

Readers choose amalgamation - by Ian Dutton - Times Colonist staff - Times Colonist graphic

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

The most popular choice among readers was Plan B, amalgamation of the Peninsula communities, three or four core municipalities, View Royal and the Western Communities, and Sooke/Metchosin. That option drew 327 votes. As well as cutting down on municipal government, many favored amalgamation of school districts as well. Others wrote to say that municipal amalgamation could start with four regions and later become one big municipality. Municipal Affairs Minister Darlene Marzari is on record as saying that amalgamation will not be imposed on any municipalities. And local politicians supporting amalgamation would be putting themselves out of work.

FULL TEXT

Greater Victoria residents overwhelmingly want consolidation of local government, according to a mail-in poll. More than 550 out of just over 600 people who returned a clip-out quiz on amalgamation options want fewer municipal jurisdictions.

The most popular choice among readers was Plan B, amalgamation of the Peninsula communities, three or four core municipalities, View Royal and the Western Communities, and Sooke/Metchosin. That option drew 327 votes. Variations on the plan have included Esquimalt either with the core group or with the Western Communities. Next was amalgamation of the entire region from Sooke to Sidney into one municipality. There were 224 supporters for that option.

The status quo is just fine with 57 of respondents.

As well as cutting down on municipal government, many favored amalgamation of school districts as well. Others wrote to say that municipal amalgamation could start with four regions and later become one big municipality. Some of the comments reflected strongly held views. "In a radius of 20 miles (hour) we have 12 mayors when only three are necessary. How stupid! Amalgamation is inevitable so let's get on with it NOW," says Lionel Speller of Victoria.

Or, "We lived in Winnipeg before and after amalgamation. Unicity proved to be the best thing that ever happened," from Lillian Main.

Doreen Mead wants it made clear where she stands. "Yes. Yes. Yes. It should have been done years ago," she writes.

Or Robert Poulin - "Option 2 for now, Option 3 will be for the next generation to do." "The sooner the better," says William Smith of Victoria, and P. McKean says, "I think doing away with smaller municipalities is inevitable, so why not do it NOW."

The McCarters from Victoria were in agreement on this issue, too. "We have lived from sea to sea in Canada. We were quite amazed on settling here to find that the Capital Region has such a fragmented and expensive government."

On the other side of the coin is an unsigned lament. "The area is already on a destruction path from the pressure of development and realtors who go offshore and out of province peddling their wares. "One day the lifeboat will sink under the e pressure of the euphemism called development."

Or how about N.C.'s note: "There is enough big government now! Smaller units are basically the same cost and

provide citizens with access to their local representatives, so are more democratic." Another reader says, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Oak Bay is just fine the way it is." But however much the people want amalgamation, they are unlikely to get it just by asking for it. Municipal Affairs Minister Darlene Marzari is on record as saying that amalgamation will not be imposed on any municipalities. And local politicians supporting amalgamation would be putting themselves out of work.

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