

I was for a decade a columnist for the Delta Optimist newspaper where I wrote somewhat frequently about the impact “outside parties” were having on the municipality (now city) of Delta. One of the major impacts on South Delta comes from the Port and Deltaport. It operates as a world within itself, isolated from Delta and not at all governed and controlled by municipal or provincial authority. However when police or fire/rescue are needed, that call goes to Delta. My input is on two matters, and time doesn’t allow me much detail.

1. Governance of the Port is missing or sloppy. A decade ago and in response to a comment by the then Minister of Transportation to the Mayor of Delta, I wrote to ask why he did not control the actions of the Port. He had said to the Mayor that they (government) wanted the port to have flexibility, and inferred that the board was the control mechanism for their action. Given many board members have conflicts in that they already have significant dealings with the port, there is no check and balance. Governance is missing. The Port says in its annual reports it is accountable to the Government of Canada through the Minister. But if the Minister “cuts them loose”, there is no governance.

2. Strategic location: The two main ports on the west coast are Prince Rupert and Vancouver. If you were a fan of the TV series Downton Abbey, you would know that Prince Rupert was favoured to be a massive rail head and sea port. The Titanic disaster stopped that effort. It was favoured for several reasons including easier access than Vancouver. Recently I read that some 85% of cargo on the west coast goes through Vancouver. From a strategic (military) point of view, that is concentrating too much at one location. Were Vancouver to be disabled, say by an earthquake, it would be disastrous for Canada and trade (not to mention many other factors). The Port of Vancouver board is in competition with Rupert, so that trade is being concentrated in one location, not two.

I humbly submit that these matters need to be brought to the top of your list of items for review.

Ian Robertson