

Saanich and Victoria:

What Council changes would result from a municipal merger?

SUMMARY.....Pages 2 - 3

2018 Voting Statistics.....Page 4

Council Comparisons with Large BC Municipalities.....Page 5

Municipalities Where Serving Council Members Live.....Page 6

Voting Legislation.....Page 7

Summary: Some conclusions can be drawn about the makeup of a new council if Saanich and Victoria voters approved amalgamation. Each municipality currently has a mayor and 8 councillors. Section 118(1)(a) of the *Community Charter* sets the maximum number of councillors at 8, excluding the mayor. If the Saanich - Victoria Citizens' Assembly recommends a merger, and if the two councils put the merger to a Provincially authorized binding vote, and if a majority of the voters in both municipalities vote in favour of merging, then a new municipality would be created. Following the merger, residents of the new Municipality would elect¹ a new council consisting of a Mayor and 8 Councillors (the new Council could enact a bylaw after their election to increase the number of Councillors to 10, if they so desired (see *Community Charter* Section 118(3), & (5)) those additional council positions would be filled at next local election).

All but one² of the more than 150 BC municipalities use an At-large mechanism to elect the Mayor and councillors (Section 53(1) of the *Local Government Act* specifies that councillors be elected "At-large" - Section 53(2) permits a council to pass a bylaw allowing some or all of the councillors to be elected on a neighbourhood constituency basis). Initially, the 8 councillors of the newly merged municipality would be elected "At-Large" across the former municipal boundaries. This would significantly increase the number of votes needed for election, as candidates for council would have to appeal to voters across the new voter base.

How would that voter base change? In the October 2018 municipal election, Saanich had 85,004 eligible voters, of which 32,538 cast a ballot - a 38.3% turnout. Victoria had 66,243 eligible voters, of which 29,707 voted - a 44.8% turnout. While Saanich had a lower voter turnout, Saanich voters cast **2,831** more ballots than Victoria. If Saanich voter turnout were the same as Victoria's, the number of ballots cast in Saanich would have been even higher.

Had the two municipalities merged prior to the 2018 election, and assuming the same voter turnout, the total number of ballots cast in the combined new municipality would have been 62,245, a significantly larger voter base than the current Saanich and Victoria voter bases. Getting elected to council in an amalgamated municipality would require all candidates, particularly incumbents, to broaden their base of support across former municipal boundaries. Also, with the number of councillors capped at 8, competition for Council seats would increase significantly.

1 The existing councils would remain in office until their term expired or a new Council was elected, whichever came first.

2 Lake Country has 6 Councillors, 2 are elected at large and 4 are elected from specific geographic areas of the Municipality - see: <https://www.lakecountry.bc.ca/en/local-government/mayor-and-council.aspx>.

The revised 2018 *Local Election Campaign Financing Act* has made campaign financing less of an issue than in the past. Contributions can now be made only by eligible individuals³. While incumbent councillors have name recognition that tends to favour them re-election, the necessity of having to win votes from a much larger voter base means they must earn broader public support. Expense caps would increase based on the larger voter population, rising to roughly the same as Richmond and Burnaby (both of which would still be slightly larger than the amalgamated Saanich/Victoria), however campaign financing would be less expensive than it was prior to 2018.

The likelihood of a majority of candidates from one former municipality taking control of both is highly unlikely as they would need to appeal to voters in both former municipalities.

A merger could encourage new candidates who have not previously run for public office. An example of this is Councillor Patricia Ross of Abbotsford, who was first elected to the new amalgamated Abbotsford Council in 1994, following the merger of the City of Abbotsford with the District of Matsqui. In their 2018 election, Councillor Ross topped the polls with 55.2% of the votes cast, a strong indication of her wide appeal to Abbotsford voters based on her performance over 24 years on council.

The reduction in councillors would not lead to a change in the role of the new Council. Day to day operations of any municipality is the responsibility of the chief administrative officer (CAO), the management staff and municipal employees. Councils pass bylaws, set policies, establish budgets, determine land use policies and conduct public hearings on developments; background work is done by staff. While the ratio of residents per councillor would increase, there is no evidence that this would result in less accessible councillors, nor to public input at council meetings and/or public hearings. The City of Vancouver, with 631,486 residents and 10 councillors, provides for resident input at council meetings⁴. Thus, even with a ratio of 63,148 residents per councillor in Vancouver, the opportunity for residents input is similar to that in Saanich and Victoria.

This represents only one aspect of amalgamation, albeit an important one, which is often raised.

3 BC resident and Canadian Citizen or permanent resident; direct business & union contributions are now prohibited.

4 see: <https://vancouver.ca/your-government/speak-at-city-council-meetings.aspx>

2018 Voting Statistics:

Saanich & Victoria Municipal Electorates as of October 20, 2018 (Last local elections):

<u>Municipality:</u>	<u># of Eligible Voters:</u>	<u># Who Voted:</u>	<u>Turnout %:</u>
Saanich	85,004	32,538	38.3%
Victoria	66,243	29,707	44.8%
Combined Totals	151,247	62,245	

Saanich had **18,770** more eligible voters than Victoria in 2018.

2,831 more electors voted in Saanich than in Victoria in 2018.

The following Sixteen (16) Councillors and two Mayors from the two Municipalities were elected in **2018**, listed by vote count (from most to least votes):

(Victoria Councillor Laurel Collins was elected as a Federal MP in October 2019 & resigned her council seat).

<u>Municipality:</u>	<u>Council Member:</u>	<u>Votes:</u>	<u># who Voted</u>
1. Saanich	Rebecca Mercereau	18,416	32,538
2. Saanich	Colin Plant	17,749	32,538
3. Saanich	Ned Taylor	16,047	32,538
4. Saanich	Susan Brice	15,981	32,538
5. Saanich	Mayor Fred Haynes	15,312	32,538
6. Victoria	Ben Isitt	14,205	29,707
7. Saanich	Zac De Vries	13,631	32,538
8. Saanich	Judy Brownoff	13,594	32,538
9. Victoria	Jeremy Loveday	13,239	29,707
10. Saanich	Nathalie Chambers	13,080	32,538
11. Victoria	Laurel Collins	12,842	29,707
12. Victoria	Mayor Lisa Helps	12,642	29,707
13. Victoria	Geoff Young	12,184	29,707
14. Victoria	Sarah Potts	11,977	29,707
15. Saanich	Karen Harper	11,713	32,538
16. Victoria	Charlayne Thornton-Joe	10,678	29,707
17. Victoria	Sharmarke Dubow	10,590	29,707
18. Victoria	Marianne Alto	10,245	29,707

Sources:

Saanich 2018 Local Election Results – https://bc.localections.ca/election_results/114_2018_results.html

Victoria 2018 Local Election Results – https://bc.localections.ca/election_results/142_2018_results.html

Council Comparisons in Larger BC Municipalities:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>2016 Population: (Last Census)</u>	<u>Number of Councillors:</u>	<u>Population per Councillor:</u>
Abbotsford	141,397	8	17,674
Burnaby	232,755	8	29,094
Coquitlam	139,284	8	17,410
Delta	102,238	6	12,780
Kamloops	90,280	8	11,285
Kelowna	127,380	8	15,922
Langley District	117,285	6	19,547
Nanaimo	90,504	8	11,313
Prince George	74,003	8	9,250
Richmond	198,309	8	24,788
Surrey	517,887	8	64,735
Vancouver	631,486	10	63,148
Saanich	114,148	8	14,268
Victoria	85,792	8	10,724
<i>Saanich/Victoria Combined:</i>	<i>199,940</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>24,992</i>

Sources:

Abbotsford Council – https://www.abbotsford.ca/city_hall/mayor_and_council/city_council.htm

Burnaby Council – <https://www.burnaby.ca/Our-City-Hall/Mayor---Council.html>

Coquitlam Council – <https://www.coquitlam.ca/city-hall/mayor-and-council/Mayor-and-Council.aspx>

Delta Council – <http://www.delta.ca/your-government/mayor-council>

Kamloops Council – <https://www.kamloops.ca/city-hall/city-government/city-council/council-contact-information-and-bios>

Kelowna Council – <https://www.kelowna.ca/city-hall/council/mayor-council-biographies>

Langley District –

Nanaimo Council – <https://www.nanaimo.ca/your-government/city-council>

Prince George – <https://www.princegeorge.ca/City%20Hall/Pages/MayorandCouncil.aspx>

Richmond Council – <https://www.richmond.ca/cityhall/council.htm>

Surrey Council – <https://www.richmond.ca/cityhall/council.htm>

Vancouver Council – <https://vancouver.ca/your-government/city-councillors.aspx>

Municipalities Where Serving Saanich & Victoria Council Members Live:

<u>Municipality:</u>	<u>Council Member:</u>	<u>Resides in:</u>	<u>Reference:</u>
Saanich	Mayor Fred Haynes	Saanich	See Below
Saanich	Councillor Susan Brice	Saanich	“ “
Saanich	Councillor Judy Brownoff	Saanich	“ “
Saanich	Councillor Nathalie Chambers	Saanich	“ “
Saanich	Councillor Zac De Vries	Saanich	“ “
Saanich	Councillor Karen Harper	Saanich	“ “
Saanich	Councillor Rebecca Mercereau	Saanich	“ “
Saanich	Councillor Colin Plant	Saanich	“ “
Saanich	Councillor Ned Taylor	Saanich	“ “
Victoria	Mayor Lisa Helps	Victoria	“ “
Victoria	Councillor Marianne Alto	Saanich	“ “
Victoria	Councillor Sharmark Dubow	Esquimalt	“ “
Victoria	Councillor Ben Isitt	Victoria	“ “
Victoria	Councillor Jeremy Loveday	Esquimalt	“ “
Victoria	Councillor Sarah Potts	Victoria	“ “
Victoria	Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe	Saanich	“ “
Victoria	Councillor Geoff Young	Victoria	“ “
Victoria	Vacant (formerly Laurel Collins)	By-Election scheduled for Apr 4, 2020	

Sources:

Saanich Financial Disclosures:

<https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/local-government/mayor-council/council-remuneration-and-expenses.html>

Victoria Financial Disclosures:

<http://opendata.victoria.ca/search?q=financial%20disclosure%20statement>

Voting Legislation

Voter Eligibility in BC – Sections 64(1) & 65 (1) Local Government Act:

In order to be eligible to vote in general local elections or by-elections as a resident or **non-resident property elector**, a person must:

- Be 18 years of age or older when they register to vote, or 18 years or older on general voting day
- Be a Canadian citizen
- Have been a resident of B. C. for at least six months before they register to vote
- Have either **lived** or owned property in the jurisdiction in which they intend to vote for at least 30 days before they register to vote
- Not be disqualified under the *Local Government Act*, or any other enactment, or by law from voting in a local election

Non-Resident Property Electors – Local Government Act – Section 66

When a person lives in one jurisdiction and owns property in one or more other jurisdictions, they may vote once in each of the other jurisdictions where they own property -- as long as they meet the voter eligibility requirements above.

If a person owns a property with one or more other individuals, only one person is eligible to vote as the non-resident property elector for that property. One owner must be designated, in writing, by the majority of other property owners, in order to vote.

A person cannot vote on behalf of a corporation, or as a non-resident property elector, based on a property owned wholly or in part by a corporation.

Students

Students who live in one jurisdiction and attend an educational institution in a jurisdiction different from their usual place of residence may vote only once--either in the jurisdiction where they attend school or in the jurisdiction that is their usual place of residence.

Here are a Couple of voting examples:

Situation 1: If a person currently living in Saanich, owns a property in Victoria that person can vote once in each municipality provided he/she meets the above voter requirements. If Saanich and Victoria merged, that same person would only be allowed to vote once (one vote per municipality).

Local Government Act Section 124 (1) A person must not vote more than once in the same election.

Situation 2: If a person currently lives in Saanich and owns a property **jointly in Victoria** with another individual (who is also not a Victoria resident), only one of the two owners of the Victoria property may vote in Victoria. They can, however, each vote in the municipality where they live outside Victoria.

Situation 2: If a person currently lives in Saanich and rents a property in Victoria for business purposes under a “Triple Net” lease (where the owner of the property requires the lessee to pay the taxes), the renter (lessee) is not entitled to a vote. Only the property owner may vote (this situation would not change after a merger).