, there are several arrangements that exist to collaboratively deliver specialized parks and recreation services. Each parks and recreation department in the region are involved in at least some of these arrangements. The report finds opportunities to improve services by increasing recreation integration through joint ownership and operation of facilities and programs, as well as by increasing citizen accessibility to services throughout the region.

2.3 Parks and Recreation in Greater Victoria

Parks and recreation facilities are considered integral to vibrant and healthy communities. Parks and recreation facilities have been identified and developed as places where people can go to engage in physical activity. Studies have found positive correlation between physical activity and health (Orsega-Smith, Payne, Katzenmeyer, & Godbey, 2000). Orsega-Smith et al. (2000) describe how parks and recreation programs facilitated physical activity, resulting in health benefits that include improved cardiovascular fitness, fewer medical visits, increased muscular strength and better perceived health (p. 72). Across Greater Victoria, it is believed that parks and recreation services can serve as vehicles for strengthening the well-being of a community by encouraging active and healthy lifestyles (City of Victoria, 2012, p.74; District of Saanich, 2013, p. 1; City of Langford, 2017, p. 42; City of Colwood, p. 4-1). Improving parks and recreation services can therefore not only improve physical health, but the health of a community as well.

In British Columbia, parks and recreation can be offered on a variety of levels. Federal parks and provincial parks offer outdoor recreation and other opportunities that are offered in park settings. Parks and recreation services are also offered at a regional, sub-regional or municipal level. In this scenario, one can find parks similar to those at the federal and provincial level, as well as recreation facilities such as ice rinks, swimming pools and a host of recreational programs. Parks and recreation is defined for this project as the public parks and recreation facilities that are available for use by the public and are managed at a municipal level. These public works are used for a variety of reasons including recreation, leisure, activities, exercise, games and community events.

2.4 Key Findings and Summary

Amalgamation is an uncommon form of municipal restructuring in B.C. This may be since, unlike in other jurisdictions, such as Ontario or Quebec, the Province of BC cannot force amalgamation upon communities. Amalgamation must therefore be initiated by local governments, and the history of amalgamation referendums demonstrate that this has never found enough support to be successful in

Greater Victoria. However, the most recent non-binding referendums indicate that there is significant interest across the region to explore options to deepen regional integration at some level.

As parks and recreation is believed to be integral to a vibrant and health community, this study is seeking to understand the most effective and efficient means for municipalities to collaboratively deliver parks and recreation services. The historical background and BC context indicates amalgamation may not be the most realistic solution. Therefore, to explore options for deepening regional integration, this study examines options of taking smaller incremental steps, specifically around parks and recreation.

| Key findings |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amalgamation is rare and very difficult to achieve in BC.• There is significant interest across the region in exploring options to deepen integration, whether regionally or sub-regionally.• Parks and recreation are generally considered important to the health and well being of communities across the region. |

3.0 Methodology and Methods

3.1 Methodology

This research project received ethics approval from UVic's Human Research Ethics Board.

The research and analysis of this project is, for the most part, qualitative in nature. The information was obtained through a literature review and primary research to provide recommendations on smart practices in delivering parks and recreation services. Bardach (2012) presents smart practices as a clever idea that is expressed through practice with actions to "solve a problem or achieve a goal" (p. 111). A smart practice exploits an opportunity and creates values with minimal costs (p. 114).

To formulate the smart practices, the methodology for this project involved a current-state analysis. This required information seeking and an analysis on the current state of parks and recreation service delivery in the thirteen municipalities of Greater Victoria. The municipalities include the core communities of Victoria, Saanich, Esquimalt and Oak Bay; the Saanich Peninsula communities of North Saanich, Central Saanich and Sidney; the West Shore communities of View Royal, Highlands, Colwood, Langford and Metchosin; and finally, Sooke. The Juan de Fuca Electoral Areas are a part of parks and recreation arrangements with some of the jurisdictions mentioned above and are therefore included in discussions. This research required speaking to various professionals and elected councillors within municipal public service that had experience with parks and recreation service delivery.

The findings were measured against the literature about approaches to shared services across Canada and in other parts of the world, to better understand the strengths, challenges, limitations and opportunities of increasing collaboration in parks and recreation service delivery amongst Greater Victoria municipalities

3.2 Methods

The two main methods used to collect research were semi-structured interviews with key informants and a literature review. The literature review is narrative and traditional. This form of literature review summarizes the findings of various studies that conducted primary research (Rozas & Klein, 2010, p. 395). Rozas and Klein state that "the purpose of the traditional literature review is to gather and synthesize primary findings from research studies conducted on a particular topic" and will provide the reader "with a reasonably thorough overview of the state of relevant knowledge in that area." The literature review can be broken down into three parts; a review of amalgamation and its impacts in Canada, a review of shared services and the potential benefits, challenges and limitations, and finally a review of parks and recreation service delivery. The literature review provides knowledge on how to best implement shared services arrangements by mitigating negative outcomes.

The semi-structured interview approach is a flexible method of data collection that offers focused structure through pre-determined questions while allowing the interviewer the opportunity to explore themes and responses further when desired (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016, p. 2955). This allowed for the knowledge, experience and expertise of the particular key informant to emerge. Key informants are selected due to their ability to offer their insights on a subject as they hold information and ideas that can be utilized by the researcher (Kumar, 1989, p.1). The objective of the key informant interviews was to understand the current state of parks and recreation service delivery, as well as to

gain expert opinion on what works well, what does not work well, and how to better deliver parks and recreation services.

Approximately a dozen municipal documents that provided information on parks and recreation service delivery in Greater Victoria were also reviewed to support the current-state analysis. These included Official Community Plans for several of the municipalities, as well as parks and recreation master plans, annual reports and strategic plans.

Interview Process

The sample for interviews was found by identifying which professionals would have the most knowledge on parks and recreation service delivery in Greater Victoria. These tend to be the Directors of Parks and Recreation for the municipalities and the CRD. To obtain the fullest understanding of parks and recreation service delivery in Greater Victoria, it was determined that each municipality should be represented in the project. Upon initial research, to identify heads of parks and recreation for each municipality, it was found that not every municipality has their own parks and recreation department and administrative staff. The West Shore, which includes Metchosin, Langford, Colwood, Highlands, and View Royal have an agreement to jointly deliver parks and recreation services, under the West Shore Parks and Recreation Society (WSPRS), and therefore have one administration for the 5 municipalities. The municipalities on the Saanich Peninsula; North Saanich, Sidney and Central Saanich have a similar arrangement for recreation services under the Peninsula Recreation Commission (PRC). Both WSPRS and PRC have elected councillors and citizen representatives from each of the municipalities involved in the agreement represented on a board of directors. To have representation from each municipality, elected councillors involved in parks and recreation services were interviewed as well. Therefore, administrative professionals from parks and recreation departments and elected councillors involved in parks and recreation services were interviewed to have representation from all Greater Victoria municipalities and the CRD. Each interview was approximately one hour in length. No representative from Oak Bay was interviewed, as there was no response to multiple requests made to them.

I contacted all the potential interviewees directly, through email or phone, and set-up in person interviews with each participant (see Appendix A for letter of consent and Appendix B for interview questions). One participant elected to be interviewed over the phone. A consent form and the interview questions were given to the participant prior to the interview. A semi-structured interview was used to facilitate an open and broadly focused discussion, which allowed the interviewer to adjust how questions were asked for each situation. Three transcripts of interview questions were prepared that contained mostly similar questions; however, the different transcripts had some questions that were unique to the circumstance to accommodate the three different interviewee types; those who were a part of a municipality that delivers parks and recreation services independently, those involved in shared services arrangements, and one for the CRD.

The interview questions were based on facilitating the discussion and to draw on the expertise and the particular experiences of each participant. The questions emerged from preliminary research on the topic and from the literature review. There was a central set of interview questions that served as a catalyst to each interview, and based on the participants background, specialization and expertise, interview questions were adjusted or added. All key informants were asked to provide their knowledge on the current state of parks and recreation service delivery and their thoughts on how the service could be improved. Notes were taken to record the responses for each interview.

Document Review

Any municipality produced document that touched upon parks and recreation service delivery was also reviewed to contribute to analysis on the current state of parks and recreation service delivery. Saanich, Sidney and Victoria offered parks and/or recreation master plans, the CRD and PRC offered strategic plans, and WSPRS provides an annual report. For municipalities that do not offer master or strategic plan documents on their own, official community plans were reviewed to gauge their municipal perspectives, visions and priorities with regards to parks and recreation.

3.3 Data Analysis

From the interviews, transcripts were produced and then these were coded to create groups and categories to allow for the general ideas of the interview responses to emerge. These were then summarized to formulate and identify knowledge relevant to this study. To find the perspectives on parks and recreation service delivery of the key informants, thematic analysis was conducted to organize the summarize material into key themes such as recurring responses and ideas. Thematic analysis is a “method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Braun & Clarke state how themes emerge from meaningful patterns found within the data and encapsulate something significant about the data that is related to the research question (p. 82). As the project developed, themes adapted accordingly to items that emerged from interviews and the literature.

3.4 Project Limitations

The following are project limitations:

- *Not obtaining parks and recreation information from other jurisdictions.*

Although there is a significant amount of information in the literature, knowledge gained from the interview subjects provided valuable first-hand experience that cannot be replicated through scholarly reviews. Based on this experience, it can be assumed that there would have been significant value in interviewing subjects from other jurisdictions involved in parks and recreation service delivery. Further research should be undertaken that examines shared services arrangements in other jurisdictions in BC. Gaining knowledge of the state of parks and recreation service delivery in other regions of BC would have assisted in the development of smart practices that could be generalized across the province.

- *Having to get municipal representation from councillors who have limited knowledge on the subject.*

To understand the current state of parks and recreation in the region, it was important to gain municipal representation from every municipality to understand the different perspectives. The preferred representative would be involved in parks and recreation administration. Since not all municipalities have their own parks and recreation department, it was decided that elected councillors with some experience in parks and recreation would be interviewed. In some cases, council knowledge of parks and recreation service delivery was limited and therefore it was difficult to answer some of the interview questions.

- *Absence of First Nations representatives*

To obtain a fulsome and inclusive understanding on how to best manage parks and recreation services in Greater Victoria, it is necessary to understand the relationship between municipalities and First Nations regarding parks and recreation. The nine indigenous communities of Greater Victoria have a

deep spiritual and historical connection to the land and have shown significant interest in how some parks and recreation services should be managed and to be apart of the decision-making process. Due to constraints on this study, there was an absence of engagement with First Nations which limits the abilities of this study to offer a complete understanding on how to best deliver parks and recreation services.

- *Bias of participant*

The administrators of the parks and recreation departments expressed general satisfaction with the services they provided. Considering they are responsible for the outcomes of their departments, there is the potential for bias as it is in their interest to present their operation in the best light. This may have led to what can be described as a sense of possessiveness of their system. There were often limited responses on what within their system is not working well and where improvements could be made. Therefore, when describing the current state of parks and recreation, some answers may have been skewed to some degree.

Although the purpose of the research was to be objective in the design and analysis, it was clear that the key informants, those involved in administration, were often hesitant to offer opinions on service delivery arrangements other than those already in place within their organization. There may have been concerns that expressing opinions on the potential of alternative service delivery arrangement would give a perception of concerns within their own structure or were hesitant to give comments perceived to have political implications. Whatever the reason, this concern may have limited the discussion on potential for alternative methods of service delivery.

4.0 Literature Review

The literature review focuses on research on cooperation and collaboration amongst Canadian municipalities through municipal amalgamation, inter-municipal service delivery, and other service delivery mechanisms. This chapter is broken down into three parts. The first section will discuss amalgamation. After a period of amalgamation in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s, a significant amount of research emerged to analyze the outcomes. Therefore, most of the studies examined for this section are from Canadian sources after the year 2000, and they generally questioned the efficacy of amalgamation and whether the benefits outweighed the costs. There was little scholarly support for amalgamation in the literature.

The second section focuses on shared services arrangements. There is a growing stream of scholarly work in this area and recent literature from around the world including Canada, USA, Australia and Japan, were drawn upon for this section. The general state of the literature here describes shared services as a more effective means of improving service delivery than amalgamation. However, despite the recognized potential of shared services, there are concerns with risks, especially those associated with transaction costs. The third section narrows the focus to parks and recreation service delivery. Considering the literature is extremely limited on local government collaboration, attention is paid to other forms of partnerships in parks and recreation service delivery and the potential benefits from such arrangements.

Google, Google Scholar and databases available through UVic's library website including Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Canadian Public Policy Collection, Encyclopedia of Public Administration & Public Policy, JSTOR, ProQuest and SAGE provided scholarly sources. Search terms utilized include "municipal amalgamation," "municipal shared services," inter-municipal collaboration," "local government shared services," "local government consolidation," "parks and recreation service delivery" and "parks and recreation shared services."

4.1 Municipal Amalgamation in Canada

There has been extensive literature written on the benefits and limitations of local government consolidation. Those who favour consolidation view decentralized fragmented metropolitan areas as ill-equipped to deal with complex urban issues (Wikstrom, 1978, p. 2) It is believed that larger governmental units address these issues more effectively and efficiently. For example, Wikstrom states how by the middle of the twentieth century there was a consensus amongst academics that urban structural reform required consolidation of local governments.

Canada experienced a wave of municipal mergers in the 1950s and 1960s, mostly in Ontario (Slack & Bird, 2013a, p. 6) The rationale behind these mergers had to do mostly with more effective service delivery, redistribution of the tax base, and regional planning (Sancton, 1996, p. 271). A common municipal restructuring method was to establish two-tier government. Two-tier government retains the municipal governance structure while establishing a regional government. This first occurred in metropolitan Toronto in 1953 and was followed by additional two-tier governments being established, so that by 1974 two-tier governments held one third of Ontario's population (Slack and Bird, 2013a, p. 6). Slack and Bird claim the creation of two-tier government was to allow regional problems related to land use planning, transportation, social services and policing to be addressed at the upper tier level, and for more local concerns to be addressed by the lower tier governments.

After 1974, municipal restructuring virtually ceased to exist for some time (Slack & Bird, 2013a, p. 6). Leading into this era, an increasing amount of literature began challenging the notion that local government consolidation would lead to a more effective and efficient form of metropolitan

government (Martin and McKenzie, 1975). Economists who leaned towards public choice theory argued that smaller governments, required to compete against one another, are more efficient than larger governmental units. There was concern that larger governments mean a rise in bureaucracy that will inevitably enhance waste and inefficiency (Boyne, 1998, p. 476). Martin and McKenzie (1975) argued that a larger consolidated government enhances the extent of monopoly of power that is gained from access to specialized information (p. 96). Therefore, any possible cost savings that may be realized through amalgamation will be offset by bureaucrats who ensure they receive higher salaries, greater job leisure and better working conditions.

The rationale for consolidated government is that a more unified administration will relieve financial pressure, allow for improved service delivery and offer more effective and efficient government through streamlined decision-making and clearer accountability (Slack and Bird, 2013a, p. 4). Further, arguments were put forward that reducing the number of administrative components should reduce expenditures, which means fewer tax requirements (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 386). Finally, economies of scale are expected to reduce average costs by expanding the scale of production, thereby making service delivery more effective and efficient (McKay, 2004, p. 24; Vojnovic, 2000, p. 387). The possible beneficial outcomes made amalgamation too tempting for many decision-makers to easily pass over.

The potential benefits led to another wave of municipal restructuring across Canada in the 1990s and early 2000s. This time around the favoured form of restructuring was amalgamation. Ontario experienced the most in government consolidation, reducing the number of municipalities from 839 to 448 (Slack & Bird, 2013b, p. 6). In the 1980s, significant pressures on growth produced a desire to have municipalities that could more effectively deliver on urban development (Sancton, 2000, p. 102). Then in the 1990s much of the country experienced recession and areas that were ideal for economic growth lacked the resources to add the necessary infrastructure. Sancton states how amalgamation was now also seen as necessary to enhance economic growth and development (p.103).

There are many potential benefits for municipal operations that have been associated with amalgamation, including improvements in:

- Economies of scale;
- Regional planning;
- Economic Growth;
- Distribution of the tax base, and;
- Citizen accessibility to government and administration.

The discussion that follows examines the arguments supporting and disputing the idea that amalgamation can be effective in improving municipal operations based on these five criteria.

Economies of Scale

The attainment of increased efficiency has been the central focus in the pursuit of amalgamation (McKay, 2004, p. 26). Proponents will argue that the delivery of a public service can be provided more efficiently with economies of scale. If services such as garbage collection and fire protection are planned and delivered on a regional scale, rather than in a fragmented manner, they would be delivered more effectively due to the larger service delivery area and subsequent declining costs per capita (Wikstrom, 1978, p. 3). Providing the ability to afford specialized equipment and professionals, and to purchase inputs in larger quantities, economies of scale can reduce expenditures by lowering unit and related administrative costs, while improving the quality of service delivery (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 387).

Although for some municipal services, economies of scale may require a significant amount of resources to be realized, some authors do not support the idea that consolidated government reduces unit costs of local services or improves the effectiveness of service delivery (Wikstrom, 1978, p. 4). Wikstrom (1978) identifies several studies to prove that there is “no consistent relationship between measures of governmental fragmentation and per capita cost” (p. 4). For example, Dahl found that there are only a few items, such as water and sewage, that may benefit from economies of scale, and these are offset by increased costs of other services such as policing. Wikstrom also cites work from Hirsh arguing that “economies of scale are not uniformly found in the public sector” and from Wilken that found per capita costs of services rise after amalgamation. On their study undertaken of the City of Toronto, Slack and Bird (2013b) found that the unit costs of service delivery for garbage, fire and parks and recreation all increased after the area amalgamated (pp. 23-24). Amalgamation usually means that all services will be consolidated under a single regime and the authors above suggest that not all service would improve as larger entities.

Different services and various parts of services have differing “optimum scales of population” and therefore it may be better to keep municipal units smaller while cooperating with other entities for issues that require more resources (Sancton, 2001, p. 14). The ideal size will depend on the service offered. For garbage collection, it was found that operating costs were lowest for populations under 5,000 (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 387). Costs would continue to rise from here until the population reached 325,000.

Vojnovic (2000) claims that labour intensive services will yield higher costs per unit as services levels grow (p. 388). He continues to state that larger municipal governments will eventually lead to increase professionalization of the bureaucracy. And this means “increased service standards, higher paid civil servants” and expensive specialized equipment can offset the cost savings expected to be realized through the elimination of duplicate staff and administrative overhead (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 388). According to Vojnovic, there is no evidence that improved municipal governance is achieved through professional bureaucracies.

Regional Planning

Another favoured reason for municipal amalgamation is to develop a coherent and integrated regional planning system to address current and future needs of systems that connect or cross jurisdictional boundaries. If an urban area requires a plan to integrate systems such as roads, utilities and sewers to maintain infrastructure at acceptable levels, it has been argued that only a regional authority can coordinate for the entire area (Sancton, 2001, p. 12). Having several separate plans may result in some working in contradiction to each other. For metropolitan areas to function acceptably and for the public sector to plan effectively on a regional basis, the governing body must have sufficient size and authority to plan, administer and provide adequate financial support for major socioeconomic, area-wide problems (Wikstrom, 1978, p. 2). A single authority, it has been argued, will lead to increased organization and public accountability and streamlined decisions (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 392).

As the urban centre grows, the need for regional planning increases. As populations expand outwards, rural areas may not have the resources or the capacity to build and manage the necessary infrastructure (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 392). And the urban centre may see outlying regions utilizing services provided by the urban centre and not paying for them. An example of this can be seen in Greater Victoria with the replacement of the Johnson Street Bridge, a major artery for many regional residents to enter downtown Victoria on their daily commute to work. Although residents from all over the region will be using the bridge regularly, the City of Victoria will be the only municipality contributing to the costs (City of Victoria, 2013).

However, arguments have been made that creating a regional authority to improve regional planning will incur unnecessary municipal restructuring costs when all that needs to be done is for municipalities to engage in inter-municipal agreements. (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 392). Public choice theorists do not think governments can effectively predict the future and therefore producing a useful regional plan is highly unlikely (Sancton, 2001, p. 14). They believe that bureaucrats will increase their control of processes in consolidated government and will seek out their own interest and maximize their own well-being (Martin and McKenzie 1975, p. 96). A regional plan may simply increase the potential for bureaucrats to reward themselves and those close to them without improving a community's built environment (Sancton, 2001, p. 15).

Economic Growth

Economic growth has been touted as another reason to encourage municipal consolidation. In the 1990s in Ontario the conversation shifted from amalgamation being necessary to accommodate regional planning to amalgamation being necessary for economic growth (Sancton, 2000, p. 103). The consolidation of resources provides a larger government with advantages over more fragmented regions. As an example, a larger and stronger tax base allows for services to be delivered at higher qualities and allows for greater infrastructure improvements (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 392). Vojnovic adds that advocates for amalgamation believe increased capital will also allow for a municipality to maintain a higher profile and advertise and market itself to attract investment towards its services. And that greater fiscal stability and accountability can also lead to increased business in the future, by establishing the jurisdiction as being a safe place to invest in. Finally, Vojnovic states that advocates will argue that competition amongst neighboring municipalities will produce inefficiencies. For example, in order to attract investment, a municipality may reduce its business taxes below levels needed to cover service costs. Consolidation will therefore mitigate practices that may contribute to economic inefficiencies.

To counter consolidation advocates, opponents will point to the benefits to the economic viability of the region that municipal competition brings with it. Bish & Filipowiz (2015) claim that "local government units compete in a market that is geographically limited and such competition is associated with lower spending (p. 34). This forces them to compete on taxation levels and quality of services thereby encouraging efficiencies in service delivery (Sancton, 2001, p. 14). Offering specialized rates of taxes and services to attract certain residents and businesses will also encourage investment and spur economic growth.

Equitable Distribution of the Tax Base

Amalgamation has also been identified as a means to address equity issues of metropolitan areas. Fragmented governments allow for wealthier areas to isolate themselves with superior services while poorer regions are under financial strain (Sancton, 2001, p. 12). These wealthier areas tend to have few socioeconomic problems yet have excess resources, whereas poorer inner cities tend to have increased socioeconomic issues with a smaller tax base to draw from (Wikstrom, 1978, p. 2). And by merging municipalities, revenues can be generated on a regional basis and resources can be allocated where needed in an efficient manner. A larger municipal jurisdiction with a strong financial base can more readily provide all areas with a minimum level of services (Slack & Bird, 2013a, p. 19). Slack & Bird find evidence of this with the amalgamation of Toronto. Municipalities of York and East York became more financially viable, as amalgamation allowed for expenditures to increase as their tax base was declining.

Although the logic behind the argument makes sense, others will point to there being no clear relationship between governmental organization and resource distribution. There is no assurance that a consolidated government will redirect resources away from wealthier areas to address issues of inner

cities (Wikstrom, 1978, p. 3). Wikstrom reminds us that the new political reality could very much be dominated by those from the wealthier regions.

Accessibility to Government and Administration

Proponents also argue that fragmented governments have much more complex systems of service delivery, which make it much more difficult for the average citizen to understand who is responsible for what, leading to concerns with accountability (Kushner & Siegel, 2003, p. 1036). A governance structure that is larger can make access to services simpler and will mean greater transparency (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 390). Vojnovic states how London, Ontario's amalgamated system was praised for its ability to not allow bureaucrats to veil themselves under the multiple layers of municipal structures (p. 391).

Accountability, to some, can also be measured by accessibility. It has been argued that larger units of government will reduce citizen involvement in decision making and thus hindering democracy (Kushner & Siegel, 2003, p. 1037). Larger governments can prove to be ineffective in meeting local needs as citizens' access points become limited due to the intimidating and unmanageable size of administration (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 391). Kushner and Siegel (2003) found in their study that, although councillors themselves did not feel their accessibility had diminished post-amalgamation, a large minority of average citizens did feel as though their access had diminished. Slack and Bird (2013a) found that amalgamation in Toronto reduced the number of community councils, which reduced citizen involvement and participation. Spicer (2016) studied the amalgamation of Hamilton and found that certain areas such as suburban zones or urban cores would tend to create voting blocs, leading to urban rural divides, in which the minority on the council tends to lose out.

4.1.1 Opposition to Amalgamation

It is evident that many authors have taken a cautionary approach to amalgamation. They have studied amalgamation and found that in many instances, it is unclear if the expected benefits will ever be realized (Vojnovic, 1998; Slack & Bird, 2013a; Kushner & Siegel, 2005). Slack and Bird (2013a) studied amalgamation of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and argue that the financial viability of some of the smaller communities improved due to access to a larger tax base (p. 19). However, when they looked at fire, garbage, and parks and recreation services for the whole GTA, costs have increased, whereas prior to amalgamation they were trending downwards. Having a larger production capacity will only lower costs up to a certain point before average costs will begin to rise, due to issues such as difficulties in offering services to outlying regions (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 386). And some authors suggest that economies of scale may only be viable for a select number of municipal services (McKay, 2004, p. 26; Vojnovic, 2000, p. 389). Kushner and Siegal (2005) concluded that amalgamation does not necessarily mean improved service delivery and that amalgamation can affect different municipalities in different ways (p. 266). Spicer (2012) argues that amalgamation negatively impacts a community's voice and decision-making abilities on local issues and policies. Amalgamation has occurred across Canada and it is difficult to find research confirming improved service levels or cost savings. The Government of Quebec forced a municipal merger on Montreal in 2001, only to have more than half of the boroughs vote to demerge three years later (Tomas, 2011). Studies undertaken in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have also questioned the success of municipal mergers (Sancton, 2001; Vojnovic, 1998).

Regarding Greater Victoria, Bish and Filipowicz (2016) claim the regional district system established by British Columbia better serves the region than amalgamation would. They argue that the region has a greater level of shared services than is realized and the current model maintains lower administrative costs (p. 31). The Regional District System has allowed for voluntary shared services arrangements while maintaining local authority on local matters.

Outside of Canada, the purported benefits of local government amalgamation are also being increasingly questioned. It is being argued that the claimed efficiencies realized through amalgamation have not been supported by empirical work (Dollery, Kortt & Drew, 2016, p. 226). Faulk and Grassmuck (2012) found that in the US, per capita expenditures in consolidated jurisdictions are not statistically different from areas that choose not to merge with another jurisdiction. And a study of five consolidated governments in New Zealand concluded that no cost-saving could be expected (Kortt, Dollery & Drew, 2016). Consolidation of local councils have not only been contentious, but the unsatisfactory results of past amalgamation have led to significant doubt in its effectiveness. Numerous studies in Australia have found the claimed economies of scale would not have occurred through amalgamation and that a larger council size does not mean a more effective council (Dollery et al., 2016, p. 227).

4.2 Improving Service Delivery through Shared Services

The fact that many local policy issues transcend boundaries means that some sort of collective action may still be required (LeRoux, Brandenburger & Pandey, 2010, p. 258). The lack of evidence in achieving cost savings and improving efficiencies through municipal amalgamation has led to an increasing number of voices to emphasize shared services. Shared services, which have also been described as intergovernmental arrangements or interlocal agreements, are increasingly seen as a more viable and less contentious form of service delivery that can reign in problems related to municipal fragmentation, such as service costs and effects of spill-over, while addressing cross jurisdictional issues (Leroux and Carr, 2007, p. 345; Kwon & Feiock, 2010, p. 876). The demand for shared service arrangements are largely driven by issues of economies of scale and the need to mitigate negative externalities that generate inefficiencies in service delivery (Kwon & Feiock, 2010, p. 877).

Shared services have gained increased attention in research around the world. Some of the literature recognizes the potential of shared services to improve serviced delivery and reduce costs (Dollery, Akimov & Byrnes, 2009; Tomkinson, 2007). Shared services involve the pooling of resources of two or more municipalities to provide a service across the jurisdictions of all the parties involved (Spicer, 2017, p. 389). Through these arrangements, municipalities have the potential to share costs while gaining knowledge and expertise of another jurisdiction. The opportunities presented by shared services occurs when a jurisdictional area is not optimal. Special arrangements could be made amongst smaller governmental units to increase administrative and technical capabilities, while addressing fiscal concerns (Bel and Warner, 2015, p. 53). Although there is increasing excitement and consideration of local government cooperation as a means in achieving efficient and effective service delivery, Dollery et al. (2009) point out, that within the broader debate of improving municipal services, local government collaboration receives far less attention than local government amalgamation (p. 209).

Noda (2017) takes the adoption of shared services further and claims that it is becoming increasingly common around the world, in places such as Australia, New Zealand, UK, USA and Japan, with the objective of improving efficiencies (p. 39). Kwon and Feiock (2010) think the increasing interest may be since interlocal agreements can be simpler to design and implement than other forms of service delivery (p. 876). Although the potential to address fiscal strain through cooperation has led many local government representatives to consider shared services arrangements, according to Kwon and Feiock, most are still not taking advantage of the model.

When considering a variety of arrangements, Noda (2017) conceptualizes service production ranging from “fragmented to consolidated” and governance ranging from “autonomous to shared,” with service delivery taking a mix of these dimensions to varying degrees (p. 41). Shared services with consolidated

service production and autonomous governance can lead to greater efficiency and higher levels of service while maintaining local autonomy (p. 40). The literature also suggests that shared services does not necessarily result in improved services, therefore careful consideration must be taken on the model of service delivery to ensure cost savings are realized, services are improved, and accountability and transparency are maintained (Noda, 2017; Dollery et al. 2016; Tomkinson, 2007).

Dollery et al. (2016) conceptualizes the case for shared services on two propositions: equity and efficiency and the distinction between local service production and local service provision. In terms of equity and efficiency, shared services should support the continued autonomy of local governments at the lowest level, as they exemplify democracy by providing the closest avenue of input for local voices (p. 210). Local council is also preferred for its expectation to possess a higher degree of knowledge of local demand and supply conditions. The diversity in communities and their preference allows local decisions to enhance social welfare (p. 211). To achieve the shared deliverance of a service, cash strapped municipalities tend to prefer intergovernmental collaboration to share resources yet maintain a high level of autonomy (Noda, 2016, p. 41). By engaging in intergovernmental cooperation, municipalities retain flexibility to decide which issues should be addressed at a collective level and the arrangement tends to be far less permanent (Leroux and Carr, 2007, p. 345). Leroux and Carr claim that this leaves the local autonomy in place, preventing the “policy capacity” from leaving, thereby protecting local democracy.

The second proposition suggested by Dollery et al. (2016) is drawn from the work of Oakerson and his distinction between service provision and service production. Service provision involves decisions on whether to offer a service, the amount of service needed, and how to deliver the service. The actual delivery of the service is the service production. Service delivery can be divided into several parts, separating direct service from service that supports the direct service. Each part can have different levels of economies of scale and require varying degrees of coordination (p. 212). Therefore, it can be understood that “economies of scale differ widely between different municipal activities” (p. 211). Different services should use different possibilities to link provision with production (p. 212). These possibilities include different levels of intergovernmental cooperation.

Intergovernmental cooperation ranges from low maintenance information sharing to highly multifaceted joint service delivery instruments that can potentially lower costs and improve service quality, while addressing some of the issues associated with municipal fragmentation (Spicer, 2017, p. 389). Government authorities are often citing efficiency gains and cost savings as motivations to seek service cooperation. In Australia, it has been considered primarily to manage fiscal strain but also to improve operational efficiencies (Dollery & Akimov, 2007, p. 89). Those which lack the resources to sufficiently implement a service are encouraged to cooperate with other jurisdictions to pool resources together. This will allow economies of scale to more efficiently and effectively utilize resources, spread risk and responsibility over a wider network, purchase and replace expensive equipment and conduct infrastructure and other capital improvements (Kwon & Feiock, 2010, p. 878).

When increasing productive output results in a reduction in costs per unit, economies of scale exist (Feiock, 2007, p. 49). Bel and Warner (2015) break down economies of scale further into economies of density and economies of scope (p. 55). Economies of density exist when a service with a fixed cost, such as being connected to an urban water network, is offered to a larger population, thereby reducing average cost. Also, according to Bel and Warner, economies of scope exist when some infrastructure is

able to increase the number of services it can produce, such as waste collection and recycling. If a government is inhibited by their inability to produce a service at minimum cost, economies of scale tend to be the greatest incentive for interlocal arrangements (Bel & Warner, 2015, p. 49; Chen & Thermaier, 2009, p. 538). Chen and Thermaier point to studies that show interlocal agreements are more likely to create economies of scale to manage expensive capital start-up costs or when the scope of services needs expanding (p. 539). When the city of Napa consolidated 911 dispatch services with the county, the reduction of costs was close to 40 percent (Ruggini, 2006, p 32).

Shared services are also recognized as an avenue for operational improvements. With fragmented governments and tiered governments that overlap, there are concerns with duplication and efficiency. Shared services have been seen not only as a means to reduce duplication but to also as means to better deploy resources (Ruggini, 2006, p 33).

Rather than efficiency, shared services may be sought after to attain a higher level of service. It was found that in Kansas City, local government or interlocal agreements were more focused on improving service effectiveness (Chen & Thermaier, 2009, p. 540). By pooling resources together local governments create the ability to offer more of a service and at higher levels.

Another motivation to pursue interlocal agreements is to manage issues associated with externalities. The actions by one jurisdiction may impact another jurisdiction in positive or negative ways (Bel & Warner, 2015, p. 57). Spillovers from services that are incompatible, such as land use planning, road management and storm water management, can be produced by fragmentation (Bel & Warner, 2015, p. 57; Feiock, 2007, p. 49). Externalities will occur amongst governmental units' due to the "connectedness of services, policies and resource systems" (Feiock, 2013, p. 398). Interlocal agreements can internalize the externalities by taking in broader considerations, which can allow for more effective and efficient service delivery (Bel & Warner, 2015, p. 57).

Risks Associated with Integrating Services

For many local officials, the risks of greater integration outweigh any motivation to pursue interlocal agreements. The greatest concerns are those related to transaction costs. Interlocal agreements are more likely to happen when it is clear that benefits to the parties involved will be high while the transaction costs will be low (Feiock, 2007, p. 50). Feiock (2013) recognizes transaction costs as being highest when shared service arrangements are forced from a higher governmental unit and lowest when the arrangements are voluntary (p. 404). Transaction costs may mean the financial efficiency the arrangement is meant to produce may not be realized (Noda, 2017, p. 43)

Hawkins (2010) identifies three sets of transaction costs associated with cooperative ventures; coordination, negotiation, and enforcement and monitoring (p. 255). Coordination costs stem from the different characteristics of the potential collaborators and their differing ideas of policy direction and governance structure (Noda, 2017, p. 42). The process of bringing these differing groups together creates coordination problems, as the costs of negotiating agreement can be high and may demotivate local officials from entering shared services agreements (Carr & Hawkins, 2013, p. 226). Cooperation requires sufficient knowledge of the potential partner to recognize the opportunities for mutual benefits in an agreement. If information and resources are limited, finding an appropriate partner becomes highly inefficient (Feiock, 2007, p. 50). "Information costs include the costs of obtaining information on the range of possible institutional solutions, the resources of other actors, and the preferences of

participants over possible outcomes,” and prevent local officials from understanding the full potential of collaboration (Kwon & Feiock, 2010, p. 878). Noda describes how Hayama town and other municipalities in Japan defected from shared services arrangements due to “significant differences concerning policy preferences” (p. 42). Hayama town, specifically, experienced coordination costs on the differing views on waste management.

The agreement developed must achieve the service delivery requirements of all the actors while local officials must also ensure the needs of their own jurisdiction are being properly addressed (Carr & Hawkins, 2013, p. 226). Carr and Hawkins state that this may lead to many rounds of negotiating and bargaining to set terms and conditions and will most likely need council approval. All this adds to the cost. If the service requires a significant variety of activities, the risks of incoordination become higher (Feiock, 2013, p. 406).

Negotiation costs emerge when there is an agreement on the service arrangements but the distribution of benefits remain unequal or is perceived as being unequal. Local officials may have all the needed information for a shared services arrangement, however difficulties in the distribution of costs and benefits may remain (Feiock, 2007, p. 51). Feiock (2007) argues that the economic and political power imbalance amongst the groups influences the negotiation of the distribution of benefits and will “reproduce existing advantages and disadvantages” (p. 51). Even if it is agreed upon that all groups are better off through a cooperative arrangement, varying degrees of costs and benefits understood by the different groups can lead to perceived unfairness, and this set of bargaining can prove to be long and expensive (Feiock, 2013, p. 407). These division problems are greater when the agreements are more difficult to monitor and costs and benefits are more obscure (Hawkins, 2010, p. 255).

When a service arrangement has been agreed upon and at least one of the actors is not in compliance with the agreement, there are enforcement and monitoring problems. When there is a potential for a partner to take advantage of the arrangement, such as backtracking on the agreement or free riding on the costs of others, the risks to the other participating governments increase (Carr, Hawkins & Westberg, 2017, p. 212; Carr & Hawkins, 2013, p. 228). Incomplete information and the uncertainty of outcomes also increases risk that one partner may make a decision that negatively affects another partner (Feiock, 2013, p. 407).

It can also be that as time passes, changing circumstances, such as population growth in one area and population reduction in another, will lead to preferences deviating and certain parties may feel the need to renege (Feiock, 2007, p. 52). A rapidly growing suburb’s needs and preferences would not move in unison with an aging rural area. It is highly likely that their preferences will diverge and one party may seek to defect. If defection occurs, a municipality may be left on the hook paying higher for expected on their investment.

Asset specificity, which Feiock (2007) defines as “transaction-specific durable investments that cannot easily be redeployed to other uses” (p. 53), are seen as especially risky for shared services, as it may be unlikely to recoup investments in fixed assets and equipment, and specialized services (Carr et al., 2017, p. 212; Carr & Hawkins, 2013, p. 228). Without reliable commitments by all parties, enforcement will prove to be costly and therefore if there is a higher probability that interests will diverge, the less of a chance the collaborative arrangement will be implemented (Hawkins, 2010, p. 255; Feiock, 2007, p. 52).

Another important factor that may inhibit the success of shared services arrangements is accountability. When oversight for a particular service is outside a jurisdiction's direct responsibility, "lines for accountability can become blurred and even erased" (Ruggini 2006, p. 33). If citizens seek to complain about a service, it may be difficult to identify which authority oversees the service delivery (Noda, 2017, p. 43)

Spicer (2017) examined inter-municipal agreements amongst the 27 municipalities in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area and found that the region suffered from poor accountability when considering various criteria. Accessing documents relating to the agreement and other information on the service proved to be very difficult and is where accountability suffered the most (p. 397). Other accountability issues found include that very few agreements require submissions of annual reports or budgets and are highly unlikely to be subject to audit (p. 398). In addition to this, Spicer found that very few agreements set consistent standards for communication and budgeting.

Reducing the Risk of Service Integration

Carr and Hawkins (2010) have identified three different approaches to mitigating risks in providing shared services that have been the focus of scholarly work. The first approach they discuss addresses risks of potential defection and the associated transaction costs that are linked to asset specificity. Feiock (2007) found that the higher asset specificity required and the greater the difficulty in measuring service outcomes, the greater the risk to the durability of the cooperative agreement (p. 54). To manage these risks, Carr and Hawkins (2010) suggest the contract of the shared services agreement should be utilized. Adaptive contracts such as memoranda of agreements or understandings and mutual aid agreements are flexible and use language that leaves room for negotiation (p. 231). This can minimize transaction costs by allowing flexibility for the collaborators to reconsider priorities under changing environments.

Restrictive contracts can also be utilized to address uncertainty risks. Carr and Hawkins (2010) state that restrictive contracts clearly specify the dealings and the desired outcomes (p 231). A clear set of rules and strong agreement reduce uncertainty, risk and the potential for inter-municipal conflict. Carr and Hawkins believe this becomes more valuable when total responsibility is to be transferred or when financial transactions are to occur.

Several authors have argued that to overcome transaction costs, social capital is what is needed (Feiock 2013; Hawkins, 2010; Bel & Warner, 2015). More specifically items such as trust and norms of reciprocity, influence the likelihood of a cooperative arrangement and the likelihood of their success by reducing coordination, negotiation, and defection issues. Officials from different organizations who have established trusting relationships will have lower coordination costs since they are less concerned with finding a partner for a collaborative arrangement (Hawkins, 2010, p. 256). Hawkins believes when trust is lacking, regional development can be hindered. Alternately, norms go outside formal agreements, acting as monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, to reduce transaction costs, by limiting behaviour that leads to non-compliance (Hawkins, 2010, p. 256). Hawkins mentions studies that stress how norms of reciprocity encourages cooperation through procedural rules and punishment of renege. Norms of reciprocity establish trust, an integral part of successful collaboration (Chen & Thurmaier, 2017, p. 541).

In addition to social capital, frequent communication through numerous interactions will mitigate issues preventing successful cooperation. Based on past encounters, if local officials get an idea of reliability

and where alliances have developed, the likelihood increases that the alliance will be formed again (Hawkins, 2010, p. 256). Additionally, maintaining a trusting reputation and reinforcing it through frequent communication will be in the interest of an actor and this will balance concerns with uncertainty.

Beyond social capital and repeated interactions, the policy network structure can address transaction costs. Networks provide information about a municipalities' priorities via their policies and programs that have been crafted in interlocal agreements. They facilitate processes that increase social capital and benefits of frequent communication. When units of government are engaged in separate agreements with different units of government, a policy network has been formed within a regional governance structure (Feiock, 2007, p. 56). Hawkins (2010) states how networks allow for effective information flow and therefore one's reputation can be known by those who do not even have direct contact with each other (p. 256). Through repeated encounters, known levels of trust and reciprocity can minimize opportunism of jurisdictions that do not border one another (Feiock, 2007, p. 57).

Carr et al. (2017) identify three basic network structures important to issues of collaboration risks (p. 214). First there is the central actors structure where the central actor is connected to all other actors to facilitate the adequate relaying of information. By being linked to the central actor, progress from coordination is easily shared. However, the defection costs remain in this scenario due to the noncentral actors having limited interaction with other jurisdictions.

The bridging structure has a link that acts as a bridge for a government to another government that has well-established networks with other governments (Feiock, 2007, p. 57). Feiock discusses how bridging allows for the facilitation of information that governments require to understand the possible gains of a collaborative arrangement with another government, thereby reducing coordination costs. He does warn that negotiation and enforcement costs can be higher in this scenario if an actor uses their position as the link to act opportunistically to monopolize the information.

Finally, there are structures with reciprocal relationships which are best for establishing trusts and norms of reciprocity (Carr et al. 2017, p. 214). These are densely clustered structures that allow for a government's behaviours and actions to be readily available (Feiock, 2007, p. 57). Feiock speaks to how this allows for punishments of collective action which will constrain an actor from attempting to act opportunistically. This form of interlocal relationship increases trust, norms of reciprocity, and rule following, which reduces risks, thereby providing more protection than the other two structures mentioned above (Carr et al. 2017; Feiock, 2007).

Motivation of Leadership to Engage in Shared Services Arrangements

When the possibility exists for local government officials to advance their prospective employment opportunities through collaborative arrangements, these officials are more willing to enter into the agreements (Feiock, 2007, p. 50). Some have found that the prestige of city managers and their opportunities to obtain better employment increases through collaborative service delivery arrangements (p. 50.) Indeed, a declared benefit of shared services arrangements has been the improved "career prospects of specialized staff" (Elston & MacCarthaigh, 2016, p. 351)

Local leaders who must consider re-election, have motivations to pursue, or not, interlocal service delivery agreements. Depending on where their core support is coming from and if that base is in favour or not in favour of undertaking cooperative service delivery arrangements, the local government official

will be motivated one way or the other (Feiock, 20007, p. 50). Therefore, even if a collaborative arrangement would lead to greater efficiencies it still may not be desired by local officials if it meant it would compromise their re-election. On the other hand, if a local leader is seeking to move up the political realm to a regional constituency, they may be inclined to promote regional interests and push for greater integration of services (p. 50).

4.3 Parks and Recreation Service Delivery

Literature on parks and recreation shared services amongst local governments is extremely limited. There is more literature on the contracting out of parks and recreation services by local governments to other entities. Since both the motivations for contracting out and the motivations for participating in a shared services arrangement involve a jurisdiction exploring alternative service delivery models, some of the literature on contracting out is discussed, before an article on recreation shared services is examined. Finally, this section will conclude by reviewing collaboration with other entities, specifically the health sector.

In some jurisdictions, local governments have moved to contract out parks and recreation service delivery. The arrangement to deliver the service will be undertaken by another government entity, private firms, or non-profit organizations. Jang (2006) argues that it is “state institutions, local policy and local institutional arrangements” which impact a local governments conditions to trade costs savings for resource control (p. 803). Cost savings from contacting out largely relies on the complexities of interactions between community laws and characteristics.

Jang (2006) goes on to describe three levels of rules to describe how a municipality will be influenced to find alternative service delivery methods such as contracting out (p. 803-804). Constitutional level rules establish the framework through laws that provide a basic system of governance. There may be rules requiring serious fiscal restraint which may force a jurisdiction to seek alternative service methods. Collective level rules deal with a specific policy area. Different forms of government shape political leadership and effect the capabilities of administration officials to effectively manage contracted service providers. Finally, the operational rules provide guidelines around the allocation and management of resources. Collective rules affect the choice and management of operational rules. The operational rules “are the appropriate behaviours of concerning when, where, and how to withdraw resource unit, who should monitor the action of others and how, what information must be exchanged or withheld and what rewards or sanctions will be assigned to different combinations of actions and outcomes” (p. 804).

Leiren et al. (2016) studied contracting out of park sectors in Norway. Their findings suggest that municipalities consider costs as less of a concern for contracting out than their capabilities to deliver the service themselves. In fact, contracting out is very often seen as potentially costly due to the lack of competition, rendering it as a less attractive form of service delivery. Indeed, empirical evidence has suggested that contracting out does not necessarily reduce service expenditure (Jang, 2006, p. 814).

When non-profits take charge of parks and recreation services there is increased potential for higher efficiency gains as long as the contractors have a significant cost advantage (Jang, 2006, p. 815). In the UK, a social enterprise model known as the Commercial Property Endowment Model has been a method of delivering services, including parks and recreation, in a significant number of jurisdictions across the country (Crompton, 2010). The surpluses of these businesses are primarily reinvested towards the service delivery for which it was created (p. 104). Crompton examines the parks and recreation trusts

established in two British towns and demonstrates their success in efficiency and effectiveness (p. 105-107). Crompton also demonstrated similar successful parks and recreation service deliver models in the U.S. where they are known as operating foundations. Crompton claims that these parks and recreation foundations reduced operating costs while maintaining high levels of service (p. 108). The US model was initiated by private action while the UK model was encouraged by government action, but they both demonstrate the potential for effective service delivery through non-profit providers (p. 109).

The research on parks and recreation interlocal collaboration amongst municipalities is very limited and further research needs to be undertaken to better understand the motivations and effectiveness of such arrangements. In Canada, Le Sage, McMillan & Hepburn (2008) investigated shared services arrangements amongst municipalities, by examining recreation and cultural services within the Edmonton metropolitan region. The study claims to provide insight on the reason a municipality will partner in service delivery and the reasons for selecting a particular partner. It also claims to highlight the smaller municipalities within a metropolitan environment.

The study by LeSage et al. (2008) makes the assertion that recreation shared services arrangements offer smaller communities the most to gain (p. 464). This aligns with other literature that supports shared services as a tool for communities to take advantage of economies of scale. The survey conducted for the study indicated that the main motivation for participation in a shared services arrangement was the opportunity to provide a service where one did not exist (p. 466). This was followed by reducing costs while maintaining service levels. Third on the list was to avoid losing the service altogether, and finally there was the potential to improve the service without increasing cost. The results of the survey confirm that the opportunity to realize economies of scale was a key determinant in participating in a shared services agreement.

Participation is also dependent on the pressure on the fiscal capacity of the municipality (LeSage et al., 2008, p. 462). The greater the pressure the more likely a shared services arrangement was desired for parks and recreation. The study also found that concern over local control was not a significant factor in participating in a shared services arrangement (p. 463).

Finally, LeSage et al. (2008) found that population was an important factor in determining participation in a shared services arrangement. Smaller populations were more inclined to join a shared service arrangement than larger ones and this would have to do with opportunities to offer improved and expanded services, and the greater potential for cost-savings (p. 463).

Parks and Recreation and the Health Sector

Considering a common primary goal of organizations providing parks and recreation services is to offer improved quality of life for members of the community, physical health through physical activity has been studied in literature on parks and recreation services. Parks and recreation facilities offer people space to engage in physical activity that is accessible and appealing (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005, p. 159). Spangler (2007) claims the parks and recreation movement was grounded in the idea that public parks and recreation spaces facilitate individual health and offer communities that are more liveable (p. 64). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services describes the urgency for adults to engage in increased physical activity, and the presence of parks will contribute to achieving this (Kruger, 2008, p. 124).

To this end there has been literature in recent years regarding collaboration between parks and recreation and public health. These arrangements always move forward with the intent of improving public health through encouragement of physical activity. Kruger (2008) discusses how the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services partnered with the National Recreation and Parks Association to encourage physical activity, reduce obesity and improve “the health of communities through programs, products and services” (p. 124). Librett et. al (2007) offered recommendations on how to facilitate parks and recreation and public health collaborations in order to achieve broad public health goals. Spangler & Caldwell (2007) found in their study that professionals from different fields, namely parks and recreation and public health, “working together have the potential to significantly influence public policy to increase physical activity and positive health outcomes of the American public” (p. 69). They claim that through research, policy development should offer the tools and resources that service providers and health officials need to adequately promote physical activity.

Parks and recreation services have also been positively associated with psychological health of community members. Studies on a wide array of different types of people have shown a wide variety of “psychological, emotional, and mental health benefits” from viewing natural settings (Bedimo-Rung, 2005, p. 161). Bedimo-Rung et al. (2005) cites a study that found park users participating in moderate aerobic activity were in better moods after the park visit and other studies that found lower levels of anxiety and stress related to park visits.

Along with the stated goals of public health, the collaborations amongst the public health and parks and recreation departments can also facilitate administrative goals of efficiency and higher levels of service. Liechty et al. (2014) interviewed parks and recreation managers who had participated in partnerships with public health organizations and although not every case was a success, there was an agreement on the potential for a host of benefits (p. 23). Some of these benefits include improved operational efficiencies, increased and improved services for the community at large, and improved public image and community goodwill.

The literature on parks and recreation services demonstrates the potential for efficiency and effectiveness gains through collaboration with other entities. Whether a local government deliver parks and recreation jointly under a shared services arrangement with another local government, or if they partner with a health care provider or non-profit to achieve common objectives, the collaborative arrangements can help achieve organizational goals. The partnerships should be considered carefully to identify where a partnership makes sense and benefits all organizations involved.

4.4 Summary and Findings

The discourse on amalgamation in Canada suggests that this model of municipal structuring can be contentious, as there is a perceived loss of local decision-making abilities. The research also suggests that amalgamation results in no clear indication of improved service delivery or costs savings. A common theme in the literature expressed reservations on the capabilities of amalgamation to achieve its intended benefits. Shared services are seen as a more viable alternative to achieve service delivery goals. Shared services offer more flexible arrangements that have the potential to deliver on efficiency gains while maintaining local autonomy. However, there is a general understanding in the literature that there are significant risks associated with shared services, particularly those related to transaction costs. These risks can offset any gains in efficiency the arrangement was meant to achieve. To reduce the risks, three concepts were identified; utilizing adaptive contracts, social capital and policy networks. Adaptive

or flexible contracts allow for accommodating changing circumstances. Social capital and policy networks establish trust and norms or reciprocity, which can nurture better working relationships.

The research on parks and recreation service delivery suggests that a shared services arrangement can be beneficial, particularly for smaller municipalities to take advantage of economies of scale. The research also suggests that there is potential to improve service delivery through partnerships with organizations whose objectives are in alignment, such as the health sector.

| Key findings from the literature review |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amalgamation can be politically contentious and can inhibit local autonomy.• Amalgamation has resulted in no clear service delivery improvements or cost savings.• Shared services have the potential to offer improvements in service delivery efficiency while retaining local autonomy.• Risks associated with shared services, such as transaction costs, can limit the effectiveness of the agreements.• Adaptive interlocal agreements can be effective to address risks associated with changing circumstances.• Social capital and policy networks should be considered when selecting partners and developing an interlocal agreement.• There is significant potential for improving parks and recreation service delivery through collaboration with other entities such as the health sector. |

The next chapter details the findings on the current state of parks and recreation service delivery in Greater Victoria. The key findings from the literature review will be measured against the current state of parks and recreation in Greater Victoria to identify smart practices in collaborative parks and recreation service delivery.

5.0 Findings: Interview Results and Document Review

The purpose of this chapter is to detail the current state of parks and recreation service delivery in Greater Victoria. Key informants interviewed include managers and directors of parks and recreation in Greater Victoria, as well as local politicians involved in some manner with parks and recreation. These key informants offered knowledge on the benefits, challenges, opportunities, and limitations of the different models of parks and recreation service delivery in Greater Victoria. The chapter begins by offering an overview of the different models of service delivery. The section goes on to detail the current state of independent service providers, shared services arrangements, regional collaboration and efforts to engage First Nations. The second section speaks to the potential of increasing integration across the region. The third section discusses the potential of collaboration with other public sector entities.

The chapter concludes with document reviews of municipal reports that speak in some manner to parks and recreation and a review of the *Capital Integrated Services and Governance Initiative*. The municipal reports contribute to knowledge on the current state of parks and recreation service delivery and provide information on the visions, objectives, priorities and directives of the different municipalities. The *Capital Integrated Services and Governance Initiative* is a study commissioned by the Provincial Government to examine the potential for service integration in Greater Victoria.

5.1 Current State of Parks and Recreation Service Delivery in Greater Victoria

The information obtained in the first three sections of the chapter was collected through the key informant interviews. Statistical data from the WSPRS's annual report and municipal statistics obtained from the BC Government's website were integrated into this section to support the information that emerged from the interviews. All respondents were asked to provide details on the current model of parks and recreation service delivery that they represent and this is detailed below.

In Greater Victoria, there are several forms of parks and recreation service delivery. On the regional level, the CRD is represented by all jurisdictions and offers parks and recreation services for the entire region. On sub regional levels, there are two shared services arrangements for parks and recreation and there is one more shared services arrangement for just recreation. In addition to these models, there are four municipalities that offer parks and recreation services on their own and three more which offer parks services on their own. See Table 4.1 for a summary of parks and recreation service providers in Greater Victoria.

Table 4.1: Parks and recreation service providers in Greater Victoria

| Independent Service Providers | Shared Services Arrangements |
|--|--|
| <p>Parks and Recreation: Esquimalt Parks and Recreation Oak Bay Parks and Recreation Saanich Parks and Recreation Victoria Parks and Recreation</p> <p>Parks: Central Saanich Parks North Saanich Parks Sidney Parks</p> | <p>Parks and Recreation: Capital Regional District (CRD) Parks, Recreation and Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CRD involves all municipalities of Greater Victoria West Shore Parks and Recreation Society (WSPRS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colwood • The Highlands • Langford • Metchosin • View Royal Sooke Electoral Area Parks and Recreation Commission (SEAPARC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juan de Fuca Electoral Area • Sooke <p>Recreation: Peninsula Recreation Commission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Saanich • North Saanich • Sidney </p> </p> |

On the regional scale, the CRD provides parks services throughout Greater Victoria, including 30 parks and 3 regional trails. For regional service issues, decision making is initiated upon recommendations at a standing committee of the board. The board of directors, with the highest authority, is made up of representatives from all municipalities and electoral areas in the CRD, with each jurisdiction having representation for every 25,000 people. CRD Regional Parks is guided by a ten-year strategic plan. The CRD also operates sub-regional departmental facilities, the Sooke and Electoral Area Parks and Recreation Commission (SEAPARC) and the Peninsula Recreation Commission (PRC). The CRD also operates the recreation department on Salt Spring Island, which is not of concern for this study. For both PRC and SEAPARC, the commission has delegated authority from the CRD, and therefore approvals must come from the CRD, although in practice this is more of a formality.

SEAPARC and PRC are both shared services arrangements facilitated by the CRD. And both organizations management are under the General Manager of CRD Parks, Recreations and Environmental Services. SEAPARC consists of the Juan de Fuca (JDF) Electoral Area and the District of Sooke. The service funding is split by population, meaning Sooke covers approximately 80 per cent of the operating costs. Decision making authority resides within the commission which has 4 representatives from Sooke and 2 from the JDF Electoral Area. There are three elected members and three volunteer members.

PRC provides recreation programs and services to the municipalities on the Saanich Peninsula which include North Saanich, Central Saanich and Sidney. The commission is comprised of 9 members that include mayors, councillors and members at large, with equal representation from all the municipalities. Administration of PRC reports directly to the commission and approval from the commission is required for major decisions, big capital projects and the budget. With regards to parks, Central Saanich, North Saanich and Sidney all operate their own departments independently, and therefore decisions on parks are made at the municipal level.

The five municipalities of Colwood, The Highlands, Langford, Metchosin and View Royal deliver parks and recreation services under a shared services agreement that established the West Shore Parks and Recreation Society (WSPRS). The Malahat region of the JDF Electoral Area was a part of the agreement but exited at the end of 2017. The funding of the operating and capital costs come from user fees and tax requisition. All the jurisdictions contribute by means of requisition and it is based on the assessed value of property of all towns (See Table 4.2 for a breakdown of WSPRS expenditure for the participating members). Decision making authority sits with the board of directors and the owners group. The board of directors is made up of council and citizen representatives from all jurisdictions. There are 5 representatives from Langford, 4 from Colwood, 2 from View Royal, 2 from Metchosin and 1 from the Highlands. Anything that has financial implications such as the budget comes to the board of directors. The owners group consists of the mayors and are responsible for capital projects. The board of directors or the owners group will vote on the budget or whether to proceed with a capital project and the decision must be unanimous. One vote against is considered a veto and the project would not be approved.

Table 4.2: 2016 Municipal Tax Requisition for WSPRS

| Municipality | 2016 Tax Requisition | Percentage of Tax Requisition Contribution |
|--------------------|----------------------|--|
| Colwood | \$1,110,077 | 22.3 |
| Highlands | \$177,304 | 3.6 |
| Langford | \$2,511,736 | 50.5 |
| Metchosin | \$422,583 | 8.5 |
| View Royal | \$725,839 | 14.6 |
| JDF Electoral Area | \$21,406 | 0.4 |
| Total | \$4,968,945 | |

(West Shore Parks and Recreation Society, 2016, p. 16)

The four core municipalities of Greater Victoria; Esquimalt, Oak Bay, Saanich and Victoria all operate their own parks and recreation departments. The structures of each of these models of service delivery may vary, but there are some common elements. The services are driven by the needs of the community while plans and budget need approval from council. Costs are covered by user fees and taxation. Services can be based on market demand or strictly for the benefit of the citizens, which can be totally funded by the operating budget. Some municipalities provide a blend of direct service provision where the department works with partners and external providers for the next level of service. And such the community offers a significant amount of service, such as paying for minor hockey. One participant described parks and recreation departments as “facility operators and operators of assets, and the function is to provide spaces and places.”

The parks and recreation service delivery costs vary from each municipality (see Table 4.3). Esquimalt and Oak Bay, the two smaller municipalities that deliver parks and recreation services on their own, have significantly higher costs than any other municipality. The other two municipalities that deliver parks and recreation services on their own, Victoria and Saanich, are fourth and fifth on the list. Langford, which has the third highest per capita costs, is the most populous municipality in a shared services arrangement. The rest of the municipalities are all a part of a parks and recreation shared services arrangement or a recreation shared services arrangement and have significantly lower costs than the five municipalities mentioned above.

Table 4.3: Parks and recreation expenditure by municipality

| Organization | Total Expenditure 2016 | Population 2016 | Costs per Capita 2016 |
|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Central Saanich | \$2,449,659 | 16,814 | \$145.69 |
| Colwood | \$3,927,877 | 16,859 | \$232.98 |
| Esquimalt | \$8,753,361 | 17,655 | \$495.80 |
| Highlands | \$518,602 | 2,225 | \$233.08 |
| Langford | \$11,859,157 | 35,342 | \$335.55 |
| Metchosin | \$1,351,640 | 4,708 | \$287.09 |
| North Saanich | \$1,234,920 | 11,249 | \$109.78 |
| Oak Bay | \$11,711,327 | 18,094 | \$647.25 |
| Saanich | \$35,848,537 | 114,148 | \$314.05 |
| Sidney | \$2,405,676 | 11,672 | \$206.11 |
| Victoria | \$27,864,376 | 85,792 | \$324.79 |
| View Royal | \$2,493,802 | 10,408 | \$239.60 |

(BC MAH, 2017c; BC MAH, 2017e)

Beyond the separate service delivery models, each of the recreation departments in Greater Victoria participate in informal inter-municipal groups. Management from different branches such as aquatics, fitness and arena staff meet monthly. Directors of parks and recreation get together every few months. These inter-municipal groups get together to exchange information and current practices and provides an opportunity to discuss services that can be better provided on a regional, sub regional or collaborative basis. An example of an initiative from the inter-municipal group is the L.I.F.E program, which allows low income residents to access recreational services at all recreation centres throughout the region.

5.1.1 Independent Service Delivery

In this sub-section, key informants involved with independent service providers were asked what works well, what does not work well and what can be improved in their service delivery model. The key informants here represent the parks and recreation departments of the core communities as well as the parks services of the Saanich Peninsula communities.

For those jurisdictions that offer parks and recreation services or just parks services on their own, a common benefit identified by participants is the responsiveness to the needs of the community. In these models, there is considerable community engagement through avenues such as public consultation. The autonomy of service delivery allows the service to reflect community values. Through grassroots initiatives, programs are said to be “user driven, allowing the community to feel ownership over programs and parks.”

The participants indicated that the level of public engagement and involvement offers residents with “clarity and transparency in the operations” of this service delivery model. In addition, further transparency is offered through documents such as master plans, which allow residents to understand what to expect from their parks and recreation department. Saanich with a Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and Victoria and Sidney with Parks Master Plans are the only jurisdictions that offer thorough plans for parks and recreation.

The findings also demonstrate that the municipalities that offer parks and recreation services independently have high levels of service. For example, they all offer a large recreation facility or

multiple recreation facilities to residents on their own, while the rest of the municipalities share these resources with other jurisdictions. Some participants understand that there is an increasing demand for higher levels of parks services and recreation programs to improve the health and wellness of the community and residents.

The larger municipalities of Victoria and Saanich, with the larger tax base, can take advantage of economies of scale. They deliver a high level of parks and recreation services on their own while maintaining lower costs. Oak Bay and Esquimalt which have much smaller populations, and therefore smaller tax bases, have the highest per capita parks and recreation service costs in the entire Greater Victoria Region. And although Saanich and Victoria can better achieve scale economies, their costs are amongst the highest in the entire region as well. That being said, as mentioned above, all four municipalities deliver a very high level of service, and it is argued that these organizations are delivering on the demands of the residents. Esquimalt council had once considered shutting down the main recreation facility, the Archie Brown Centre, but after public outcry the idea was scrapped.

On the Saanich Peninsula, individual parks departments allow the communities of Central Saanich, North Saanich and Sidney to retain autonomy in decision making and to be responsive to the needs of the community, much like the core communities. Although the regions have similar population sizes, the needs of the community reflect the level of intensity in the service. For example, North Saanich, with an older demographic, has outdoor spaces that are not so labour intensive. The parks in North Saanich do not contain much in what requires upkeep, like playgrounds, so the municipality is able to get by with only 3 full time and 2 auxiliary staff members. Therefore, their costs remain very low for park services. Sidney on the other hand, is described as “a growing but built out community, with very little opportunity to grow parks. Priority is given to upkeep and improvements to existing infrastructure such as playgrounds, tennis courts, accessibility, shaded areas, skate parks and waterfront parks.

Some of the challenges identified by the participants include the “pace with which projects move from concept to execution.” There is an expectation within local government that public consultation should take place and this, although necessary, will slow processes. Another challenge is that although each jurisdiction operates their own department, they in essences still operate regional facilities. Residents do not contain themselves within the municipal boundaries of where they live. One participant mentioned how a “municipality may be providing a service for tax payers in other jurisdictions,” and that “this can work for a community or against it, depending on the service offered.” Finally, one participant identified costs as a challenge. The pricing of programs must stay within the affordability of residents, all while parks and recreations is “considered sort of a second service.” Although it is a “high value service with high demand, it will not be put before transportation or health care.”

| Key findings |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independent service providers can be more responsive to the needs of the community and retain high levels of autonomy on local decisions than other models of service delivery• Independent parks and recreation departments have higher costs than shared services arrangements, but also have high levels of service. |

5.1.2 Collaborative Service Delivery

The key informants involved in parks and recreation departments that are subject to shared services arrangements, were also asked what works well, what does not work well and what can be improved. These key informants represent the CRD and municipalities that participate in WSPRS, SEAPARC or PRC. Their responses are detailed below.

As a part of the study participants were asked to provide reasons municipalities would choose to collaborate in parks and recreation service delivery. The most common response was for economies of scale. By working together, capacity increases and more facilities can be built and a higher variety of programs can be offered at a more affordable cost. Thus, cost savings can be realized leading to increased efficiencies. Indeed, for those jurisdictions that are involved in shared services, the most recognized benefit of the collaborative arrangements is economies of scale. By pooling resources together, municipalities have been able to increase production levels and reduce costs.

Participants agreed that smaller communities could not afford the facilities and quantity of programs that they gained from the shared services arrangements. One participant stated that “the inputs needed such as human resources or IT would be too expensive to implement on their own” and that “partnering with other jurisdictions also allows for participation in bigger projects.”

Another reason identified to enter shared services arrangement is the ability to deliver the service with a regional understanding. Residents are described as “not isolated within their municipalities and regularly cross borders” and so some levels of service would be best offered regionally. This can remove unnecessary duplication of services. Some of the participants indicated that the centralized location of the shared services arrangement saves costs by allowing for smaller staff and less facilities.

Costs are also saved as shared services reduces the needs for some municipalities to invest in services on their own. For example, some municipalities can get by without having a parks department, instead only having a parks committee.

The ability to offer more service options at a higher level is another recognized benefit of delivering parks and recreation collaboratively. It allows for a large variety and diversity of high level programs. This can better serve the needs of the communities and increase opportunities for improving health and wellness. Some of the participants claimed that to improve community health and wellness would also be a reason to initiate collaborative service delivery.

Although there are several benefits in the shared services arrangement, WSPRS is currently facing serious challenges. Due to a new YMCA being built in Langford, WSPRS has lost significant revenue from the swimming pool. When this is combined with the cancellation of the Rock the Shores music festival, the result is a \$77,000 revenue shortfall. The proposed 2017 budget was asking for increased requisition to make up for the shortfall but the city of Langford rejected the budget, meaning WSPRS reverts to the previous year’s budget.

In recent years, Langford has experienced significant growth and has canvassed WSPRS for more facilities and services to meet the needs and demands of its growing community. However, the other partners in WSPRS are not experiencing close to the level of growth of Langford, or any growth at all. Therefore, there was push back on building more facilities and with the veto vote in play, many of Langford’s proposals were rejected. Langford has claimed to have spent tens of millions of dollars on

recreational facilities, separately from WSPRS in the past few years, and these can be used by residents of any of the other municipalities. Also, Langford being the largest member of WSPRS contributes the most in requisition payments. Officials from Langford believe WSPRS is not delivering on the needs of Langford’s citizens and therefore other municipalities need to contribute more to the operating costs. The uncertainty in the distribution of costs and benefits and the differing needs of the communities are indicative of transaction costs.

Table 4.4 shows the increase in parks and recreation per capita costs of the Westshore communities from 2011 to 2016. Langford’s expenses have increased by 35%. This is more than double the increase of Colwood, the next closest in the West Shore. In fact, Langford has by far experienced the greatest increase in parks and recreation per capita costs in the entire Greater Victoria region.

Table 4.4: Cost per capita increases in the Westshore 2011-2016

| Municipality | Costs Per Capita 2011 | Costs Per Capita 2016 | Increase in Per Capita Costs |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Colwood | \$199.62 | \$232.98 | 17% |
| Highlands | \$231.41 | \$233.08 | 1% |
| Langford | \$248.71 | \$335.55 | 35% |
| Metchosin | \$286.70 | \$287.09 | 0% |
| View Royal | \$235.51 | \$239.60 | 2% |

(BC MAH, 2017c; BC MAH, 2017d)

Although Langford has seen their parks and recreation costs increase dramatically in the past few years, the statistics indicate that their contribution to WSPRS is fair. Table 4.5 shows that the Langford’s percentage of registrations for WSPRS recreation programs in 2016 is slightly higher than the percentage of tax requisition provided to fund WSPRS.

Table 4.5: West Shore tax requisition, population, annual pass holders and registrations for WSPRS*

| Municipality | % of Tax Requisition 2016 | % of West Shore Populations 2016 | % of WSPRS Passes 2016 | % of WSPRS Registrations 2016 |
|--------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Colwood | 22.3 | 24.2 | 29.5 | 28.4 |
| Highlands | 3.6 | 3.2 | 2.2 | 2.3 |
| Langford | 50.5 | 50.7 | 47.2 | 51.9 |
| Metchosin | 8.5 | 6.8 | 6.7 | 4.7 |
| View Royal | 14.6 | 14.9 | 14.3 | 12.7 |

*excludes pass holders and registrations from residents outside of the West Shore
(West Shore Parks and Recreation Society, 2016)

The governance structure of WSPRS has been identified by all participants from West Shore communities as not working well. With the veto vote, one individual can shut down any proposal. One participant explained how “there is no binding arbitration to settle disputes,” as decisions must be unanimous or they do not pass. There was nothing written into the agreement to address conflicts. Therefore, participants agreed that the governance structure needs to be revisited. Removing the veto and switching to a majority decision was suggested by a few of the participants. However, this would have to be done thoughtfully as to not have projects forced upon communities. One thought was to allow communities not to participate in the project, meaning the community would not have to pay for it if they did not agree with the proposal. Another participant recommended following the Greater

Victoria Libraries model that requires a two-thirds vote. In this model, if Langford desired a facility in their own community, they would be responsible for the capital investment. Afterwards, WSPRS would take over the operating costs.

Within PRC, there is general satisfaction amongst participants that the arrangement has been beneficial for the three municipalities involved. There was consensus that the level of services each municipality received in the shared services arrangement would not be possible if they did it on their own. Central Saanich, North Saanich and Sidney all are similar in population size, and together they have pooled resources together for an effective recreation facility, Panorama Recreation Centre, which includes a pool and two ice rinks.

There was a recent issue that arose involving North Saanich's plans to construct a library on the same lands as the recreation facility. North Saanich saw no problem with it as they were constructing on their own municipal lands. However, the other municipalities saw this as being undertaken in "bad faith" as their input was not sought. Another issue that was mentioned is the proximity of Central Saanich residents to Panorama Recreation Centre. Central Saanich covers a vast area and a significant number of their residents would find Panorama Recreation Centre a far commute and would prefer going to the closest facility across their southern border in Saanich.

| Key findings |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared services arrangements can offer economies of scale, reduce costs, and offer higher levels of service.• Shared services arrangements are susceptible to transaction costs, which can negatively effect service delivery. |

5.1.3 Inter-municipal Groups

This sub-section describes the collaborative arrangements made by municipalities outside of a formal shared services agreement and the policy network amongst parks and recreation staff across the region. All key informants were asked what sort of collaborative arrangements they participate in and what their relations are like with representatives of other parks and recreation departments. The local politicians did not have much to contribute to these questions and the real knowledge came from the managers and directors.

Amongst the participants, there is a consensus that the inter-municipal groups have been an effective and successful tool for collaboration amongst the municipalities. Regular meetings amongst program managers and directors allows for regional dialogue and approaches to programs and services. Limited to recreation, the discussion allows for information and smart practices sharing and is a place where ideas on services emerge and are traded. Decisions from these meetings have identified what services should be offered regionally, where municipalities can and should work together, and where one municipality can offer the services for another to eliminate unnecessary duplication.

As an example, the L.I.F.E. Pass is a program offered to low-income residents to use recreation facilities. Residents can sign up anywhere and use any of the participating facilities across the region for 52 free visits per year. The core municipalities, PRC, WSPRS and SEAPARC all participate in the program. Another collaborative initiative that emerged is the Annual Regional Recreation Pass. This pass has a premium price but allows residents unlimited visits to all recreation facilities in the region. This initiative is

described as recognizing “the fact that residents are not siloed and live and work in areas that are geographically separated,” and that “it serves their health and wellness to access recreation facilities across the region.” Another initiative is the fit and fitness website, paid for by all parks and recreation departments of Greater Victoria to communicate health and wellness from a regional perspective. Finally, an example of the different jurisdictions working together to implement technology at lower costs is the updating of registration software. Recognizing that the licensing agreement was set to expire for the administration software for nearly all parks and recreation departments in the region, several municipalities decided to work together to purchase the new software, PerfectMind. One participant stated how this “allowed them to obtain the service at a lower cost” while “providing consistency in the user interface” across the region. The inter-municipal initiatives have been described as great for customers and consumer choice, allowing for deeper community reach, and beneficial for the community in terms of health and wellness.

As described above, the inter-municipal groups are highly praised by those who participate in it, but a limitation that was mentioned has to do with the competing interests and different priorities and values of the different communities. In the end a municipality will look after its own needs and interests first and there is risk of a jurisdiction “getting sucked into things” that they probably should not have agreed to. This sort of problem, however, is less of a concern in an informal arrangement such as these than a formal shared services arrangement.

Suggested improvements to the inter-municipal collaborative initiatives centre around improving regional planning. For this, it was recommended that there should be regional funding available. Another opinion stated that the “different councils need to engage each other more on the issue, to align strategic direction and to offer more principled direction.” Finally, since the inter-municipal groups focus on recreation, it was recommended that the same sort of arrangements should be considered for parks.

| Key finding |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-municipal groups, which bring together administrative personal from across the region to discuss potential for collaboration, facilitate policy networks and are effective means for the municipalities to deliver programs regionally and sub-regionally. |

5.1.4 Working with First Nations

All key informants were asked about the collaboration and engagement that exists with local First Nation with regards to parks and recreation. Across the entire region there is a general understanding amongst the respondents that this conversation is in its infant stage and much more needs to be done to improve collaboration here.

There are several First Nations whose traditional territories lay within the boundaries of the Greater Victoria municipalities. Lacking real engagement in the past, municipalities are now expressing their desire and willingness to engage and partner with First Nations. Nearly all participants indicated how their municipality has begun conversations with First Nations for better understanding with regards to parks and recreation. Some of the participants mentioned following the recommendations that emerged from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Indeed, the CRD’s Regional Parks Strategic Plan states: “The CRD is situated within the traditional territory of many First Nations. The relationship with the land

has deep historical and spiritual roots. Regional Parks seeks to understand First Nation issues and work toward finding common ground between the goals of Regional Parks and First Nations.”

Despite this, there is a general understanding that a significant amount of work and relationship building still needs to be undertaken. In July 2017, a last minute letter from the Tsawout Nation forced the CRD to postpone consideration for the Island View Beach Management Plan. The CRD claims that Tsawout was consulted throughout the process. However, the Tsawout Nation viewed the Management Plan as not recognizing their treaty or aboriginal rights and leaving them out of the decision-making process in the parks management (Cleverley, 2017). The plan that was seven years in the making is now stated as being on indefinite hold pending further consultation.

Participants agree that the engagement with First Nations in parks and recreation, like many other areas, are in the infant stages and there is much to learn. One participant stated that the First Nations “do not want to be treated as a stakeholder, but as rights holder” and this is something that needs to be understood better. Some participants believe First Nations should be sitting on board of directors or somehow be integrated into the decision-making process. There is some potential here, however more research is required to better build a parks and recreation collaborative relationship between First Nations and the municipalities.

5.2 Integration of Services

The key informants were also asked their opinions on the potential for increasing integration of parks and recreation services in Greater Victoria and the responses are expressed below.

Almost all participants agree that there is potential in expanded and deeper regional integration. However, there is significant caution on the level of integration that can remain effective. There is concern that the “competing interests and corporate priorities” will make deeper integration difficult. Some communities value parks and recreation higher than others and are willing to pay more. Some communities are younger and growing while others are older with minimal development. Many participants were inclined to express reservations about expanding the integration of parks and recreation services. With one participant stating that “any further integration and too much autonomy would be lost.”

Some of the participants believe that the municipalities need to be clearer on their direction with one another. Small communities agreed that shared services are beneficial to them and favour such an agreement. But the extent of which depended on proximity, similarities, local autonomy and efficiency. Although some would consider further integration and expanding a shared services arrangement, creating a regional wide entity was not desired.

The case of the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) highlights the concerns of creating regional shared services arrangements. The community of North Cowichan wanted to construct a new swimming pool. The proposal was rejected by CVRD Parks and Recreation and so North Cowichan constructed the pool on its own. After a few months of being open, North Cowichan felt that other municipalities of CVRD were not contributing a fair share and implemented a two-tier system where non-paying communities were charged double for programs and services. Some communities came on board and contributed while others refrained. The result was “mothers not being to afford swimming lesson fees” and less people began using the facility, leaving it underutilized.

Despite the reservations about expanding regional integration in Greater Victoria, some of the participants recognized the potential benefits of increasing collaboration and partnerships. Some believe that the sharing of information, ideas, expertise and resources can serve to “create win-win scenarios” for everyone at play. One key informant stated that “where priorities and needs align, and where it makes sense to work together,” would be the time to initiate an undertaking. For reasons like this, there is greater faith in building upon the inter-municipal groups rather than a formal integration of parks and recreation services.

There is an appetite for increased collaboration in parks services. As mentioned, the inter-municipal groups focus on recreation and not parks. Considering the success of the group on recreation, there should be considerations of similar meetings occurring from representatives of parks. It is believed by some that parks services could serve interests of all communities by taking a regional perspective.

An example of necessary and successful parks collaboration is CRISP, Capital Region Invasive Species Partnership. The partnership provides more efficient and effective invasive species management in the Capital Region through regional collaboration, information sharing, planning and programs. One participant used it as an example of the “need to increase communication and ideas in parks services.” The need is amplified when it is considered from an environmental perspective. Participants suggested reforestation could be served through regional alignment.

| Key finding |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although there is interest in increasing collaborative arrangements amongst the parks and recreation departments, there is no desire to create a region-wide parks and recreation entity. |

5.3 Potential for Collaboration with Other Public Sector Organizations

The key informants were asked how to best deliver parks and recreation services and how processes could be improved. Several respondents indicated that there is significant potential to improve services through collaboration with other public sector entities. Outside of inter-municipal collaboration, interest was expressed in increasing partnerships with other public sector organizations. Particularly with those entities which utilize or have similar programs and facilities as parks and recreation. Partnering with school districts is seen as a benefit for the entire community. It allows youth more access to recreation services. As one participant explained, “our slowest time is there busiest time,” so it makes sense to collaborate and maximize usage. The importance that communities place on recreation for youth is highlighted in one community, which had a high school student sitting on the parks and recreation board of directors.

Another entity is the Department of National Defence (DND), which has its own recreation facilities. Partnering with DND could give residents access to more facilities and services. As municipalities try to maintain a high level of parks and recreation services and keep costs reasonable, it may make sense to partner with those which have similar needs and are in close proximity.

| Key finding |
|---|
| There is potential for improvements in levels of service and operational efficiencies through partnerships with other public sector entities. |

5.4 Document Review

The following section identifies visions, objectives, priorities and directives of the different parks and recreation departments. This information was found in a document review of relevant municipal documents and can offer insights into where the municipalities are in alignment with one another regarding parks and recreation services.

Most municipalities do not have documents strictly dedicated to parks and recreation planning. The CRD has developed a *Regional Parks Strategic Plan*, the City of Victoria has developed a *Parks and Open Space Master Plan*, the Township of Sidney recently released a *Parks Master Plan*, while the District of Saanich has created a *Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan*. The shared services arrangements also produce their own documents in the form of a strategic plan for PRC and an annual report from WSPRS. All these documents were reviewed along with the Official Community Plans of the municipalities. Most municipalities choose to incorporate their parks and recreation visions and goals in their Official Community Plans.

The documents reviewed indicate that parks and recreation are important to the health and well being of Greater Victoria municipalities. Some of the statements from the different documents include: “health and well-being of a community are measurably strengthened when residents engage in parks, recreational and cultural opportunities” (District of Saanich, 2015, p.1); “Parks, open spaces and both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities are critical components of a complete community” (City of Victoria, 2015, p. 74); “Parks and recreation are defining characteristics of View Royal” (Town of View Royal, 2011, p 112).

Although each municipality has laid out their own vision and goals for what they hope parks and recreation can offer their community in the future, there are some similar aspirations across the region that may be beneficial to examine and deliver from a broader perspective.

The first common theme from the different municipalities is the need to develop parks space where there is an insufficient level for the neighborhood. Although Greater Victoria contains significant park space overall, there are some neighborhoods where parks are not easily accessible and acquisition of parkland is needed. The City of Victoria has set a goal of having 99% of residents being within 400 metres of a park or open space by 2041 (City of Victoria, 2016, p. 37).

Another common theme is to have parks, open spaces and facilities linked through a network of trails or “greenways”. There is a desire to have green areas connected via trails for the likes of pedestrians and cyclists, with minimal interference of automobile traffic. Langford and Colwood both expressed support for the “West Shore Greenbelt” that encompasses the urban areas of these two communities (City of Langford, 2017, p. 46; City of Colwood, 2017, p. 4-7).

Additionally, common objectives include the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems. This was identified in different methods including invasive species management, promotion of indigenous plant species and biodiversity, and the development of habitat corridors. Finally, other common objectives identified are the enhancement and development of the urban forests and public access to shorelines.

An overarching theme from many of the documents is the relation of parks and recreation with improving public health. There is some indication that there is a will for further promotion of this correlation so that the public can understand the benefits and participate more in parks and recreation.

Indeed, one of the objectives of the District of Saanich is to “strengthen links with VIHA [Vancouver Island Health Authority] and other health services organizations, to ensure the health benefits of parks and recreation services are fully available to Saanich residents, and are recognized by the health care system” (District of Saanich, 2015, p. 12)

| Key finding |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many goals, visions and aspirations of the different parks and recreation service providers are in alignment. |

5.5 Capital Integrated Services and Governance Initiative

The *Capital Integrated Services and Governance Initiative* (CISGI) was commissioned by the Province of BC to “explore current service delivery in the Capital Region, and to recommend opportunities to better integrate service and governance in the region” (Urban Systems and Circle Square Solutions, p.1). This section reviews the report, particularly the opportunities identified for parks and recreation.

Released in 2017, the report attempts to summarize a variety of services and the methods they are provided in. The report found that for parks and recreation all municipalities participated in some form of specialized shared services or shared-sub services. These include the inter-municipal groups mentioned above such as inter-municipal aquatics coordinators and inter-municipal recreation committee, as well as staff training and equipment sharing.

The report identifies a couple of opportunities for improving recreation services. One opportunity suggests having joint recreation facilities and programming. The report claims that “joint ownership of major recreation facilities would merge these facilities and give resident more options (increased level of service) for recreation facilities they can use (p. 136). The other opportunity mentioned highlights a concern with the report. It is suggested that a recreation pass that can be used at all recreation facilities in the region can create operational efficiencies in facility management and reduce the number of ‘free riders’ using facilities in neighboring jurisdictions (p. 135). What was discovered during the research for this project is that a pass that can be used throughout the region in all recreation facilities already exists. The research for the CISGI report failed to illuminate this, which should lead to questions on the validity of their recommendations.

6.0 Discussion and Analysis

The findings from the study suggest that inter-municipal collaboration on parks and recreation service delivery can lead to improved efficiencies and effectiveness under the proper conditions. The study also suggests that if the conditions are not appropriate, the services can be negatively affected. For municipalities to collaboratively deliver parks and recreation services in effective and efficient manners, appropriate steps must be taken to mitigate transaction costs that will negatively affect shared services arrangements. These findings agree with much of the literature which found that shared services have the potential to improve municipal operations but warn of significant associated risks when the arrangements are not conducive to municipal priorities.

6.1 Strengths of Parks and Recreation Shared Services

When identifying what works well in shared services, this study has found that smaller communities tend to benefit the most from parks and recreation shared services arrangements. For such municipalities, shared services allow for economies of scale that would otherwise be unattainable. This agrees with the literature that sees economies of scale as a potential benefit of consolidating resources (Vojnovic, 2000) and has also been demonstrated in studies on shared services agreements (Lesage et al. 2008). There was agreement amongst the key informants involved in shared services arrangements that the smaller municipalities involved do not have the capacity to provide high levels of services independently. Amongst those involved in PRC, all those who were interviewed agreed that it would not be possible to offer the services provided by the Panorama Recreation Centre if they were on their own. It was agreed by those in the West Shore communities, that the municipalities of the Highlands, Metchosin and View Royal would not be able to offer the service levels provided by the WSPRS.

There is also evidence to support that shared services arrangements are effective in keeping costs lower for smaller communities. It is interesting to note that the two smallest municipalities that deliver parks and recreations services on their own, Esquimalt and Oak Bay, have by far the highest per capita costs. Victoria and Saanich, the other two municipalities that do not have a shared service agreement for either parks or recreation, are high on the list in per capita costs as well. In fact, the core communities, the only four municipalities which have their own parks and recreation departments, have 4 of the 5 highest costs in the region. However, Victoria and Saanich have significantly higher populations than any other municipality in the region, and therefore, the effects on the costs of shared services on larger municipalities cannot be deduced from the results of this study.

Langford, the largest member of any parks and recreation shared services agreement, have seen their per capita costs increase by a far greater amount than any other municipality in the region, suggesting that shared services may not be effective at maintaining lower costs once a municipality grows to a certain level. This aligns with arguments in the literature that suggests that larger production capacity lowers cost only up to a certain point before average costs begin to rise (Vojnovic, 2000, p. 386).

6.2 Limitations of Parks and Recreation Shared Services

When identifying what does not work well in shared services, the most significant challenges found in this study are those that emerge from transaction costs. This agrees with evidence from the literature review which warns of transactions costs negatively affecting shared services agreements (Feiock, 2010;

Carr & Hawkins, 2013). The issues facing WSPRS demonstrate the difficulties that can emerge from negotiation costs and enforcement and monitoring costs. The descriptions of the transaction costs in the literature review section are used below to highlight the challenges facing WSPRS.

Diverging trajectories of communities from the differing growth patterns and demographics encourage defection which creates enforcement costs. With WSPRS not being able to deliver on the needs of Langford residents, there is a legitimate perception that costs are increasingly exceeding the benefits.

Although some of the smaller communities claim that the facilities are mostly being used by Langford residents, there is a perception of unfairness that while Langford contributes the most to WSPRS, members of the other municipalities are not contributing to, but still utilizing, facilities that Langford builds on its own. This has been described as negotiation costs. The costs and benefits of WSPRS are perceived to be unequally distributed across the participating members. Therefore, in the eyes of Langford, monitoring and enforcement has also become an issue of free riding - where municipalities benefit without contributing to the cost.

The transaction costs of WSPRS emerged from competing priorities and diverging interests of the communities. In the West Shore, growth patterns and changing demographics ensured that these factors would arise. In the past, the communities were more similar in needs, growth and development. When the agreement was first made, the communities, as one participant described it, were in a “honeymoon stage.” Over time the situation in the Westshore has transformed. Today Langford hails itself as the bastion of growth and development in the region, and promotes itself as running like a successful business, values which are not as strong in other municipalities. The changes in Langford have set it on a far different trajectory than some its partners in WSPRS.

From 2006 to 2016, Langford’s population increased by 57% (See Table 5.1). This tremendous growth far exceeds any other jurisdiction in the region, and Langford plans to continue the rapid pace of development. Additionally, Langford, with its low housing costs compared to the core communities is attracting young families, while some of the other municipalities in WSPRS have a much older demographic. From 2011 to 2016, Langford’s population of those under the age of 15 increased by 20.7%, while communities such Colwood, the Highlands and Metchosin experienced either virtually no growth or declining numbers in this age category (Statistics Canada, 2017). And according to Statistics Canada, out of the 5 WSPRS members, Langford has lowest percentage of those over the age of 64. Communities like Langford require new and larger facilities, while smaller communities not experiencing growth prefer to upkeep and maintain existing facilities.

Table 5.1: Population Growth of Westshore Communities 2006 - 2016

| Organization | Population 2006 | Population 2016 | Growth in Population | Growth in Population % |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Colwood | 14,687 | 16,859 | 2,172 | 15% |
| Highlands | 1,903 | 2,225 | 322 | 17% |
| Langford | 22,459 | 35,342 | 12,883 | 57% |
| Metchosin | 4,795 | 4,708 | -87 | -2% |
| View Royal | 8,768 | 10,408 | 1,640 | 19% |

(BC MAH, 2017e; BC MAH, 2017f)

All this has led to obvious tension amongst the members of WSPRS. Langford officials are feeling taken advantage of in the arrangement, believing they are unfairly paying too much. Other communities feel that Langford is demanding too much of them, even acting as a bully, with one participant describing Langford’s mayor as “the Donald Trump of Victoria.”

The case of the CVRD also highlights the concerns with transaction costs. It was clear that differing priorities led to a feeling that costs and benefits were not equal and that some communities were free riding. This led to the inefficient operations of a new facility, and tension and mistrust amongst the partnering jurisdictions.

Another challenge of shared services identified in the findings is ability to respond to the needs of the community. The two highest spenders per capita, Esquimalt and Oak Bay, provide high levels of service, as they are the two smallest municipalities offering a recreation facility with ice rinks and a swimming pool independently. It has been argued that these municipalities are delivering on the priorities of their communities. In the West Shore, WSPRS has not been willing or able to offer the levels of service that the community of Langford requires, leaving them to develop facilities separately from WSPRS. The very nature of the shared services agreements means that being responsive to community needs cannot always be the case in such a model.

6.3 Benefiting from Increased Integration While Mitigating the Risks

Although most of those interviewed believe WSPRS is a beneficial and effective resource, the issues with the governance structure has led to the budget not being passed, putting fiscal strain on the organization. There was a consensus that the veto power is a source of tension that has led to the crisis. And without binding arbitration, issues due to the tensions remain unresolved. The current dilemma in the West Shore stresses the importance of implementing a proper agreement. To accommodate changing circumstances, the contract should be flexible to allow for restructuring over time. This was also described in the literature as important for a successful interlocal arrangement (Carr & Hawkins, 2010).

PRC is not having the same issues as the WSPRS and this may be since the three communities have similar population sizes and although they have differing demographics, the interests are not diverging on such levels to cause strain on the agreement. Therefore, as also mentioned in the literature (LeSage et al., 2008; Feiock, 2007), it appears having similar population sizes is important in maintaining a successful agreement.

Table 5.2: Population of Saanich Peninsula communities, 2016

| Municipality | Population |
|-----------------|------------|
| Central Saanich | 16,814 |
| North Saanich | 11,249 |
| Sidney | 11,672 |

(BC MAH 2017e)

Another consideration that emerged from the study is that proximity plays a role in successful shared services arrangement. Having a community such as Sooke join a formal shared services arrangement with the core communities may not serve their interests and will have the community contribute to facilities that is hard for them to access. In Central Saanich, the community members who live closer to a

facility in Saanich than to Panorama Recreation Centre, are not best served for in the current arrangement. Building smaller satellite facilities could be a preferable option in remedying the problem.

Both, the findings from the primary research from this study and the findings from the literature review, agree that the development of policy networks can facilitate successful interlocal collaboration. The inter-municipal groups are examples of policy network structures that promotes social capital by fostering trusting relationships and establishing norms of reciprocity. Feiock (2007) and Hawkins (2010) claim that through repeated interactions, information exchange and collaborative arrangement made through the policy networks, good relations develop which enhance the prospective of successful collaboration. These groups can be seen as effective tools to further collaborative efforts by mitigating transaction costs.

The inter-municipal groups demonstrate how collaboration can be successfully implemented outside of a formal shared services arrangement. This sort of collaboration offers municipalities the opportunity to take advantage of economies of scale, leverage what is already in place somewhere else, tailor recreation needs to the market place, reduce costs and reduce barriers to residents. Since there are many common focuses and services amongst the different groups, unnecessary duplication can also be visited and addressed.

The inter-municipal groups are limited to the recreation side of parks and recreation and there was significant desire amongst participants to see increased dialogue in the parks realm. The review of municipal documents, highlights many of the collective goals and visions of the region. The objectives to make parks and open space more accessible, acquiring more park land, creating a network of greenways connecting parks and open space, invasive species management, and enhancing the urban forests are all some of the common objectives that could be served by a parks inter-municipal group.

Land use can be a highly contentious and defensive issue and this limits collaborative parks services. There is a higher demand to retain local authority over land use. Therefore, it is much more difficult to have a deeper integration of parks services. On the surface, it may look appealing for two similar sized communities that neighbor each other to share parks services. However, the differing demands of citizens in each jurisdiction may make this more ineffective than not. Sidney and North Saanich are an example of this. North Saanich is an older demographic with limited growth. Sidney is a growing community attracting young families. Therefore, there demands on park services are moving in different directions

Findings from the interviews also support concepts found in the literature that suggests collaboration with other public sector or non-profit organizations can be effective means to deliver parks and recreation services more effectively and efficiently and with wider benefits (Crompton, 2010; Librett et al, 2007; Liechty, 2014). There was considerable interest in increasing partnerships with school districts, providing increased access to youths at a time when the facilities are underused. The Department of National Defence, which has facilities at the CFB Esquimalt Naval Base, is another potential partner for neighboring municipalities such as Esquimalt and View Royal. There is also ample literature giving support to the potential of parks and recreation partnering with health care providers to promote health and well being. Saanich has made this a clear objective in their Master Plan.

6.4 When to Participate in Shared Services

The findings from the key informant interviews and the literature review demonstrate that if a municipality is exploring shared services arrangements, thoughtful consideration must be taken for a variety of factors. The municipality should clearly define and understand what objectives are hoped to be accomplished and if shared services can achieve these objectives. Is the objective to gain higher levels of service or reduce costs? Shared services have the potential to allow efficiency gains from economies of scale, however, growth patterns and diverging interests may reverse the efficiency gains.

Finding an appropriate partner is another factor to consider. If two municipalities have demographics with different requirements or have significantly differing development and growth visions, the potential for issues related to transaction costs are high. Municipalities with closely aligned interests and priorities and similar populations tend to have less of a concern for conflict to arise.

The needs of the community in five or ten years time is another factor that requires thoughtful consideration. It could be that a shared services arrangement looks best for a community today, but the community's position in the future may not be conducive to a shared services arrangement or with partnering with a particular government.

Before entering a shared services agreement, municipal governments must consider the benefits and limitations in an all-encompassing manner. Not only should the pros and cons of today be considered, but the potential issues of the future and how those issues can be resolved should be investigated. If it is determined that a shared services arrangement should be pursued, the following chapter provides some smart practices for going forward.

6.5 Areas for Further Research

From this study the next appropriate step would be to investigate further the relationship that local First Nation communities have with parks and recreation services in the region. This will involve interviewing representatives from each community to gain their perspective on the issue and understand what, where and how each community would like to be involved. This will allow for a more inclusive and complete illustration of the regional parks and recreation needs.

Another appropriate next step is to study other jurisdictions that have entered shared services to better understand the effects on costs and service levels of larger municipalities. As mentioned earlier, Saanich and Victoria, which offer independent parks and recreation service delivery, have no similarly sized municipalities in the region that practice shared services to measure against. This means there was no comparative analysis between shared services and independent providers for larger municipalities.

7.0 Recommendations: Smart Practices

To develop an approach to improve parks and recreation service delivery through increased collaboration, existing models and arrangements of service delivery were analysed, studies on amalgamation and shared services reviewed, and recommendations are offered below. Increasing shared services will require cross-jurisdictional acceptance and therefore the recommended approaches and strategies must carefully consider the potential benefits and risks of such endeavours.

One of the areas of study was to explore how municipal services are currently being delivered and how they are being delivered with the premise that not all services under the spectrum of municipal responsibility may be ideal to be incorporated into a shared services arrangement. Municipal services need to be broken down into their operational components and determined on a case by case, or service by service, basis, if it is preferred candidate for a shared services arrangement. Coordinating a shared services arrangement will be one tool amongst many that municipalities will be reviewing to improve operational efficiencies. When considering such an arrangement, each municipality will have identified several objectives, which presumably cannot be met without some negotiation and research of potential partners.

This section presents five smart practices to utilize when considering a parks and recreation shared services arrangement to improve the potential of success and to mitigate issues that may arise. These options emerged from considerations of the key findings in the literature review as a means to improve shared services arrangements, and the key findings on the current state of parks and recreation service delivery in Greater Victoria. A sixth recommendation offers a suggestion on what is required to move towards more complete analysis on the regional parks and recreation service needs, by seeking to understand how First Nations envision a parks and recreations system and how they should be involved in processes.

The first five recommendations are offered in an order that considers levels of costs and intrusion. The practices that require the least amount of cost, resources, and investigation are listed first. Each recommendation should be considered under careful analysis within the context of the particular situation – a one-size-all approach does not apply to improving service delivery.

Recommendation 1 - Utilize inter-municipal groups for parks and recreation

The inter-municipal groups that has been established for recreation services in Greater Victoria are considered by all those involved as an effective means to collaborate when needed. It has facilitated a policy network, which according to the literature not only increases potential collaboration but increases the potential for a successful arrangement by mitigating transaction costs. It could be beneficial to increase collaboration through this avenue. The arrangements here are more flexible as they tend to be more informal. There will be less of a concern of working with a partner on a different trajectory, as these agreements are easier to separate from. It also allows the municipalities to pick and choose who to collaborate with and what to collaborate on. This means a municipality can select partners who are have similar interests and agree to cooperate in areas where priorities are aligning. Considering the success of the inter-municipal groups, regional services would benefit from increased communication and partnerships and therefore, it is suggested that the directors meet more often to discuss how to increase collaboration.

It would be beneficial to establish an inter-municipal group for parks in addition to recreation. Although land use planning is more of a contentious issue, an inter-municipal group would mean working

together on parks would not infringe on the sovereignty of a neighbor. There was interest expressed from some of the participants of increased parks collaboration. The document review also demonstrated how many of the goals and visions of the different municipalities are closely aligned, especially related to parks and open spaces. By coming together and exchanging information and determining where to best support each other, the municipalities can better achieve objectives of invasive-species control, networks of greenways, park accessibility and habitat restoration.

Recommendation 2 - Utilize adaptive contracts or agreements.

To maintain a successful shared services agreement, it is important to have the initial contract or agreement carefully thought out and provide for flexibility when it is needed. All possible transaction costs and any negative consequence that may emerge should be considered and a method to address these potential issues should be written into the contract. There is a consensus amongst those involved in WSPRS that the governance structure is not working for WSPRS. There was a time when the governance structure and the other issues facing WSPRS were not as serious as a concern. WSPRS was created when priorities and interests of the different parties were more in alignment, and therefore there was nothing written into the contract to deal with the issues today. The contract should be adaptive in respect to the potential of changing circumstances. Being capable of revisiting the contract after a few years and using language that leaves room for future negotiation should be apart of the agreement. Allowing for flexibility when it is needed can mitigate transaction costs by allowing priorities to be reevaluated when needed.

Recommendation 3 - Take advantage of economies of scale.

Smaller municipalities, in particular, have the potential to take advantage of economies of scale by entering into shared services arrangements. If a municipality wishes to offer a higher level of service but do not have the capacity to do so, entering into a shared services agreement allows them to achieve that higher level of service at lower costs. There was consensus amongst key informants that smaller communities such as the Central Saanich, the Highlands, Metchosin, North Saanich, Sidney and View Royal would not be able to offer the facilities currently available to their communities if they were not a part of a shared services arrangement. In addition, these municipalities have kept costs relatively low in comparison to other small communities who do not participate in parks and recreation shared services. Langford have seen their costs rise significantly during a population boom, which signals caution for larger municipalities.

Recommendation 4 - Select partners with demographic trends, interests and priorities in alignment.

When considering a shared services agreement effort should be made to determine if potential partners hold similar interests and priorities and have growth patterns that align with future needs. A booming suburb's priorities will not align with the interests of an aging rural community. This is indicative of what is going on in the West Shore. Booming Langford is expressing far different visions than a quiet rural community such as Metchosin. Langford is expressing itself like a corporation while the other communities desire more community driven approaches.

Although it may seem on paper the municipalities of Oak Bay and Esquimalt, with their high costs of service delivery, should enter into a shared services agreement. This agreement may be hindered by competing priorities and differing interests. Both these communities are built out and the citizens demand high levels of service. These factors may make an arrangement with another community unsuccessful if they have differing factors involved.

Recommendation 5 - Collaborate with other public sector and non-profit entities

Municipalities can benefit and realize objectives and visions through collaborative efforts with other public sector organizations and non-profits. Where there is an organization that offers facilities near or within their boundaries, a municipality can leverage the resources the organization has, to offer services that the community requires. An example here is the Department of National Defence neighboring Esquimalt and near View Royal. There is also increasing interest in partnerships with local school districts. This makes sense as the recreation facilities are slowest during school hours. Partnering with school districts can promote youth health and development while allowing for a more efficient use of resources.

There is growing literature supporting the potential of collaboration between health care providers and parks and recreation. Considering municipal goals of parks and recreation being an avenue for healthy individuals and communities, it makes sense to work with health care providers to promote the health benefits of parks and recreation participation.

Recommendation 6 – Conduct further research for collaboration with First Nations

First Nations should have a more significant role to play in parks and recreation service delivery. This is apparent in the conflict that emerged with the proposed Island View Beach Management Plan and through the responses of the key informants who generally agree that engagement with First Nations needs to be improved and increased. Determining the level of engagement, such as consultation or being involved as decision-maker will depend on factors such as location and significance and will require further investigation by directly engaging with First Nations on this issue. Therefore, further research is recommended to better understand the perspectives of First Nations on the current state of parks and recreation in Greater Victoria and what their vision is for their involvement in these services.

8.0 Conclusion

This research shows that shared services arrangements can be an effective means to reduce operational costs and offer higher levels of services. However, the research also indicates that shared services arrangements are susceptible to transaction costs which can hinder service delivery and limit the ability of municipality to be responsive to the individual needs of their community. Governments need to move cautiously and thoughtfully to determine the most effective and efficient method of service delivery for a particular service. If a shared services arrangement is sought after, service delivery objectives and broader visions of all potential partners should be clearly understood by all parties involved.

This research offered smart practices on how to best approach shared services arrangements for parks and recreation service delivery. It was determined that importance should be placed on steps that improve operational efficiencies and steps that mitigate potential issues that may arise from transaction costs. It is difficult to determine what will happen in the future, as unexpected circumstance will arise, so it is necessary to understand as much as possible and prepare for as many potential conceivable outcomes.

As municipalities continue to seek ways to improve service delivery while maintaining fiscal restraint, explorations to increase efficiency and effectiveness will continue. With amalgamation being politically contentious and the benefits being increasingly scrutinized, shared services offers a more realistic option to increase regional integration as a means to improve governance efficiencies. For parks and recreation, each municipality would be served best to properly examine their community needs and capabilities to determine whether a shared services arrangement can best meet the community's objectives.

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Appendix A Interview Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Collaborative Parks and Recreation Service Delivery in the Greater Victoria Region

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Collaborative Parks and Recreation Service Delivery in the Greater Victoria Region that is being conducted by Binaipal Gill.

Binaipal Gill is a Graduate Student in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by phone at 250-213-8163.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Kim Speers. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8057.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to investigate opportunities in delivering parks and recreation services in collaborative and efficient manners in the Greater Victoria Region. The study is being undertaken for Jennifer Kroeker-Hall, the lead consultant for the Saanich governance project.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because there are discussions on increasing shared service arrangements in Greater Victoria, yet there is a lack of information on the current state of parks and recreation service delivery and the potential for collaborative parks and recreation service delivery.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because your experience in the area will contribute valuable knowledge to achieving the objectives of the study.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include being interviewed for approximately 1 hour.

Written notes will be taken to record the interview and a transcript will be made.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including your time to conduct the interview.

Risks

There is a small risk of you being identified by your answers on current parks and recreation service delivery models. To mitigate any risks your name will not be included in the study.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include contributing to the state of knowledge to improve parks and recreation service delivery in Greater Victoria.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will only be used if you give permission.

On-going Consent

Only one interview is required and there is no need for on-going consent.

Anonymity

To protect your anonymity all data will be stored safely and securely. Your name will not be used in the report. I will be the only one with access to the raw data.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by the information being held on password protected laptop. Paper data will be secured in a locked briefcase in my home office.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: Through an academic defence of the project at uvic and through the report being offered for use in the Saanich Governance Project.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of with the deletion of all files from the laptop where it is saved once the materials are no longer required. Paper data will be shredded when no longer needed. All data will be disposed of appropriately when it is no longer needed for my academic requirements or the client's requirements.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Binaipal Gill, email: binaipal@gmail.com, phone: 250-213-8163. And Kim Speers, email: kspeers@uvic.ca; phone: 250-721-8057

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Future Use of Data

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research:
_____ (Participant to provide initials)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix B Interview Questions

Collaborative Parks and Recreation Service Delivery Research Project Interview Questions

Set 1

| Personal Information | |
|---|--|
| Last Name | |
| First Name | |
| Title: | |
| Organization: | |
| Years of parks and recreation experience: | |

Introduction

The objective the research is to provide smart practices for municipal governments to deliver parks and recreation services in a collaborative and efficient manner. The client for this project is Jennifer Kroeker-Hall, the lead consultant for the Saanich Governance Project. The interviews will inform a current-state analysis, of current models of parks and recreation service delivery in the Greater Victoria region. To support the objective of the research, the interviews will help identify strengths and limitations of the current models, as well as opportunities and challenges for parks and recreation service delivery collaboration.

Interview Questions

- 1.0 Current state
 - 1.1 Please describe the current model of parks and recreation service delivery for your jurisdiction. (i.e. processes of decision making, expanding, rezoning, etc.)
 - 1.2 What works well in the current model?
 - 1.3 What does not work well with the current model?
 - 1.4 How can the current model of parks and recreation service delivery be improved?

- 2.0 Current collaboration
 - 2.1 Does your jurisdiction engage in any sort of collaboration in parks and recreation service delivery with other municipalities outside arrangements of the CRD? (i.e. equipment sharing, staff training, full service delivery)? If so, please describe the types of services delivered.

- 2.2 What is the governance decision-making process in delivering these services?
- 2.3 What is working well with the collaborative arrangements?
- 2.4 What is not working well with the collaborative arrangements?
- 2.5 How can parks and recreation service delivery collaboration be improved?
- 3.0 Collaboration with First Nations
 - 3.1 What consultation and/or collaborative arrangements in parks and recreation service delivery exist with First Nations?
 - 3.2 What works well?
 - 3.3 What does not work well?
 - 3.4 How can consultation and/or collaboration with First Nations be improved?
- 4.0 Parks and Recreation Network
 - 4.1 What sort of contact do you have with parks and recreation officials from other municipalities?
 - 4.2 Could you please describe the relationship? Is there trust? Do you share similar values?
 - 4.3 Could you please describe reasons municipalities will choose to collaborate in parks and recreation service delivery?
 - 4.4 Could you please describe reasons municipalities will not choose to collaborate in parks and recreation service delivery?
- 5.0 A recent report exploring the potential in increasing service integration in the Capital Region entitled, The Capital Integrated Services and Governance Initiative, identified opportunities through discussion with communities and the public. Regarding recreation, regional service integration was identified as a potential opportunity. Having joint recreation facilities and programming is a mechanism to possibly offer residents more options (increased level of service) for recreation facilities they can use. Another potential is to have a “One Rec Card” so residents can access facilities across jurisdiction to reduce “free-riders” and create operational facilities.
 - 5.1 Do you agree that these arrangements present opportunities? Why or why not?
 - 5.2 How do you think parks and recreation services can best be delivered in the region?

Collaborative Parks and Recreation Service Delivery Research Project Interview Questions

Set 2

Interviewer: Binaipal Gill

| Interviewee Personal Information | |
|---|--|
| Last Name | |
| First Name | |
| Title: | |
| Organization: | |
| Years of parks and recreation experience: | |

Introduction

The objective the research is to provide smart practices for municipal governments to deliver parks and recreation services in a collaborative and efficient manner. The client for this project is Jennifer Kroeker-Hall, the lead consultant for the Saanich Governance Project. The interviews will inform a current-state analysis, of current models of parks and recreation service delivery in the Greater Victoria region. To support the objective of the research, the interviews will help identify strengths and limitations of the current models, as well as opportunities and challenges for parks and recreation service delivery collaboration.

Interview Questions

- 1.0 Current state of regional parks and recreation shared services arrangement
 - 1.1 Please describe the current model of parks and recreation shared service delivery for which your jurisdiction is a part of. (i.e. processes of decision making, expanding, rezoning, etc.)
 - 1.2 What works well with the current model?
 - 1.3 What does not work well with the current model?
 - 1.4 How can the current model of parks and recreation shared service delivery be improved?
- 2.0 Current collaboration outside regional arrangement
 - 2.1 Does your jurisdiction engage in any sort of collaboration in parks and recreation service delivery with other municipalities outside arrangements of the CRD? Please describe (i.e. equipment sharing, staff training, full service delivery)

- 2.2 What is the governance decision-making process in delivering these services?
- 2.3 What is working well with the collaborative arrangements?
- 2.4 What is not working well with the collaborative arrangements?
- 2.5 How can these collaborative arrangements be improved?
- 3.0 Collaboration and consultation with First Nations in service delivery
 - 3.1 What consultation and/or collaborative arrangements in parks and recreation service delivery exist with First Nations?
 - 3.2 What works well?
 - 3.3 What does not work well?
 - 3.4 How can consultation and/or collaboration with First Nations be improved?
- 4.0 Parks and Recreation Network
 - 4.1 What sort of contact do you have with parks and recreation officials from other municipalities?
 - 4.2 Could you please describe the relationship? Is there trust? Do you share similar values?
 - 4.3 Could you please describe reasons municipalities will choose to collaborate in parks and recreation service delivery?
 - 4.4 Could you please describe reasons municipalities will not choose to collaborate in parks and recreation service delivery?
- 5.0 Capital Integrated Services and Governance Initiative Report

A recent report exploring the potential in increasing service integration in the Capital Region entitled, The Capital Integrated Services and Governance Initiative, identified opportunities through discussion with communities and the public. Regarding recreation, regional service integration was identified as a potential opportunity. Having joint recreation facilities and programming is a mechanism to possibly offer residents more options (increased level of service) for recreation facilities they can use. Another potential is to have a “One Rec Card” so residents can access facilities across jurisdiction to reduce “free-riders” and create operational facilities.

 - 5.1 Do you agree that these arrangements present opportunities? Why or why not?
 - 5.2 How do you think parks and recreation services can best be delivered in the region?

