

Victoria councillors OK amalgamation-study question



Victoria's city hall.

Victoria residents will get a say this fall on the idea of exploring amalgamation with Saanich.

Councillors have ratified a referendum question on establishing a citizens assembly to explore the idea.

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Saanich has ratified the same question.

The question for voters on the Oct. 20 municipal election ballot will read: “Are you in favour of spending up to \$250,000 for establishing a Citizens’ Assembly to explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of the amalgamation between the District of Saanich and the City of Victoria?”

Municipal staff estimate the cost to establish a citizens assembly at \$750,000. The hope is the cost will be split three ways between each municipality and the province.

Saanich and Victoria residents met in a joint committee meeting last month to hammer out the referendum question.

In the 2014 municipal elections, eight of 13 capital region municipalities put some sort of question about amalgamation on the ballot.

Victoria residents voted 80 per cent in favour when asked: “Are you in favour of reducing the number of municipalities in Greater Victoria through amalgamation?”

Saanich residents voted 88.5 per cent in favour when asked: “Do you support council initiating a community-based review of governance structures and policies with Saanich and our partnerships within the region?”

Saanich followed up on the positive vote by establishing a citizen advisory committee which made several recommendations, including calling on the province to fund a citizens assembly on amalgamation with interested municipalities and to hold a referendum on the possibility.

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