

Presentation to District of Saanich Council on citizens' assembly with Victoria April 23, 2018

Good Evening Mayor and Council,

The leadership from the two largest municipalities on the South Island is to be commended and applauded.

The joint motion from Mayors Atwell and Helps before you tonight is a beginning.

This proposed upcoming collaborative work between Saanich and Victoria is not divisive nor should it be construed as such.

No outcome is predetermined. You, on behalf of your resident, are only tasked with developing a question with Victoria Council to ask your citizenry. Your citizens will then decide.

The possible outcome of the dialogue with Victoria will be a process which provides information, encourages dialogue, thoughtful discourse and results in positive outcomes.

Tonight, you, as the elected officials are agreeing to embark on a deliberative process that will untangle this longstanding, nagging and divisive issue.

It is critically important to remember that tonight you are not deciding the outcome. Tonight you are not voting on whether to amalgamate.

Tonight you are deciding on whether to embark on a process to ask your resident if they think that 'better, more effective and accountable governance is possible' - then, systematically working with the province, you are determining the path forward.

In October your voter will cast their informed vote in favour or against the proposed process.

Potentially, followed by another vote further down the road on further steps forward.

I encourage you to harness the wisdom of the people, encourage collaboration, conversation and respectful dialogue with evidence based information and data that in turn, will develop innovative, thoughtful and successful outcomes.

I know that each and every one of you has been a part of a deliberative and democratic process where animosity and ideology were put aside and people listened to one another. Sadly it is a rare occurrence. Instead we have been accustomed to dualistic thinking, winners and losers, black and white.

On the topic of governance, with its myriad of subtleties we must work together and listen to everyone.

A citizens' assembly provides the opportunity for you to have your voters participate in a thorough, fair and inclusive process. Your voters will be given the opportunity to provide constructive advice, perspective and sensitivity that this issue requires.

Ultimately, your voter, with thorough information, will decide.

Democracy in action.

You are putting your citizen at the centre. Encouraging them to participate meaningfully in the public decisions that affect their lives.

It is what your citizens are owed. This is a small step forward. Your citizenry expects no less.

Honour them. Listen to them. Respect them.

The alternative, that may keep the naysayers on the fringe, is to deny your voters and yourself information.

In casting your vote tonight please remember you are not voting for or against amalgamation.

You are voting for the opportunity to begin a dialogue with your neighbouring colleagues in Victoria.

Shellie Gudgeon
Chair
Amalgamation Yes