

Why Amalgamation: The Facts

Capital Regional District (CRD) Population:

- The population of the 13 CRD municipalities is 335,256¹
- Of those, the majority 70% reside in 5 core municipalities: Saanich, Victoria, Oak Bay, Esquimalt and View Royal.
- Western communities of Langford, Colwood, Sooke, Metchosin, Highlands combine 19% of the population.
- Peninsula communities of Central Saanich, and Sidney, North Saanich, make up the balance of 11%.
- The 5 core municipalities have a population larger than each of Burnaby, Richmond, Abbotsford, Coquitlam and Kelowna, but these latter cities rank higher on the list of Canada's 100 largest cities.
- The aggregated core, peninsula and western municipal groupings below are presented for illustrative cost and data comparison purposes only, and do not presume or presuppose specific future amalgamation boundaries.

Municipality	Population	
Saanich	109,752	
Victoria	80,017	
Oak Bay	18,015	
Esquimalt	16,209	
View Royal	9,381	
subtotal of Core	233,374	70%
Central Saanich	15,936	
Sidney	11,178	
North Saanich	11,089	
subtotal of Peninsula	38,203	11%
Langford	29,228	
Colwood	16,093	
Sooke	11,435	
Metchosin	4,803	
Highlands	2,120	
subtotal of Western	63,679	19%
Total	335,256	
Other Electoral Areas	24,735	Juan de Fuca, Southern Gulf Islands, Salt Spring
Total CRD	359,991	

¹ Excludes 25,000 residents in the three CRD Electoral Areas of Juan de Fuca, Southern Gulf Islands, and Salt Spring Island. Total CRD population is 360,000.

Governance

- Local government in the Province of BC is legislated pursuant to the *Local Government Act* and the *Community Charter*. Municipalities are therefore the creation of the Provincial government.
- The 13 CRD municipalities elect 13 Mayors and 76 councillors, a total of 89 representatives.
- Council members from each municipality may also serve on the 24-member CRD Board, as well as other boards.
- The CRD provides a number of regional services, including landfill operations, regional parks, water supply, trunk sewers, sewer treatment and recycling.
- Several unincorporated areas, including Willis Point, East Sooke, Otter Point, Shirley and Port Renfrew have no local government, but are represented by one Electoral Area Director on the CRD Board.
- Municipalities, independent of each other, organize and provide planning, engineering, public works, streets, water, sewer, garbage, parks, police and fire services, and bylaw enactment, all within the silos of individual municipal boundaries.
- Four of the 5 core municipalities, (Victoria, Oak Bay, Saanich and Esquimalt) each fund and operate separate parks, recreation and cultural services. The recreation facilities in Juan de Fuca (West Shore), SEAPARC (Sooke) and Panorama (North Saanich, Central Saanich and Sidney are co-funded..
- The Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL) provides services to 10 municipalities. The other three (Sidney, North Saanich and Sooke) are part of the Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL).
- The Victoria Regional Transit Commission provides oversight of BC Transit, which operates the Victoria Regional Transit System.
- There are three School Districts, none of which match municipal boundaries.
- Management of marine and air traffic in the downtown harbour is the responsibility of Transport Canada. The Greater Victoria Harbour Authority Society (GVHA) manages some waterfront properties, e.g. Ships Point, Fisherman's Wharf and Ogden Point. The GVHA Board of Directors includes elected representatives from Esquimalt, Victoria, First Nations and the CRD. The majority of key waterfront properties are owned and managed by the City of

Victoria, the Provincial Capital Commission and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)

Some cost comparisons

The table below compares some per capita costs of municipal Mayors, Councils and Chief Administrative Officers for the year 2011

Municipality	Population	Mayor & Council Cost \$	Per Capita cost of Mayor & Council \$	Municipal Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) cost \$	Per Capita Cost of CAO \$	Combined Per Capita Cost of Mayor, Council & CAO \$
Surrey	468,000	631,650	1.35	325,874	0.70	2.05
Burnaby	223,218	566,920	2.54	237,032	1.06	3.60
5 Core municipalities	233,374	1,033,495	4.43	880,292	3.77	8.20
13 municipalities	335,256	1,988,836	5.93	1,923,349	5.74	11.67

Further examples:

- 11 CRD municipalities employ Directors of Engineering, at a combined cost of \$1.4 million. Surrey, with a population of 468,000 (or 40% higher) employs just one Director of Engineering at a cost of \$234,000.
- Similar discrepancies occur throughout the senior managerial (exempt) level employees in comparison to Burnaby and Surrey. The 13 Fire Chiefs employed throughout the CRD municipalities cost in excess of \$1.5 million. Compare that with employing just one Fire Chief in Burnaby (\$170,000) or Surrey.
- 5 core CRD municipalities have 21 employees earning more than \$150,000 per annum each. In 2011 these costs totalled \$3.7 million. Total employee costs of 13 CRD municipalities was \$160 million. Surrey paid just \$149 million (note again that Surrey is 40% bigger).

Federal representation in Greater Victoria

- Three federal Members of Parliament (MPs) represent parts of several municipalities and have divided loyalties and priorities. For example, a recent widely-acknowledged priority focussed on the need for a new interchange at McKenzie/Trans-Canada Highway, the most congested intersection in the region. Instead, federal funds were allocated to an ill-conceived project situated in the peninsula riding of a federal cabinet minister.
- At the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), a significant lobby group to the federal government, Greater Victoria's separate municipalities are small players, despite the fact that

it is the 15th largest metropolitan population in Canada. Saanich, the largest local municipality, ranks #44, while Victoria is ranked #67. The cities of Halifax, London, Oshawa, and Saskatoon have a stronger voice with the FCM. Worse, there is no co-ordinated plan for establishing regional priorities, when individual councils have competing interests. See the Table at the end of this document for a ranking of city populations between 335,000 (total CRD municipalities) and 110,000 (Saanich, largest municipality within CRD) . This illustrates the higher ranking of cities with populations smaller than Greater Victoria.

Provincial representation in Greater Victoria

- 7 MLAs represent Greater Victoria, only two of which have constituency boundaries within a totally single municipality. The other 5 constituencies straddle two or three municipalities, each with competing needs and priorities. Regional priorities for capital works, arts and cultural facilities, tourism, bridges, highway and other infrastructure improvements are fractured in this environment.
- An amalgamated municipality could encompass at least 5 provincial Electoral Districts, with regional priorities determined by a single council. Thus, the 5+ MLAs would more clearly understand and respond to the priorities of a unified local government.

Regional planning needed

- Each municipality is required to prepare an Official Community Plan (OCP), and to provide some measure of urban growth and recognition of common regional interests. Through the *Regional Growth Strategy*, the CRD tries to co-ordinate these impacts. However, the CRD is primarily a co-coordinating body and only in unusual circumstances does it have the inclination or powers to interfere. As such, comprehensive planning to direct and fund the implementation of regional elements such as urban development, transit and major arterial roads is difficult, if not impossible.
- Individual municipal OCPs do not recognize the traffic impacts of major regional institutions and facilities. These include the University of Victoria, Royal Roads University, Camosun College (Interurban and Lansdowne), Victoria General Hospital, Royal Jubilee Hospital, Victoria International Airport and adjacent industrial area, Esquimalt Canadian Forces Base (CFB) and Dockyard, major retail centres , and other commercial areas that greatly affect where and how people move from home to work, shop or leisure.

- Individual municipalities support new retail centres, industrial parks and high density residential developments in order to increase local tax bases, not because they serve regional needs. There is a systematic failure to consider the cumulative and interactive impacts of such development, and a lack of regional planning and consideration over timing or locations.

Police and fire services

- In areas of public safety, the fragmentation of services is acute.
- A sharp focus on the effects of ineffective, disjointed police services occurred in 2007. Issues of lack of coordination, communication, and defined areas of responsibility were a major factor in the inadequate response to the 5 Lee family deaths in Oak Bay. The key recommendation of the 2007 *Verdict on Coroner's Inquest* into these deaths was the unification of police departments to work across jurisdictional boundaries as one unit.
- 5 municipalities have four separate police departments: Victoria-Esquimalt (combined), Saanich, Oak Bay and Central Saanich. The RCMP serve the remainder of Greater Victoria. Collectively, these police forces operate three dispatch centres.
- Integrated units for traffic, violence and major crimes have had limited effectiveness. Some municipalities have cancelled participation. For example, Victoria no longer participates in the Integrated Domestic Violence Unit (despite this being a major recommendation of the *Verdict on Coroner's Inquest* into the Lee deaths). Sidney and North Saanich no longer fund the Integrated Crime Unit. An amalgamated local government would eliminate the need for integrated units, because appropriate specialized units would be created under one police force.
- The Wally Opal *Missing Women Commission of Inquiry* report, described policing in Vancouver and the CRD as "patchwork". Opal cited a discussion paper on the benefits of regionalization, which he applied to include the CRD:

- "Improve communication and information sharing across municipal boundaries - particularly with respect to strategic and tactical information;
- Improve community relations by giving the community a more uniform view of policing resulting from consistent policies and procedures
- Promote equity in law enforcement since all citizens in a given region are provided the same quality of service and personnel;
- Provide uniformity in police accountability and the public complaints process;
- Better policing services because large size promotes flexibility and specialization;

- Promote standardized recruitment and training as well as opportunities for deployment and professional development and pay equity;
- Promote a regional approach to crime that takes into account the needs of the region as a whole and facilitates long range and contingency planning and research; and
- Create better coordination to respond to major incidents”

- Regionalization of police services is highly desirable, and is publicly supported by the Victoria Chief of Police, among others. But without municipal amalgamation, a new independent board would require representation from each municipality, as well as formulas for weighted voting and cost sharing – a half-measure at best. An amalgamated local government would simplify the governance of a regional police service.
- Approximately 1/3 of the municipalities in the CRD employ full time firefighters, 1/3 use a mix of employees and volunteers, and 1/3 use only volunteer firefighters. Despite the best coordinating efforts of the CRD, fire departments continue to operate three separate fire dispatch centres when one would be more operationally and financially efficient and effective. Turf issues have prevented the establishment of a single dispatch centre.
- Overall, the CRD currently has three 9-1-1 centres and three fire dispatch providers (excluding the federal Department of National Defence).

Regional Transportation

- Over the past 5 years, there has been considerable dialogue on transit (bus fares, scheduling, routes), highway overpasses, the need for more alternative transportation, and a proposal for light rapid transit (LRT). These discussions result in the usual quarrels over routes, timing, priorities and cost sharing, and little has changed.
- Rural councils complain of under-serviced bus routes, and often lack a voice in transit planning due to the makeup of the Victoria Region Transit Commission. Only 5 CRD municipalities are represented by officials on the 7-member Board. The municipalities of Oak Bay, View Royal, Central Saanich, North Saanich, Sidney, Langford, Sooke and the Highlands have no representation.
- Alternative transportation infrastructure is fragmented and of varying levels of quality. Cyclists experience bike lanes that terminate suddenly at municipal borders, lack of consistent signage and way-finding, and unpredictable destination facilities (bike racks, and parking). Improvements in regional connectivity are hampered due to the limited focus of

municipalities. Pedestrians must contend with a complete lack of sidewalks within some areas of the urban core and inadequate pedestrian crossing opportunities. Disabled accessibility is patchwork at best.

- There has been no funding commitment for a McKenzie/Trans Canada Highway overpass. The boundary of Esquimalt is three meters from the Craigflower Bridge on Admirals Road, but only Saanich and View Royal (with federal support) bear the \$15 million cost. The new bridge and road upgrades carry commuting traffic from the western communities to CFB Esquimalt and dockyard, downtown Victoria, and beyond. Saanich is faced with similar road improvements at the Wilkinson/Interurban intersection to resolve major traffic congestion destined for the regional institutions of Camosun College (Interurban campus) the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre, and the Vancouver Island Tech Park. None of these project examples are shared across Greater Victoria, nor recognize usage patterns of regional transportation corridors..
- The blue bridge crossing Victoria's inner harbour is a critical access route from the West Shore communities, View Royal, and Esquimalt to downtown, as well as access for Oak Bay and Saanich travelling west. Yet funding for the replacement bridge is provided only by the City of Victoria and the federal government. The CRD and adjacent municipalities agreed on the benefits of a rail link on the bridge, but refused to assist with funding. Without that help, the rail crossing cannot be replaced. This is a major setback for using the E & N Line as a commuter rail corridor, as the VIA rail line will not extend to downtown. A new and expensive LRT is proposed from the West Shore communities to the Saanich Uptown complex, while others argue for dedicated bus lanes down the Douglas corridor. Municipal leaders have differing opinions on priorities, and fail to agree on cost sharing.
- The CRD has been unable to deal with highway upgrades and the provision and expansion of transit services. As long as there are 13 mayors and councils arguing over transportation issues, change is unlikely. An underfunded transit system that doesn't serve present and future needs will continue. The provincial or federal government will not contribute funds to improve transit if 89 elected local officials cannot cooperate with each other to solve the growing nightmare of traffic gridlock. A unified and accountable administration is needed to make decisions on behalf of the region. Missed opportunities for establishing comprehensive priorities result in a massive financial loss to Greater Victoria.
- The lack of coherent and effective regional land use planning hampers efforts to prevent unintended suburban growth, creating further urban sprawl.

Protecting green space and the environment

- The region is characterized by biologically rich and diverse ecosystems. The sustained health of the region requires a balanced approach to competing patterns of land use and settlement. The region is obligated to the Province of BC to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution. Most municipal OCPs include provisions to protect and enhance environmental values, but each varies in approach, issues and priorities. Ecological initiatives must be viewed in a holistic manner to consider air sheds, watersheds, hillsides and marine environments, all of which transcend municipal boundaries.
- CRD Board members represent individual municipalities and not the broad interests of the region. The ongoing debate over sewer treatment siting, cost sharing, and methods, demonstrates the dysfunctional nature of a confusing and complex network municipal governance.

Arts, culture, tourism, and attractions

- Greater Victoria contains the capital city of British Columbia, a major local and tourist destination, yet the cultural, performing arts, and sports venues are substandard for an urban population of this size and status.
- For example, the Victoria Conference Centre, Save-on-Foods Memorial Arena, Beacon Hill Park and Royal Athletic Park are used by residents throughout the region, yet these facilities are funded by the City of Victoria.
- Residents of the other municipalities are “free riders”, as they regularly use, but do not contribute to these facilities.
- The Belleville Street ferry terminal, a major arrival point for tourists, requires an upgrade. All municipalities of Greater Victoria benefit from tourism and should share in the costs of providing adequate facilities for visitors and residents throughout the region.
- Large audience events, e.g. parades, music festivals, yacht races, Symphony Splash, Canada Day celebrations, etc. draw huge crowds to the downtown area. The City of Victoria generally receives little monetary assistance from other municipalities to offset the costs of extra policing for these regional events.

Excess regulation, inconsistency and complexity

- Municipalities within the CRD have over 522 separate zoning bylaws and 198 development zones with no unified, region wide planning process for housing, business, parking, or pets.

For example, secondary suites are permitted in some municipalities and not in others. Bylaws relating to business licenses, building development and renovation permits vary widely.

- This complexity adds to the cost of doing business for those who operate and provide services throughout the region, and the costs are ultimately passed on to the consumer.

The costs of lack of cooperation and infighting between municipalities

- Failure to cooperate between municipalities results in uncoordinated and unplanned service delivery and missed opportunities for improvement. There are also the hidden costs of constant bickering, infighting, competition, and obfuscation that result in massive overall costs to residents across the region.
- Estimates of the costs of this inter-municipal dysfunctional behaviour have yet to be made, but intuitively it is large. Just follow the debates on cost sharing the blue bridge replacement, memorial arena upgrade, transit and sewage treatment.

What about the rest of BC?

1. Alberni and Port Alberni merged in 1967.
2. Salmon Arm, Nanaimo, Kelowna, Prince George and Kamloops each amalgamated their borders during the 1970s. In some instances adjacent unincorporated communities merged with them.
3. Abbotsford and Matsqui successfully amalgamated in 1995.
4. Fort Nelson-Liard Regional District and Fort Nelson merged in 2009 to become the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality.
5. The Langley Reunification Association is urging the Township of Langley (population 106,000) and the City of Langley (26,000) to study the merits of amalgamation after a 57-year separation.

Who would be amalgamated?

- The information presented in this document does not presume or presuppose any specific boundaries or new municipal borders.

- There is a call for unified municipal government, at minimum for the urban core, home to 70% of the population.
- Others recognize a separate identity for the peninsula and the western communities. Sooke serves as a town centre surrounded by large unorganized areas.
- The wishes and needs of rural areas must be handled separately, but making decisions about boundaries is premature.
- All potential models and boundaries need further study.
- The challenge is to confirm that there is a public will for municipal reform, central leadership and governance.

Does amalgamation mean loss of local control?

- No. Amalgamation could include provision for the establishment of a form of ward representation system, with only the Mayor elected "at large".
- Under a ward system, councillors are elected by various communities. Alternatively, a partial ward system with a mix of "at large" and ward councillors could be considered.
- Ward representation would ensure that the interests of neighbourhoods within a larger municipality are represented.
- Citizen advisory councils could also be established to assist ward councillors in matters such as initial vetting of rezoning applications, major building permits and small subdivision applications, etc. The advisory councils would augment the role of community associations.
- Studies would be required to identify common interests prior to formalizing ward boundaries.

Does amalgamation mean paying bills for others?

- No. For example, Ottawa and Halifax, post amalgamation, have initiated separate city wide and local area levies. In Ottawa, city wide property taxes fund transportation, roads, bike trails, parks, libraries, recreation facilities, planning and development, and social housing. Differential local area property levies are used to cover services to specific areas for volunteer fire department activities, solid waste, kitchen scraps (where applicable) and may vary between different areas of the same municipality. The cost of regional policing and fire services are separated.

- In Greater Victoria, management of major infrastructure projects, such as the CRD Core Area Liquid Waste Management Plan (CALWMP), could be taken over by the amalgamated municipality, and costs would be treated as a local area levy.

Is amalgamation possible?

- Yes. The Province of British Columbia Ministry of Communities, Sports and Cultural Development is responsible for local government and will implement amalgamation when there is significant public support.
- The Minister also has legislative authority to approve voting by residents in affected areas by means of a referendum or plebiscite.
- **Amalgamation Yes**, will be encouraging each council within the CRD to petition their electorate during the 2014 municipal election. Where there is interest by local councils and communities, the Province will fund studies to assess options and issues.
- An affirmative result will demonstrate that residents desire change, and facilitate further study of amalgamation models. A second binding referendum would follow, the successful outcome of which would require the Minister to implement the chosen amalgamation model.

Note: Municipal financial data was obtained from Statements of Financial Information filed by the applicable municipalities and provided to BC Ministry of Finance. Other information is readily available from CRD, municipal and provincial websites.

Ranking of Cities In Canada with Populations between 335,000 (13 CRD municipalities) and 109,000 (Saanich, largest CRD municipality)

Rank	City	Prov.		Population
17	Vaughan	Ont	City	288301
18	Gatineau	Que	ville	265349
19	Longueuil	Que	ville	231409
20	Burnaby	BC	city	223218
21	Saskatoon	Sask	city	222189
22	Kitchener	Ont	city	219153
23	Windsor	Ont	city	210891
24	Regina	Sask	city	193100
25	Richmond	BC	city	190473
26	Richmond Hill	Ont	town	185541
27	Oakville	Ont	town	182520
28	Burlington	Ont	city	175779
29	Greater Sudbury	Ont	city	160274
30	Sherbrooke	Que	ville	154601
31	Oshawa	Ont	city	149607
32	Saguenay	Que	ville	144746
33	Lévis	Que	ville	138769
34	Barrie	Ont	city	135711

35	Abbotsford	BC	city	133497
36	St. Catharines	Ont	city	131400
37	Trois-Rivières	Que	ville	131338
38	Cambridge	Ont	city	126748
39	Coquitlam	BC	city	126456
40	Kingston	Ont	city	123363
41	Whitby	Ont	town	122022
42	Guelph	Ont	city	121688
43	Kelowna	BC	city	117312

Revision 12 –Apr 22, 2013