

# Island Voices: Vote no to Saanich-Victoria amalgamation

Since arriving in Victoria in 1996, I have heard ongoing discussion concerning the need for a study of amalgamation in our region.

These discussions led to the creation of an organization titled Amalgamation Yes. I was later invited to be a member of Amalgamation Yes to assist the committee with its considerations based on my experience and involvement with creation of regions in Ontario and later in the creation of the new City of Toronto, as city manager of Scarborough and vice-chairman of the Greater Toronto Co-ordinating Committee made up of all the chief administrative officers of the major cities in Greater Toronto, which gave advice to the mayors' committee.

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Amalgamation Yes in Victoria has, for some years, had a major thrust and objective of wanting the province to undertake a major study of amalgamation of the whole of the region and its municipalities, which resulted during the last election in a large number of voters in this region wanting a needed major study to be undertaken by the province.

Amalgamation Yes continued its work, and the then-premier publicly agreed that a study should be done. Later, however, with the appointment of Peter Fassbender as minister of municipal affairs, the government decided there would be no amalgamation study done by the province in Greater Victoria.

We, the public of this region, have been advised recently that Amalgamation Yes has agreed with the mayors of Saanich and Victoria that a study should now be undertaken of the amalgamation of these two municipalities. This amalgamation question is on the ballot for Oct. 20, based on action and initiative by the two mayors and Amalgamation Yes, with the hope it will be

approved.

This Amalgamation Yes position is far removed and its impact is far different from the group's position since it was created.

In my opinion, if such a study is approved by the majority of voters in Saanich and Victoria and such action leads to amalgamation of Saanich and Victoria, it will have two negative effects.

First, there would be little financial benefit.

Second, it would eliminate the needed study of amalgamation of the 13 municipalities and creation of a true capital city, properly managed and effective in its role as an economic-development generator. An amalgamated city would, like other major capital cities in the country, provide great service to its public with efficiency and effectiveness.

Finally, the headline on the recent well-written commentary by James D. Anderson, "Bigger might be better for region's municipalities" (Aug. 4) speaks to many issues concerning good governance. My position is simply that we should not approach a study of amalgamation on a piecemeal basis because of my experience in the management of large cities and regions and my conclusion that "bigger will be better."

We should undertake a study of amalgamation of Greater Victoria, as Amalgamation Yes has urged for years.

Donald Roughley has served as city manager in Victoria and in the Ontario cities of Waterloo and Scarborough.

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