

2020 Victoria By-election Questionnaire  
Capital Region Municipal Amalgamation Society (Amalgamation Yes)  
<http://www.amalgamationyes.ca>

TO EACH CANDIDATE STANDING FOR ELECTION TO PUBLIC OFFICE in the City of Victoria By-Election, April 4, 2020.

Please complete and return to [amalgamateyes@gmail.com](mailto:amalgamateyes@gmail.com) by March 15, 2020. Responses will be posted on the <http://www.amalgamationyes.ca> website.

Candidate name: Rachael Montgomery

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 thrilled that we are finally and intentionally studying some form of amalgamation in the region! I am worried that we are already behind in the timing of establishing the Citizens Assembly (the terms of reference were only approved on Jan 28, 2020 and state that the Citizen's Assembly would convene for 6-12 Saturdays starting in 2019, which hasn't happened, and we do not have the provincial funding in place yet). My concern is that we need to have the public engagement process well in hand as soon as possible, as the greater public will need a substantial amount of time to be able to fully understand the recommendations and impacts of amalgamation. We need the public to be confident and informed when they make their decision.*

*If elected, I will work to ensure that we have the best opportunity for high voter turn-out (i.e., the binding referendum would be a part of the 2022 general municipal election). However, if there isn't a substantive amount of time, coordinated civic engagement and educational resources prior to the 2022 municipal election, I would likely recommend moving the referendum to a separate vote.*

*This is important to get done right. I want to ensure there is above average civic engagement and media coverage about the recommendations and impacts of amalgamation. I would also recommend to have current council members from Victoria and Saanich, as well as the candidates running in the 2022 election in both municipalities well-versed in the recommendations as the general public may very well seek the opinion and direction from current and future elected officials. They need to be ambassadors of the change in order for it to have a positive outcome for our region.*

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. In the medium- to long-term, there will absolutely be benefits to combining these services. People and families move around our region on a daily basis, therefore the level of service and experience we have when we need critical services needs to be the same, no*

*matter where we are in the Greater Victoria region. Combining these services will also create a more coordinated approach to monitoring and responding to regional issues - and will expand the abilities of the teams who are tracking, monitoring, and responding to requests for service in our region.*

*During the transition period (as it is for any organization during a governance change) it will be disruptive and we need to pay particular attention to the known risks and have solid plans in place to mitigate them. A good example of this is the transition to E-Comm (the operator for the South Island 9-1-1/Police Dispatch Centre), which will have great benefits to the region, but has gone through growing pains. I have personally experienced this when we have combined teams and services in the healthcare system. I will work hard to reveal the day-to-day challenges that may occur if long-standing systems and relationships are disrupted and changed. First and foremost, we need to keep our teams strong and supported so they can do the great work keeping our community safe and supported everyday.*

*In the end, if we do not see a municipal merger, there are still services that can be combined. It may be easier to start with 'back-of-house' municipal services rather than the very public and often politicized front-line services that involve strong unions and long-term established community relationships. I still hold the goal of combining front-line services for the reasons I have mentioned above. It may not be the one I would start with first, however.*

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.

*As I understand it, the function of the CRD Board has been scrutinized for many years. It is clear that something needs to change so that members of the CRD Board are accountable to represent and support a common vision for the region, no matter what the impact is on their home municipality. However, I do not assume that directly electing to the CRD Board would be the best or only option for better regional governance. It may be, but there may also be a risk if the CRD Board consists of members that are not current municipal councillors or mayors (decreased consistency or opportunity for regional collaboration), and voters may not be in the best position to elect directly to this regional board.*

*I would be in favour of looking at alternate models to ensure accountability for regional representation.*

*It is clear to me that if municipal merger between Saanich and Victoria does not take effect, it will be even more of a priority to combine some of the regional services and improve the governance structure to better serve our regions biggest needs: emergency services, housing affordability, transportation, economic development, homelessness, mental health and addictions and climate change.*