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Memo

To: **Mayor and Council**

From: **Mayor Dean Murdock**

Date: **June 1, 2026**

Subject: **Ballot Question Regarding Amalgamation**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse the following question for the 2026 General Local Election Ballot:

"Do you support Saanich and Victoria becoming one municipality?"

PURPOSE

At meetings of both Councils in September of 2025, staff were directed to work on the ballot question to be approved by both Councils for the 2026 General Local Election along with obtaining approval from the Province. The Province of BC provided 1/3 of the funds towards the costs of the Citizens' Assembly process as any question pertaining to amalgamation for the ballot would require a Ministerial Order to proceed.

The Mayors of Saanich and Victoria met with the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs to seek a Ministerial Order advancing the ballot question to its citizens regarding amalgamation. The Minister advised that at this time she is not prepared to authorize a binding referendum question noting financial and transitional information was not addressed in the Citizens' Assembly process. The Minister noted that a non-binding question could be posed to the public in conjunction with the upcoming General Local Elections in October 2026.

It is important to note the Minister's comments in the letter, that the Province of BC would be responsible to undertake consultation on a proposed amalgamation with affected First Nations as part of the process. As part of the Citizens' Assembly process and following release of the report, Saanich and Victoria asked local First Nations if they had concerns about posing a ballot question about amalgamation. Most of the First Nations advised that they would be supportive of a ballot question and would look to engage with the municipalities following the results of the election.

The Citizens' Assembly, a group of 48 representatives from Saanich and Victoria strongly recommended that the question of amalgamation be posed to the electors as part of the 2026 General Local Election.

This memo is a path forward which presents a simplified question for the 2026 General Local Election to gauge elector support to pursue amalgamation further, as recommended by the Citizens' Assembly.

The recommendation is that Council endorse the following question for the 2026 General Local Election Ballot:

“Do you support Saanich and Victoria becoming one municipality?”

Dean Murdock
Mayor