

## **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: Rob Wickson

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.

**Thank you for allowing me to provide answers to these important questions**

**Yes, a properly funded citizen led study of the current governance structure for both individual and regional governing bodies is needed. We have been living with the current structure for 50 years and any good business will have reviewed the operation model at least a few times over that period. The difficulty will be to work around those entrenched positions before the deep analysis begins**

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, once there is a set of recommendations provided through a deep detailed study, then a clear question for all impacted communities must be placed on a referendum ballot.**

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?

**The somewhat arbitrary decision by the new Minister Selina Robinson has surprised me. It points to the political attitude that wants to avoid difficult and perhaps controversial issues. It also points to the possibility that some of our current elected officials are working against the voters who elected them.**

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.

**The CRD Board has become very ineffectual on a majority of their responsibilities. On regional transportation issues they have all but abandoned any efforts to develop a sound regional transportation authority. In protecting our environment, they are weak at best. The Greater Victoria watershed is an example where there is virtually no single entity with clear responsibility for protecting our watershed. A good example is to look at the Gorge Waterway. With the Gorge receiving water flows from 7 different municipalities, how are standards being met? What are those standards and whose job is to enforce them? As recently as this week we have a plume of waste water coming from somewhere in Esquimalt but so far the source has not been found. This has been going on since July 30th. Why is the CRD not in charge of this issue?**

**Back in the late 1990's and early part of the next decade, there was some very interesting work being done by the CRD regarding developing a Regional Growth Strategy. This was seen by many of us (I was representing the Victoria Chamber of Commerce at the time) to be a great way to move the conversation to the broader regional context. Unfortunately, once the citizen groups, professionals and consultants signed off, the elected board began their work which seemed to be to weaken the documents in order to satisfy the outlier communities. As a result, the RGS is now almost unenforceable and the recent update appears to be a waste of time except to attempt to remove the benefits of a regional growth strategy.**

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

**This is the one area where I think we can focus as a community without depending on other levels of government. The CRD model has outlived its usefulness and needs to be reshaped. I would like to see that conversation replace the yes or no to amalgamation question. If we could create a table that could examine a new business model to replace the CRD, we should be able to come up with consensus about what could be called the Metro Victoria model. For example, if we started from the premise that the Metro Victoria Board will be directly elected with a chair elected from within, they could take on the large regional projects with much greater efficiency. The CRD has proven to be a benefit to the region for responsibilities such as**

**the Water District and solid waste management. It should be possible to do the same with regional transportation planning and liquid waste management.**

**There is also a business opportunity that a Metro Victoria board could offer all local municipalities. What if Metro Victoria could offer services such as payroll and accounts payable functions? Would that not provide an opportunity to reduce individual municipalities some costs? What other services could Metro Victoria provide? More importantly, Metro Victoria must be tasked with bringing a regional transportation and water conservation authority in to being. These two functions are not being given anywhere near the amount of respect they deserve which is an astoundingly poor business model.**

**In short:**

- 1. Yes to a full study**
- 2. Yes to referendum on the recommendations**
- 3. Did not agree with recent government position.**
- 4. The CRD has become a weak servant of the individual municipalities**
- 5. Let's start a new conversation about what Metro Victoria could do for the citizens of the region**