

**Saanich By-Election Questionnaire**  
**Capital Region Municipal Amalgamation Society (Amalgamation Yes)**  
<http://www.amalgamationyes.ca>

TO EACH CANDIDATE STANDING FOR ELECTION TO PUBLIC OFFICE TO FILL THE VACANT COUNCIL SEAT IN SAANICH MUNICIPALITY.

Please complete and return to [amalgamateyes@gmail.com](mailto:amalgamateyes@gmail.com) by September 2, 2017. Responses will be posted on the <http://www.amalgamationyes.ca> website.

Candidate name: Karen Harper  
Candidate for: Councillor  
Municipality: District of Saanich

1. Are you in favour of the Provincially-funded, citizen-led, unbiased study of the current system of local government in the Capital Region District, to include municipalities and CRD? Yes or no. Please explain.

**Yes, I am. It is clear that many of the problems facing us are regional. The regional board - CRD, has no ability to direct regional solutions, and is unaccountable, as it is not directly elected. There is also duplication of services between the CRD and the municipal level.**

**It is also clear that a significant portion of the local population want and need the information to make informed choices about regional and municipal governance. This was indicated in the positive vote in the last municipal elections. In the case of Saanich, the question was less than clear, and I believe that Saanich residents deserve the information that will allow them to make an informed choice on this matter. Whatever their decision, it should be respected.**

**The CRD was created over 50 years ago, and it is time for a thorough review of both it, its mandate, and how it fits within the local municipal structure.**

**At the end of the day, the simple question to be answered is - if we were setting up governance today in the region, is this what it would look like? I think not.**

2. Leading up to the November 14, 2014 municipal election, all municipalities were requested to add a common non-binding question on the municipal ballot to gauge public interest in an study of local governance. 8 of 13 municipalities acquiesced, but placed uniquely-worded questions on each ballot. The (then) Saanich Mayor and Council resisted this request, but eventually public pressure forced the issue and the Mayor formulated an opaque question on the Saanich ballot. It resulted in an 88% YES vote, the highest affirmation in the regional average (75%). See:

<http://www.amalgamationyes.ca/answer-on-amalgamation---times-colonist-editorial.html>

<http://www.amalgamationyes.ca/saanich-election-about-governance.html>

<http://www.amalgamationyes.ca/so-greater-victoria-is-in-favour-of-amalgamation---kinda.html>

Do you believe that residents should once again have the opportunity to state an opinion on the subject of an governance study on a common **binding** referendum question on the municipal ballot? Yes or no. Please explain.

**Yes, I do. There needs to be a study of governance options, and following the study, there needs to a binding referendum on the status quo versus one or more specific alternate options for voters to consider.**

**This will eliminate any confusion about what is being voted on, as now opponents of any study state that the Saanich question, despite its 88% Yes vote, had nothing to do with amalgamation. We need to be clear and direct with voters to obtain their views. Information about such an important issue is required.**

3. After the November 2014 election, and the 75% YES vote for reform, the (then) Premier of BC, Christy Clark, and the (then) Minister of Communities, Coralee Oakes both promised an study into amalgamation. To date, no such study has been initiated. Leading up to the May 2017 Provincial election, the NDP promised: *"You can count on BC New Democrats to follow through on our*

*commitment to commission a study*". But on August 13, the new Minister of Municipal Affairs, Selina Robinson said she had no plans to commission an amalgamation study. As an elected councillor, what steps will you take with the Minister of Municipal Affairs to reinforce the will of the electorate and the Provincially-promised study?

**I would move a motion for Council to ask the government to commission the study that they promised, and which the Liberals also promised in their campaign.**

4. Do you believe that the Capital Region District Board has been effective in dealing with regional service issues, such as waste water treatment (sewage), public safety (police, fire, 911), regional growth, transportation and transit planning, etc? Yes or no. Please explain.

**Not particularly. Sewage is the most obvious example of the system not working well. Regional growth is another example, where the plan itself has not been adopted by the municipalities, and is currently being mediated at great expense. The structure of the CRD, where Councillors effectively represent their municipality, not the region, means that many regional issues languish.**

**All of the above - waste water treatment (sewage), public safety (police, fire, 911), regional growth, transportation and transit planning,) are important issues that are not being well served by the current governance model.**

**The CRD is effective in oversight of water for the region and of parks. These are areas where the oversight also has 'control', with no competition from the municipalities.**

5. What would you do to improve regional governance in Greater Victoria?

**A proper governance review, even if it didn't result in any amalgamations, should result in improved regional governance by having a directly elected and accountable CRD, defining what responsibilities are local and what are regional,**

and giving the power over those responsibilities to the level of government that 'owns' them. Integrated services cannot be effective if they are voluntary, they must be permanent features of a program that cannot be opted in or out of.

For example, transportation and transit planning should be dealt with on a regional basis, ensuring that all aspects are coordinated, and need to be coordinated with housing and business developments. It is the failure to do so regionally that has created many of the transportation issues that we now face.