

Editorial: A cautious step forward

What does the result of the Cowichan Valley referendum tell Saanich and Victoria councils? It tells them they should move ahead with plans to ask voters if they favour the forming of a citizens' assembly to study the possible effects — pro and con — of amalgamation.

The two councils are meeting tonight to consider a ballot question proposed by mayors Lisa Helps of Victoria and Richard Atwell of Saanich: “Are you in favour of establishing a citizens' assembly to explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of the amalgamation between the District of Saanich and the City of Victoria?”

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On Saturday, the majority of Duncan voters rejected amalgamation, while a majority in North Cowichan voted in favour of amalgamating the two communities. Under B.C. legislation, amalgamation must be approved by more than 50 per cent of voters in each municipality.

As we stated here on Saturday, Duncan and North Cowichan did it right, keeping the process at arm's length from politics and providing good information.

Saanich and Victoria have nothing to fear from putting the question on the ballot in October. In fact, both councils have been too timid thus far, given that in the 2014 election, 80 per cent of Victoria voters favoured some form of amalgamation, and 88 per cent of Saanich voters favoured reviewing regional governance.

There has been much talk about amalgamation. It's time to move ahead on the issue, even if it's the cautious step being considered at tonight's meeting.

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