

VICTORIA

VOTES

OCTOBER 20, 2018



It's time for you, Victoria electors, to decide...

The District of Saanich and the City of Victoria Councils will be asking electors if they wish to establish a Citizens' Assembly to explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of amalgamation of the two municipalities. This non-binding community opinion question will be asked at the upcoming General Local Election being held on October 20, 2018.

This is not a referendum on Amalgamation.

The question at hand is not whether the municipalities of Victoria and Saanich should amalgamate, but rather whether the prospect of amalgamation should be systematically examined through a Citizens' Assembly. If the Citizens' Assembly recommends in favour of amalgamation there would be a binding referendum question put to the citizens of Saanich and Victoria and the citizens would decide.

What is a Citizens' Assembly?

A Citizens' Assembly is a body of citizens formed to deliberate on an issue or issues of broad political importance. The membership of a Citizens' Assembly is randomly selected. The purpose is to employ a cross-section of the public to study a question and to propose answers through rational and reasoned discussion and the use of various methods of inquiry. The use of Citizens' Assemblies aims to reinstall trust in the political process by engaging citizens to take a more direct role in deliberative democracy.

What will the Citizens' Assembly do?

The Citizens' Assembly will be tasked by the City of Victoria and the District of Saanich to learn about the needs and interests of local residents and businesses, examine the costs, benefits and disadvantages of creating a new amalgamated municipal structure, and – should they determine to recommend in favour of amalgamation – advise local councillors and their administrations on the conditions under which the municipalities should proceed.

Specifically, the Citizens' Assembly on Amalgamation will develop:

- A set of values which describe their aspirations for good local governance;
- A list of issues which they believe need to be satisfactorily resolved for municipal amalgamation to merit consideration; and
- Should they recommend to proceed with amalgamation, a detailed recommendation concerning municipal amalgamation, including any conditions which would need to be satisfied if a merger were to proceed.

How will the Citizens' Assembly Members be selected?

Should the electors vote in favour of proceeding with a Citizens' Assembly to explore the amalgamation of the City of Victoria and the District of Saanich, an independent body would be engaged by Saanich and Victoria to run the Citizens' Assembly process. The Citizens' Assembly would consist of a randomly selected group of Saanich and Victoria residents that broadly reflect the local community.

For example, in the Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly, 10,000 households throughout the Cowichan Valley were randomly selected to receive an invitation to volunteer for the Assembly. Thirty-six candidates were randomly selected from the pool of respondents in such a way as to broadly match the make-up of local residents.

What is the cost of the Citizens' Assembly?

Early costs are being forecasted at approximately \$750,000 in total for a Citizens' Assembly. The City of Victoria, the District of Saanich, and the Province of British Columbia would each contribute a third of the costs up to \$250,000. No money will be spent on the establishment of a Citizens' Assembly until City Council has heard from the voters.

The question on the ballot of the upcoming General Local Election will give Council an indication of the community's interest in pursuing the establishment of a Citizens' Assembly to explore the question of the Amalgamation of the City of Victoria and District of Saanich. This is an important opportunity to provide your opinion on the path the City of Victoria should take.

Ballot question approved by Council:

"Are you in favour of spending up to \$250,000 for establishing a Citizens' Assembly to explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of the amalgamation between the District of Saanich and the City of Victoria?"



For more information

Legislative Services: 250.361.0571
victoria.ca/election