

Regional Mechanisms for Efficiency and Cooperation: the British Columbia Experience

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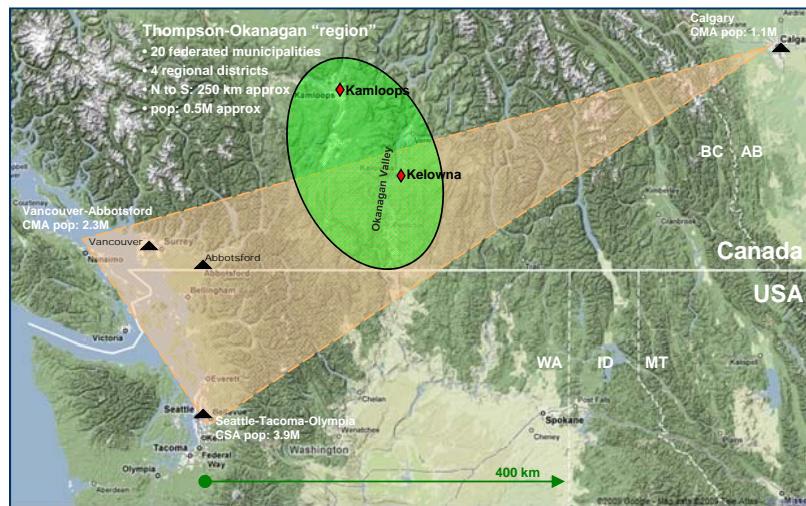
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“Virtual Region” of Thompson-Okanagan



Opportunities and Challenges for the Thompson-Okanagan Region

Opportunities

- Strategic location
- Strong connections
- Natural assets
- Amenities, services
- Leading sectors

Challenges

- Internal cohesion lacking
- Internal competition
- Misaligned local interests
- No common vision
- Erosion of natural assets

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Regional Districts & Efficient Services

1. Choose Service Component... all or part of a service		3. Choose Service Mode...			
		Direct production	Contract (public)	Contract (private)	Autonomous entity
2. Choose Service Area...	Local / rural				
	Interlocal				
	Regional				
	Multi-regional				

Services can be and are provided / financed at different scales, in different ways

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Limits to Collaboration & Cooperation: Thompson-Okanagan Governance Deficit

- Twenty municipalities & two dominant cities
- Four robust regional districts
- Focused on inter-municipal partnerships and rural services
- Regional and inter-regional district links lacking
- The “ethos of region” has yet to emerge among successive generations of local officials

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The Challenge of Regional Space

- “Wicked” issues by definition cut across localities and interests
- Regional collaboration is needed since such issues can’t be addressed locally
- However, the regional layer is often the least developed branch of government

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Two Views of Regional Districts

Flexible and effective service delivery

- Local choice: any **service**, any **scale**, any **mode**
- “Economies of scale” and “externalities” captured
- “Self-organizing” and therefore still evolving
- Less pressures for disincorporation, amalgamation and restructure

Conflictual & complex governance

- Uneven performance with tough (“winners” & “losers”) issues
- Inherently complex... seemingly endless decision-making processes
- Challenged to deliver on “wicked” public policy issues

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Pathways Ahead

Traditional Approach

Assumes:

Simple, static governance environment

Focus on:

*Structure / Functions / Mandates
Conventional tools optimized for localities (not regions)*

Emerging Approach

Anticipates:

Complex, dynamic governance environment + interlocal conflict

Focus on:

*Competencies / Leadership / Processes
Incentive-based tools optimized for regions (not localities)*

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Making the Strategic Shift: Leadership, Competencies & Processes

- New inter-regional processes
- New approaches to leadership
- Training in inter-governmental diplomacy

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Making the Strategic Shift: Incentives for Collaborative Action

- Use transfers to achieve smart outcomes
- Share revenues to achieve results
- Incentivize inter-local innovation

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Joining-up Vertically – the State’s Challenge in Region Building

- Importance of regional space
- Region building is the challenge
- From local to local to regionally-focused state (provincial) programs

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Conclusions

- BC’s regional governance approach has succeeded in providing services at a wide variety of scales
- BC’s regional governance approach has been less successful dealing with “wicked” problems
- Region building cannot succeed when the proper supports are missing:
 - Competencies, leadership, processes
 - Incentives optimized for regional action
 - Vertical coordination

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