



April 29, 2026

Reference: 189890

Her Worship Marianne Alto
Mayor, City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC V8W 1P6
Email: mayor@victoria.ca

His Worship Dean Murdock
Mayor, District of Saanich
770 Vernon Avenue
Victoria BC V8X 2W7
Email: mayor@saanich.ca

Dear Mayors Alto and Murdock:

Thank you for meeting with me on December 17, 2025, and April 1, 2026, to discuss the Saanich–Victoria Citizens’ Assembly recommendation and your respective Council’s interests in exploring options for an amalgamation question on the 2026 general local election ballot. I also acknowledge your joint correspondence of October 17, 2025, requesting clarity on the steps required for a Ministerial Order to enable a binding vote.

I appreciate the significant effort undertaken through the Citizens’ Assembly process and recognize the interest in honouring the significant work that went into that process through further consideration of amalgamation. From our recent meeting, I understand you are considering the use of a non-binding ballot question in 2026 to gauge public interest in advancing further work.

Local governments have the authority to seek the opinion of electors on matters of community interest, including through a non-binding ballot question, and do not require provincial approval to do so. As demonstrated in the 2018 general local elections, Saanich and Victoria previously used a non-binding question to gauge public interest in establishing a Citizens’ Assembly. A similar approach in 2026 could be used as a “temperature check” to confirm whether there is continued community interest in pursuing amalgamation.

Should you proceed in this manner, you may wish to consider how the question is administered alongside the general local elections, including whether it is presented on a separate ballot, to ensure clarity and minimize any procedural risk.

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For clarity, the outcome of a non-binding vote would not create any legal obligations for the Province. While an affirmative result could signal that public interest remains and that there is support for the consideration of further work, it would not constitute a decision on amalgamation or provide authority to proceed – nor would it replace the need for a formal request to the Province or the requirements associated with a binding referendum.

Before I would be in a position to consider ordering a future binding vote, additional work would be required to support informed decision-making and meet provincial obligations. This would include more detailed analysis of financial implications, transition considerations, and service impacts.

As we have discussed, the Province has a duty to consult with the area First Nations and would undertake this process in parallel. This work would proceed alongside any further study to help ensure that the impacts are considered and that electors understand the full implications of amalgamation.

As you consider next steps, you will want to ensure that any non-binding question clearly reflects its purpose as a measure of public interest in pursuing amalgamation rather than a decision on amalgamation itself (i.e. given the limited level of impact analysis that is currently available). In this regard, the proposed question (“Do you support Saanich and Victoria becoming one municipality?”) may not clearly signal to the electorate that additional work and information on costs and governance will be required in order for the Minister to order a vote. Ministry staff would be pleased to arrange a meeting to discuss potential question wording and next steps, if helpful.

Thank you for your thoughtful leadership. I look forward to continuing this dialogue with Saanich and Victoria, and to working collaboratively to determine an approach that best supports informed local decision-making. My staff and I remain available to discuss these matters further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Boyle', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christine Boyle
Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs