Candidate: Stefanie Hardman

1.   **The electorate-approved Citizens' Assembly (CA), which is well underway in Saanich and Victoria, will be tasked to make recommendations to those respective councils on the potential for unification. If the CA recommends that the two municipalities merge, what will you do to facilitate this process and ensure the voters have an opportunity to vote on the recommendations in a binding referendum?**

I am encouraged by the cooperative approach of Victoria and Saanich towards developing the terms of reference for a Citizens' Assembly. I am hopeful that the Province will approve the request for funding and a terms of reference soon so the process may advance. It's much too early to speculate on the eventual recommendations coming out of this process, as the mandate of the Citizens' Assembly covers a variety of topics, with amalgamation being only one of many options under consideration. I look forward to seeing the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly and facilitating their implementation, including a referendum if required.

2.   **Notwithstanding a municipal merger, do you agree that combining critical services, such as policing and fire fighting, would provide more effective and efficient public safety for the residents of Greater Victoria? Yes or no. Please explain.**

Yes. It's clear from the substantial pressure facing the City of Victoria's budget that the current funding model is inequitable. The City of Victoria is the urban hub of our metropolitan area and the provincial capital, both of which contributes to the inequitable burden borne by the City of Victoria with regard to emergency services. To improve public safety and ensure fiscal fairness, I see advantages of amalgamating Victoria, Oak Bay, Saanich, and other local emergency services. Doing so would be the most effective and efficient use of our resources. That said, I recognize that a change of this nature would involve negotiations with the other municipalities and discussions with the provincial government.

3.   **The current Capital Region District Board consists of municipal councillors and mayors who are appointed from the 13 municipalities. By legislation, these municipal appointments are responsible to represent the interests of their home municipalities. Do you think that regional interests could be better served if the entire CRD Board was directly elected by voters region-wide? Why or why not? Please explain.**

The City of Victoria allows voters to select its CRD Directors on the municipal election ballot and there is nothing to prevent other South Island municipalities from taking the same approach. The CRD belongs to all the residents of the region, and we need it to work if we're going to tackle our biggest regional challenges: housing affordability, transportation and climate change. I'm open to any suggestions on how to improve regional governance in the South Island, but I think we should wait for the outcome of the Victoria/Saanich Citizens' Assembly process before considering changes to the method of selecting CRD Directors.