

Final Report and Recommendation of the Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly

"Some of us have lived our whole lives here; others have recently arrived...We volunteered because we each saw this as an opportunity to give something back. We were curious to learn more about local government and become more informed about the way the two municipalities are managed. While we come from different backgrounds, we shared a desire to make a meaningful contribution to our communities."

**DUNCAN-
NORTH
COWICHAN
CITIZENS'
ASSEMBLY**

dnc-cama.ca

May 2017



MUNICIPALITY OF
NORTH
Cowichan

Publication information

Published by MASS LBP on behalf of the City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan

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Members of the Citizens' Assembly meet on their first day, January 21, 2017



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Chair's Note

I am pleased to convey to Duncan and North Cowichan Councillors the report of the Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly.

It has been a special privilege to chair this Assembly and I would like recognize the generous efforts of the Assembly members who worked very diligently on behalf of all local residents.

Each member contributed some fifty hours of unpaid volunteer time, and cumulatively the members invested some 1,800 hours in examining whether the two municipalities should amalgamate. In this regard, I believe they performed a valuable community service.

As anyone familiar with this issue will understand, the Assembly's task was not easy. It involved learning about the role of local government, the experiences of other municipalities that have pursued amalgamation, the fiscal outlooks of both municipalities, and the likely financial impact of amalgamation. Critically, it also involved considering the perspectives of some twenty invited guests who spoke to the Assembly and more than 140 residents who attended two public meetings.

The Assembly members know that their decision to endorse amalgamation will be closely scrutinized and debated.

Proponents of amalgamation often claim that combining governments and harmonizing local services will produce efficiencies and savings for taxpayers. As the Assembly learned, however, amalgamating Duncan and North Cowichan is unlikely to produce significant savings or have more than a modest impact on local taxes.

Residents may be surprised by this conclusion, but according to the findings of the accompanying technical report, the negligible financial impact of amalgamation is itself a consequence of the efficiency with which both municipalities currently provide services, and the extent of co-operation that already exists between them.

Without a strong fiscal rationale, the Assembly nevertheless believes that Cowichan Valley residents will benefit from merging their local governments. Members argue that Duncan and North Cowichan will be stronger together: harmonized bylaws will help businesses; a single official community plan will lead to more rational and coordinated land use policies; and over time a shared vision for the Cowichan Valley will produce a consistent and beneficial approach to growth. They are also

confident that an amalgamated municipality can promote and respect the distinct identities of the many Cowichan Valley communities.

With the delivery of this report, it falls now to both Councils to consider the merits of amalgamation. Should the Councils opt to endorse amalgamation, residents will have their say in a referendum. In this respect, the tabling of the Assembly's report constitutes only an early step towards amalgamation.

Finally, I would like to recognize the professionalism of municipal staff who supported the Assembly. In every instance they worked to safeguard the integrity and impartiality of the process, and provide the Assembly with the information its members required to perform their task.

Regardless of whether you agree or disagree with the Assembly's recommendation, I hope that everyone will recognize the Assembly's work as an important contribution to local democracy and active citizenship, as well as a successful demonstration of the ability of citizens to play a constructive role in local affairs.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. MacLeod', followed by a long horizontal line.

Peter MacLeod

Chair, Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly

Did you know?

Together again: After thirty-eight years as one municipality, Duncan separated from North Cowichan in 1912. In the 1970s, the two municipalities considered amalgamating but decided to remain separate. The Citizens' Assembly was convened after residents in both municipalities endorsed a proposal to study amalgamation during a referendum in November 2014.

One foot in both communities: Residents often live and work in different municipalities, crossing the boundary between North Cowichan and Duncan each day. A car travelling along the highway through Duncan from the Silver Bridge to the high school passes through three jurisdictions: North Cowichan, Cowichan Tribes, City of Duncan and back into North Cowichan. The same car travelling from Allenby Road to the high school passes through six: those above, plus Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) Areas D and E.

A history of co-operation: Duncan and North Cowichan already work together to provide a range of shared services including water and sewage to some homes and recreation for many residents throughout the regional district. Emergency Preparedness is a CVRD service.

Efficient government: Even when combined, the costs of running both Duncan and North Cowichan Municipal Councils are on par with other municipalities of a comparable size.

Similar taxes: Duncan and North Cowichan charge comparable residential property tax rates, which could be harmonized with only a modest impact on annual bills.

Two cheers for our two fire halls: The adjacent Duncan and North Cowichan fire halls provide complementary services. Combining the structures would produce no meaningful savings. Currently, all Cowichan Valley firefighters are volunteers.

Small but mighty: At 2.07 square kilometers, the City of Duncan is the smallest city by area in Canada.

A similar story: The City of Chilliwack and the District of Chilliwack amalgamated in 1984, after having separated like Duncan and North Cowichan nearly a century before, in 1908.

Not where you think: These facilities are often associated with Duncan, but in fact are outside Duncan's city limits: Cowichan Secondary School, Vancouver Island University, Island Savings Centre, Cowichan Aquatic Centre, Chesterfield Track, Duncan Christian School, Cowichan District Hospital, Superstore, White Spot, WalMart and all three Tim Horton's.

Time out: There has not been a municipal amalgamation in British Columbia since Abbotsford and Matsqui successfully merged in 1996.

Communities decide: After a series of controversial mergers in the 1970s and '80s in Nanaimo, Kamloops, and Kelowna, the province established a "Community Charter" in 2003 with provisions to ensure communities led and supported any proposed amalgamations.

Working like a region: Both the City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan sit on the board of the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), a unique-to-BC branch of local government that was created in 1965 when the province was divided into twenty-seven regions that include both incorporated and unincorporated areas to provide regionally-based planning and shared services. The CVRD stretches north to south from Ladysmith to the Malahat, and east to west from Thetis, Penelakut, and Valdez Islands to Lake Cowichan, Youbou, Caycuse, and the west coast of Vancouver Island beyond the Carmanah Valley and Nitinat Lake.

How many people? In 2011, Duncan's population was 4,944 and North Cowichan's population was 29,676. By 2046, Duncan's population is predicted to be 5,900 and North Cowichan's population is predicted to be 40,800.

First Peoples: Cowichan Tribes is the largest First Nation band in BC, with a population almost exactly the size of Duncan: 4,957. One half of band members live off-reserve, with 10 percent living off-island. A further 2,000 Indigenous people belong to one of six additional First Nations within the boundaries of the CVRD: Halalt, Penelakut, Stzuminus, Lyackson, Ditidaht, Malahat.

Who governs? Each municipality has six Councillors and one mayor, each of whom is elected every four years.

Who works where? The City of Duncan employs 32 staff and 5 students. The Municipality of North Cowichan employs 263 staff and 35 students. According to the technical report, combined staff could all be housed in North Cowichan's municipal building.

About the Assembly

The Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation was a unique exercise in local democracy that provided residents with an opportunity to develop and evaluate the case for amalgamating the City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan. The Assembly was an arms-length process that was commissioned by the elected Councils of both municipalities. Thirty-six area residents served on the Assembly, which met over six days between January and April, 2017.

Over the past decade, new growth has blurred the boundaries between Duncan and North Cowichan. Many residents routinely drive between the two jurisdictions several times during a normal day. Some municipal services are already jointly administered, and others could be combined. This has prompted both Councils to ask whether the time is right to consider amalgamation. The creation of the Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation is a first step toward examining this issue.

Mandate: The Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation was a deliberative process intended to provide residents with an opportunity to actively participate in developing and evaluating the case for amalgamating the City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan. The Citizens' Assembly was designed as an impartial advisory body that worked to represent all residents and exemplify high standards of transparency, accountability, and robust civic participation.

The Citizens' Assembly was tasked by the City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan to learn about the needs and interests of residents; examine the implications of creating a new, amalgamated municipal structure; and advise local Councillors and their administrations on the conditions under which the municipalities should proceed. Specifically, the Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation was asked to develop:

- A set of values which describe their aspirations for good local governance;
- A list of issues which they believe need to be satisfactorily resolved for municipal amalgamation to merit consideration; and
- A detailed recommendation concerning municipal amalgamation, including any conditions to be satisfied if a merger was to proceed.

Membership: The members of the Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly were selected using a civic lottery. In December 2016, 10,000 area residents were randomly mailed an invitation to volunteer. From a pool of 144 volunteers, the thirty-six members of the Assembly were randomly

selected to broadly represent the population and communities that make up the two municipalities. The members each generously agreed to spend more than fifty hours serving on the Assembly. They did not receive an honorarium or any other form of personal compensation.

The Chair and Assembly Team: The Assembly was chaired by Peter MacLeod, principal of public engagement firm MASS LBP. This firm won the contract to lead the Assembly process following a public tender and is internationally recognized for its work leading deliberative policy processes. The chair was responsible for developing the Assembly program and process, leading the local facilitation team, and serving as the spokesperson for the Assembly. He did not have a vote and was expected to remain neutral throughout the Assembly's deliberations.

Process Summary: The Assembly met three times between January and February, and three times between April and May. It also hosted public meetings open to any resident in both February and April. During the Assembly's March recess, technical consultants completed an independent study of the municipalities' finances, infrastructure, and services. They reported their findings to the Assembly during the fourth meeting, on April 1, 2017. The study is intended to provide Councillors, Assembly members, and residents with an objective assessment of the likely costs and benefits of amalgamation.

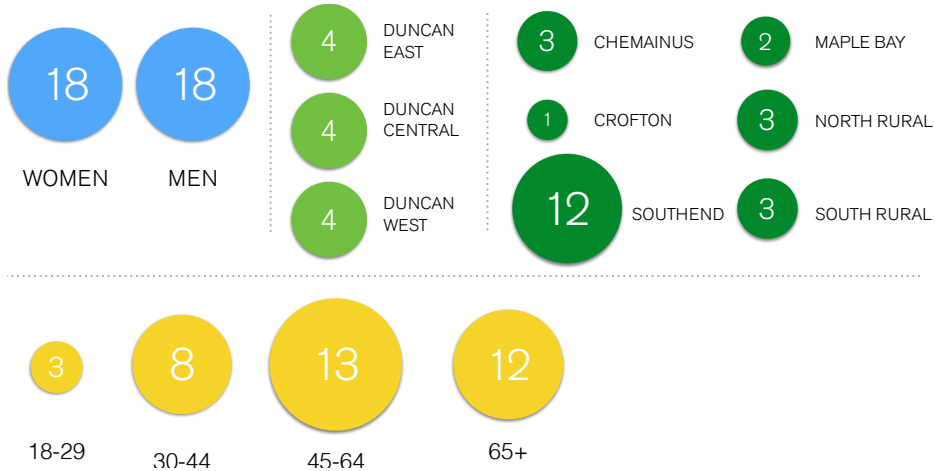
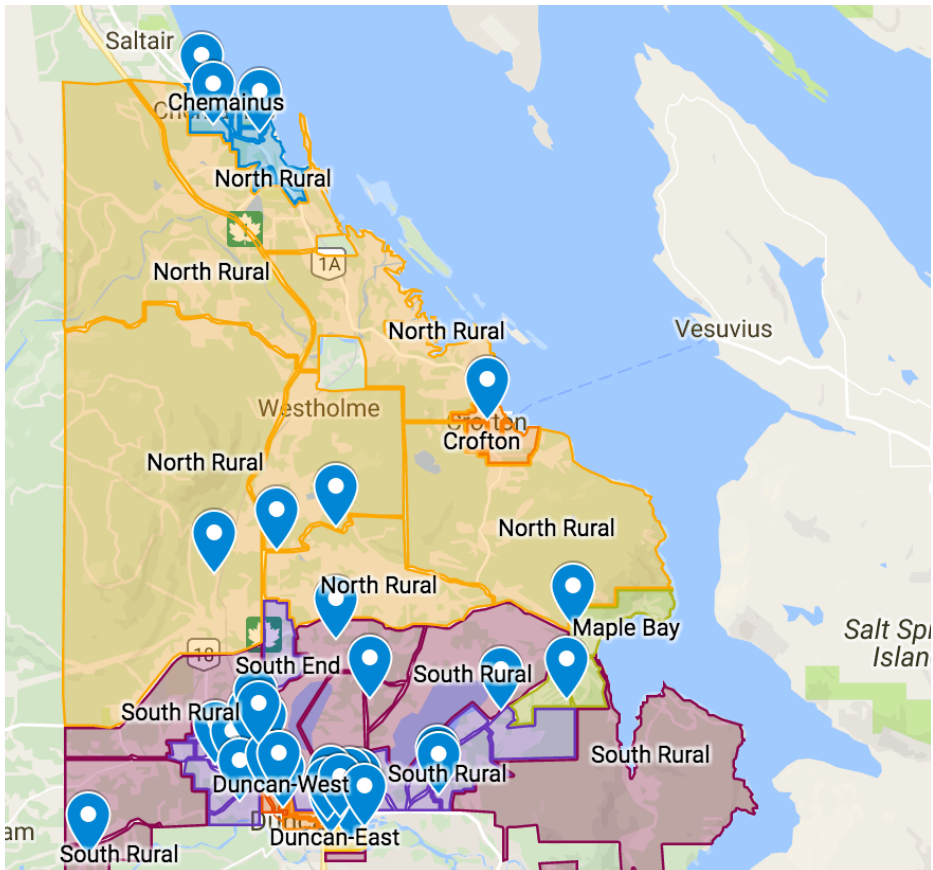
The Citizens' Assembly was designed as an advisory body and its recommendation is not binding. The support of both Municipal Councils, a majority of voters during a public referendum, and the consent of the Provincial Cabinet are required for amalgamation to proceed.

Assembly Guests (in order of appearance)

The Assembly benefited from numerous presentations representing a wide range of perspectives and interests. Generally, presentations lasted fifteen minutes or less and were followed by vigorous question-and-answer sessions. When presenters used slides, they were made available to download at dnc-cama.ca.

- Phil Kent, Mayor of Duncan
- Jon Lefebure, Mayor of North Cowichan
- Kyle Young, Assistant Manager of Planning and Subdivision, Municipality of North Cowichan
- Kathryn Gagnon, Executive Director, Cowichan Valley Museum and Archives
- Peter de Verteuil, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Duncan
- Gary Paget, Senior Policy Advisor, Local Government Division, Government of British Columbia
- Marijke Edmondson, Director, Local Government Structure, Government of British Columbia
- Patricia Ross, City Councillor, City of Abbotsford
- Debra Oakman, CAO, Comox Valley Regional District
- Brian Walliser, former senior policy advisor and expert on local government
- Jean Cardno, Owner, Cardino Shoes, representing Downtown Duncan Business Improvement Area
- Blair Herbert, Broker/Owner, Royal LePage Duncan
- Moira Hauk, First Vice President, Duncan Cowichan Chamber of Commerce
- Don Hatton, President, Hatton Insurance
- Marina Jozipovic, James Klukas, and Dan Huang, Urban Systems Inc.
- Bernie Jones, President, Chemainus Residents Association
- Inspector Ray Carfantan, North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP
- Mélie De Champlain, Director, Community Integration, Island Health
- Chief Scott Henning, North Cowichan Fire Department (South End Hall)
- Chief Mike McKinlay, City of Duncan Fire Department
- Maureen Tommy, General Manager, Cowichan Tribes First Nation
- Chief William Seymour, Cowichan Tribes First Nation

Assembly Snapshot



Proceedings of the Assembly

Meeting 1: January 21, 2017

On Saturday, January 21 the thirty-six members of the Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation met for the first time. The chair of the Assembly, Peter MacLeod, welcomed everyone and invited the Mayor of Duncan, Phil Kent, and the Mayor of North Cowichan, Jon Lefebure, to acknowledge the traditional territories and welcome the members of the Assembly. Both mayors thanked the members for their commitment to the process and explained why they looked forward to receiving the Assembly's report.

Next, the chair explained the Assembly's mandate: "to examine the implications of creating a new, amalgamated municipal structure, and advise local Councillors and their administrations on the conditions under which the municipalities should proceed."

MacLeod took care to underscore that the Assembly was not deciding whether the municipalities would merge. Instead, their task was to advise both Councils, which would then vote on whether to endorse the Assembly's recommendation. If a recommendation to pursue amalgamation was endorsed, a public referendum would also be required, as would support from the provincial government. In this way, the work of the Assembly is an important first step in a longer process that will involve significant public input.

Next, MacLeod described the role of the members as local representatives. He urged the members to think not only about their own interests, but to work to understand the needs and interests of others, and represent the community as a whole.

Members then introduced themselves and talked about the reasons why they had volunteered for the Assembly. Many were motivated by a sense of civic duty. Others were curious about the process and hoped to learn more about local government. Others still said it was a "good reason to get out of the house" and were keen to meet others and contribute.

After a short break, the Assembly heard from its first guest speakers. Kyle Young from the North Cowichan Planning Department began by providing an overview of the area's geography and population, and explained how each municipality's Official Community Plan guides local development.

Next, Kathryn Gagnon from the Cowichan Valley Museum and Archives gave a lively account of the area's local history using early photographs to help understand the Valley's colonial past. Gagnon explained how North Cowichan was the fourth municipality to incorporate in 1874 and why Duncan separated from North Cowichan thirty-eight years later in 1912. Then, as now, the condition of local roads in part spurred new municipal reforms.

Following lunch, Peter de Verteuil, Chief Administrative Officer at the City of Duncan, provided a detailed introduction to the work of local government. He discussed the services each municipality provides, the infrastructure they must maintain, and their respective budgets, staffing levels, and governance model. He also explained how the municipalities work together - and with the Cowichan Valley Regional District - to provide some services and infrastructure.

Lastly, the Assembly spent two hours discussing how the Cowichan Valley had changed, what they thought was important to know about the valley, and what they valued about local government.

Meeting 2: February 4, 2017

To start the Assembly's second meeting, an Indigenous member of the Assembly acknowledged the land, and talked about the history of local First Nations. The Assembly agreed that each meeting would start with an acknowledgement of the land and First Nations.

Next, Assembly members talked about their experience hosting the residents who attended the public roundtable meeting.

Several members noted that many people seemed unclear about the boundaries between the two municipalities. Others shared that they had heard concerns about the rural-urban divide and wondered whether these different perspectives could be well-addressed within a single municipality. Other members were concerned about the cost and wondered about the impact on taxpayers. Another member mentioned that much of the feedback he had received was unrelated to amalgamation. He encouraged Assembly members to stay focused on the task and to filter out those issues which would be unaffected by amalgamation.

The Assembly then heard from its second set of speakers. First, the Assembly heard from Gary Paget, a senior policy advisory in the local government branch of the BC government. Paget provided a history of municipal amalgamations in BC, noting the change in policy that occurred in the 1970s following a wave of forced municipal amalgamations. Today, the provincial government insists that amalgamations be voluntary and community-led.

Marijke Edmondson, program director in the Local Government Division, then explained the province's role in assisting communities to determine whether

they should amalgamate. Edmondson explained that the province provides support to municipalities for technical studies and public consultation and leads its own consultations with local First Nations. The province may also provide special funds to municipalities during a transition period following an amalgamation.

The Assembly then heard from Patricia Ross, a City Councillor from Abbotsford. She spoke candidly about her own experience with amalgamation – the City of Abbotsford and the District of Matsqui amalgamated in 1996. Her story was a positive one: “We were already living together, and it just made sense to get married.” As a Councillor, she has found that being a larger municipality has helped Abbotsford to attract more businesses and garner support from senior levels of government.

With a more cautionary message, the Assembly then heard from Debra Oakman, CAO of the Comox Valley Regional District. She has overseen the division of two regional districts and she discussed the complexity and cost of adopting a new governance structure. According to Oakman, before committing to any major reform, proponents should be very clear about what they are trying to achieve and attach benchmarks to their goals.

Finally, members heard from Brian Walliser, a former senior advisor with the province and expert on local government in BC. Walliser described how shared service agreements and greater use of the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) could provide an alternative to amalgamation, allowing the municipalities to proceed issue-by-issue. Walliser encouraged the Assembly to be clear about the specific service challenges they believe amalgamation can solve and to consider whether alternative approaches might prove less costly or more effective.

After lunch, the members of the Assembly revisited their discussion of values and worked to define and adopt seven values that would guide their work. These are: Efficiency and cost effectiveness; Quality services and infrastructure; Public engagement; Environmental stewardship; Collaboration; Accessibility, approachability and accountability; and Respect for local differences.

During their final hour, the members turned their attention to identifying the issues they believe should be considered when considering the merits of amalgamation. Working in six small groups, they articulated and then shared with one another the issues they believed were most important. During their third meeting, the members would revisit these lists as they had done with their values, and use these issues to draft questions for the technical consultants.

Meeting 3: February 25, 2017

The Assembly reconvened for their third meeting on February 25. During his overview, the chair discussed the meetings he and a member of the Assembly had had with representatives of local First Nations. He reported that the meetings were generally positive and appreciated.

The Assembly then welcomed members of the consultant team from Urban Systems, who were hired by both municipalities as independent advisors to complete a technical analysis of the proposed amalgamation.

The consultant team described the scope of their analysis, shared several draft fact sheets they had prepared, and took questions from the Assembly.

After a short break, the Assembly heard from its first “perspectives panel,” whose members were selected to speak on behalf of Duncan and North Cowichan businesses.

Jean Cardno from the Downtown Duncan BIA, Blair Herbert from Royal LePage, Moira Hauk from the Duncan Cowichan Chamber of Commerce, and Don Hatton from Hatton Insurance each took turns sharing their points of view.

Two panelists spoke strongly in favour of amalgamation believing that a single municipality would be more efficient and cost effective, and that the area would benefit from harmonizing its bylaws and zoning, and having a unified plan for development and growth.

The other panelists were more cautious, believing that it was premature to endorse amalgamation without a clear analysis of its impact.

Following lunch, the Assembly returned to the issues they identified during their second meeting. When grouped together, these issues fell roughly into eight themes: Consistency of services; Governance and leadership; Economic development; Environment; Culture and identity; Land use and planning; Taxes; and Efficiencies and savings. Members were invited to join a table focused on the theme that most interested them and to refine a list of questions based on their theme, which could be sent to the technical consultant for review.

Meeting 4: April 1, 2017

Following a month-long break during which the technical consultants prepared their report, the Assembly members reconvened to begin the second phase of their work.

The Assembly chair began the morning by recapping the Assembly’s first three sessions and inviting members to update one another on what they had heard from other residents or considered since their last meeting.

Next, he invited James Klukas and Marina Jozipovic from Urban Systems to give a detailed presentation of their ninety-page report. The members understood that this report was embargoed and would not be shared with either Councillors or members of the public until the Assembly’s recommendation and report was released in May.

Klukas and Jozipovic took time to explain their own process, which included contributions from a special advisory and oversight committee of former mayors and senior municipal officials. Then they began to explain the findings of their review. They presented detailed information concerning how each municipality is organized, governed, and financed, as well as the services and infrastructure each municipality provides.

Over the next ninety minutes, members repeatedly interjected with questions or requests for clarification. The consultants responded to each question knowledgeably or else promised to conduct further research and report back.

This exchange quickly made clear an important concern of many Assembly members: they learned that there were no immediate financial barriers to amalgamation, but neither were there likely to be significant financial savings. In a sense, the members learned that the financial case for amalgamation was a draw, and that any argument for remaining as separate municipalities or merging would need to be made on different grounds.

The consultants were also careful to emphasize that their projections did not extend past year one, as it is impossible to speculate on what future Councils might choose to do as either independent or amalgamated municipalities. Future decisions could produce savings or increase costs. Their analysis was designed to show the likely impact of merging the two municipalities as they are today, with their existing policies, tax rates, debts, and personnel.

Following a short break, the members had the opportunity to hear from a final perspectives panel, which included representatives from the two fire services, the RCMP, Island Health, and the Chemainus Residents Association.

Many members were impressed with the camaraderie and close co-operation between the fire services—which are staffed entirely by volunteers. The two chiefs explained how their members work together and why even the two adjacent halls—while unusual—are surprisingly efficient and provide complementary services.

Next, Inspector Ray Carfantan took care to explain the complicated business of police funding. Currently, municipalities like Duncan with fewer than 5,000 people make only a very modest contribution toward the cost of policing their communities, through a dedicated police levy. The majority of the cost is borne by the province. However, when a municipality grows beyond 5,000, it becomes responsible for footing 70 per cent of the policing bill. This bill itself grows as the local police force expands – with each officer representing approximately \$160,000 per year in salary, benefits, and support costs. Municipalities like North Cowichan, with a population greater than 25,000, pay 90 per cent of their policing costs, with the balance paid by the province.

Carfantan noted that by provincial standards, his force is very lean and would benefit from additional personnel – a sentiment echoed by almost all Assembly members. New officers as well as the construction of a new police

station will pose significant costs for both communities, especially should Duncan grow as expected beyond 5,000 people at the time of the next census in 2021.

Following lunch, the Assembly members spent the afternoon reviewing the technical report in close detail and drafting a series of questions for the consultants to address in the final version of their report.

Meeting 5: April 8, 2017

The Assembly met for its second-last day and its members began by recounting their experience of the second public roundtable, held the previous Thursday. Several members were disappointed by the relatively modest turnout of some thirty people. Others expressed concern that while they had had the benefit of the Assembly's proceedings and technical report, which made it possible for them to learn about amalgamation, some residents who attended the public meeting seemed poorly informed or had strong assumptions leading them to either support or disagree with amalgamation. Raising public awareness about the facts of amalgamation was a keen concern for many members.

Next, the members welcomed their final speaker, Maureen Tommy, general manager of the Cowichan Tribes First Nation. Earlier in the process, the chair and Gus Williams had visited with representatives of several area First Nations. The Assembly was keen to hear her perspective on municipal amalgamation and whether it was likely to have any material impact on the services her government provides for Indigenous residents, or affect the relationship between the municipalities and the First Nations.

Tommy began by explaining the range of responsibilities that fall to Cowichan Tribes—BC's largest First Nations government. She also explained how Cowichan Tribes co-operates actively with both municipalities and the CVRD to deliver services, and described the relationship as both beneficial and respectful.

Following an extensive round of questions, the Assembly chair thanked Tommy for her remarks, and as a representative of a municipal initiative, recognized the important relationship with Cowichan Tribes by presenting Tommy with a blanket symbolizing friendship and co-operation.

Next, the Assembly turned its attention to developing specific scenarios concerning status quo, amalgamation, and greater service integration. Working in small groups, Assembly members developed these scenarios while gauging the likely implications for the issues they had identified in their prior sessions. Additionally, though mindful that it was beyond their mandate, several members also considered whether boundary changes might be another way to find a more optimal balance between the two municipalities.

This exhaustive exercise was punctuated by each small group reporting their findings and contrasting their observations. Ultimately, having examined each

scenario according to the issues they identified, the chair asked each group to see if they could reach a rough consensus concerning their preferred scenario.

While assuring the Assembly that no decision was being made, the chair canvassed each table for their decision. Each of the six tables reported a strong majority of their members supporting amalgamation. It quickly became clear that amalgamation was preferred by more than four-fifths of Assembly members. The chair invited those who were contrary-minded to express any outstanding concerns before asking the Assembly if he could deem amalgamation to be the tentative direction of the Assembly, for the purpose of developing their recommendations on their final day.

With a sense of achievement and recognition of the careful work still ahead to finalize and communicate their recommendation and decide on any supporting measures or conditions, the Assembly adjourned.

Meeting 6: April 22, 2017

The Assembly met for its final meeting two weeks after it reached a tentative consensus to endorse amalgamation. The chair began the session by inviting second thoughts and comments regarding their proposed direction. Broadly speaking, Assembly members remained comfortable with their consensus and turned their attention to reviewing updates to the consultants' report.

Next, Assembly members split into small groups to consider the conditions and supporting measures they wished to attach to their recommendation. The rest of the morning was taken up with this activity as each group proposed specific measures for consideration by the Assembly as a whole. By lunchtime, they had finalized their key recommendations and were ready to begin drafting their report. Breaking into new groups that aligned with the sections of the report, the Assembly again worked to produce draft text for comment by other members. This back-and-forth process helped to ensure that all members were comfortable with the phrasing and that key ideas were not lost in the editing process.

This process continued up until 3:00pm, when the Mayors of Duncan and North Cowichan, Chief William Seymour of Cowichan Tribes First Nation, and Joint Council Committee member Maeve McGuire arrived to hear a reading of the draft report.

The chair thanked the guests for coming and took a moment to remind them of the extensive Assembly process and volunteer commitment. Then, taking turns, different Assembly members read out their section of the report.

Next, the chair invited members of the Assembly to speak openly about their experiences of serving on the Assembly as well as key considerations they felt their guests should remember. The chair then invited each guest to speak to the Assembly and show their appreciation for the Assembly's efforts on behalf of Duncan and North Cowichan residents.

With formalities complete, the chair reminded the Assembly members that over the next two weeks they would have the opportunity to edit the entirety of the report and, should they choose, provide a personal minority report.

Finally, he asked the Mayors to present each member of the Assembly with a Certificate of Public Service, while sharing a special cake that marked the completion of their work together.



Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly Members' Report

We are volunteers who were randomly selected using a civic lottery to serve our communities as members of the Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly. Last November, invitations were randomly distributed to 10,000 area households. 144 people responded and 36 of those respondents were randomly selected to represent the two communities and roughly match their demographic profile. Half of our members are men, and half are women. We represent a range of age groups and come from many different backgrounds. Some of us have lived our whole lives here; others have recently arrived. Twelve of our members are from Duncan, and twenty-four are from North Cowichan.

We volunteered because we each saw this as an opportunity to give something back. We were curious to learn more about local government and become more informed about the way the two municipalities are managed. While we come from different backgrounds, we shared a desire to make a meaningful contribution to our communities.

We met for six full Saturdays over four months and listened to presentations from a range of residents, business owners, public servants, first responders, academics, Indigenous leaders, and community stakeholders in order to understand the needs and perspectives of different people in our communities.

We also convened two public roundtable meetings, where we shared what we learned with residents and listened carefully to their feedback. Our members sought out their neighbours, friends, and colleagues for their perspectives as well.

We examined technical and financial analyses and came to understand them well.

We posed many questions to our guests and to the technical consultants, and appreciated their care in answering our questions.

We considered the area's history and learned from both successful and unsuccessful amalgamations in other BC communities.

We believe this process was thorough and collaborative. We strove to be impartial in our conduct and discussions.

Throughout our time on the Assembly, we listened carefully to each other and tried to set aside any pre-conceived ideas. On balance, we were open-minded and tried to be considerate of different points of view.

Our Values

During our first two meetings, we identified seven values that helped us to find common ground. We used these values to help guide our discussions and weigh different scenarios.

Efficiency and cost-effectiveness We value local government that exercises good fiscal responsibility and works efficiently and consistently to respect residents' time and money.

Quality services and infrastructure We value local government that provides quality services and infrastructure that have a measurable impact on the well being of residents. Our services and infrastructure should be cost-effective, mindful of current needs and future growth, highly satisfactory and appreciated by residents, and based on best practices.

Public engagement We value local government that proactively and regularly engages residents in local governance and decision-making. Good local government fosters public learning, consultation, collaboration, and transparency.

Environmental stewardship We value local government that ensures the protection of our air, water, wildlife, and green spaces. It works to enrich our urban, rural, and agricultural communities and ensure continued economic and ecological vitality for all.

Collaboration We value local government that exemplifies an inclusive, non-partisan and collaborative approach to meeting the distinct needs and interests of our many communities.

Accessibility, Approachability and Accountability We value local government that is: easy to access, whether online, by post, in person, or by phone; willing to listen and seriously consider different perspectives in genuine dialogue with constituents; responsive to residents; and committed to providing clear explanations for its decisions.

Respect for local differences We value local government that takes care to ensure that local voices, sensibilities, character, and communities are preserved, recognized, and enhanced.

We also drew up a list of issues and questions we wanted to address in our deliberations. It is by answering these questions and examining amalgamation through the lens of each of these issues that we ultimately reached a strong consensus.

Our issues

1. Consistency of services
2. Governance and leadership
3. Economic development
4. Environment
5. Culture and identity
6. Land use and planning
7. Taxes
8. Efficiencies and savings

Specifically, we wanted to know:

- Whether amalgamation would be more financially viable than the status quo?
- How amalgamation would impact residential and business taxes?
- How amalgamation would affect zoning and bylaws?
- How amalgamation would change the public and protective services that residents receive?
- Whether amalgamation would change or dilute the identity of local communities, and how might a shared identity strengthen perceptions of the area?
- What might the consequences be of not amalgamating?
- How amalgamation stacks up against other options, including closer service integration and boundary changes?
- How amalgamation could affect environmental policies and change the focus of both municipalities' Official Community Plans?
- Whether amalgamation would affect the local economy and lead to more and better jobs?
- Whether amalgamation would affect relations with local First Nations?
- What might the process, costs, and potential savings of amalgamation look like?

What we learned

Perhaps, like many people, we assumed that Duncan was larger than it is. In fact, it occupies just two square kilometres and has a population of just under 5,000 – one-sixth of the population of North Cowichan, which is home to almost 30,000 people. This makes Duncan Canada’s smallest city by area. Until 1912, Duncan was part of North Cowichan and served as the Cowichan Valley’s downtown, much as it does today.

This historical context is important, and our two communities have been considering amalgamation almost ever since they separated in 1912. Each generation seems to ask this same question, believing that the two communities would be more successful together.

Many of us assumed that amalgamation would save money and hoped it would lead to lower taxes. Others feared that amalgamation would only drive up costs. As we learned from the technical study, amalgamation is likely to have only a modest impact on residential and business taxes.

On its own, amalgamation will not save much money. Both municipalities already co-operate closely, and there appear to be few obvious efficiencies. Amalgamation will not change the population of the Cowichan Valley—there will be as many citizens requiring services following amalgamation as before. Even the neighbouring fire halls provide complementary services; merging them would likely cost more, not less.

We learned that important factors like policing costs and infrastructure should also be considered when evaluating the case for amalgamation. The formulas, provincial programs, and drivers of costs are complicated, but we could all agree that both Duncan and North Cowichan would benefit from having more police services and infrastructure investment, and so both communities would likely benefit from drawing on a shared tax base.

We also learned that businesses are often frustrated with what they perceive as an unequal playing field; two different sets of bylaws and zoning regulations create confusion and can become costly.

We all know that the Cowichan Valley is a special place: it has long been a community of communities. We believe the strength of local identity matters and should be preserved and enhanced.

Some of us came to this process thinking we already knew how local government works, but we now know a good deal more. Based on our work together and what we’ve learned, we’ve reached a strong consensus.

Our recommendation

We have carefully considered the technical information and different scenarios for the future of our two municipalities, including closer service integration.

We believe that Duncan and North Cowichan will be stronger together, and so our consensus as an Assembly is to recommend amalgamation.

We believe that amalgamating Duncan and North Cowichan into a single municipality will make possible lasting co-operation. Amalgamation will enhance the sustainability of our communities by strengthening our fiscal foundation and allow local government to pursue a more coordinated approach to encouraging economic growth, delivering efficient and effective public services, and ensuring that residents benefit from good local planning and strengthened environmental stewardship.

We believe amalgamation will ensure that local government in the Cowichan Valley pursues a common vision and that residents benefit from a harmonized approach to services, policies, and governance.

These benefits include:

- One Council
- Streamlined regulations and bylaws
- A level and consistent playing field for businesses
- One Official Community Plan with consistent and coordinated land use policies

Additionally, we recommend that:

1. Should both Councils endorse amalgamation, that they establish a joint amalgamation working group to develop a clear proposal for amalgamation prior to a referendum.

This working group would develop:

- A framework to ensure equitable representation for each of the Cowichan Valley's distinct communities. The framework could include an expanded role for neighbourhood and business improvement associations and ad hoc and issue-specific advisory committees, and also consider whether an amalgamated municipality should adopt an at-large or mixed-ward system;
- A multi-year transition plan to ensure equitable residential and commercial tax rates; and
- A universal standard of service that would apply across the proposed amalgamated municipality.

This working group would also:

- Propose a clear and concise referendum question that is identical in both municipalities;

- Determine whether a simple majority or a higher threshold should be met, and ensure that the same threshold applies in both municipalities;
 - Ensure that the referendum occurs in conjunction with the next municipal election; and
 - Allocate sufficient funds to develop a referendum communications plan to ensure that residents are well-informed. This plan should use all available media, including a dedicated website, community information sessions, and a direct mail package including a summary of the Citizens' Assembly and Technical Reports, as well as a clear accounting of any anticipated financial impacts, to all area households.
2. An amalgamated Council harmonize zoning regulations and develop a new official community plan and local area plans to designate and invest in the municipality's unique features, strengthen environmental stewardship, and promote a more coordinated approach to economic and social development;
 3. An amalgamated Council harmonize bylaws to ensure consistency for local businesses and industry;
 4. An amalgamated Council retain independent consultants to identify staffing redundancies and inefficiencies;
 5. Current and future Councils continue to build and strengthen a respectful and cooperative relationship with local Indigenous communities; and
 6. Current and future Councils work to foster a strong sense of civic responsibility and community through information campaigns that include mechanisms for on-going feedback and dialogue.

Meet the Members

Tanya Ablonczy: I have lived in Cowichan Valley for twenty-three years – or my entire adult life – and have lived in the heart of the city of Duncan for the past fourteen years. I first came to the valley as a young child from Alberta visiting relatives, and even at that young age, was awestruck by the wonder of this unique and incredible place. I settled here when I became a mother, because I believed it to be the cleanest, safest, and most beautiful place for children to grow up. I volunteered to be a member of the Assembly because I am passionately concerned about the strength, safety and economic viability of my community, and I believe strongly in civic duty and the power that comes to the average citizen through being accurately informed.

Andy Anand: I am from India and have lived in the Cowichan Valley since 1957. I worked at the Crofton Pulp Mill and have been retired since 1995. I am 85 years young. It was my passion to do volunteer work in the community. I have been on the school board, a chief ranger in the IOF, and a member of the Centennial Committee. I was vice chairman when the Queen visited and laid the cornerstone in the senior centre building. I have been vice chairman of the library building, the old swimming pool, and the hockey rink. I have studied at the night school on topics such as power squadron, paper-making, business management, accounting, upholstery making, lumber grading, and PLIB. I've played tennis and cricket and was a past member of the junior chamber of Commerce. I go fishing and camping with my family, and wanted to volunteer for the Citizens' Assembly because I want to see Duncan and North Cowichan use their resources better.

James Atkinson: Born on Vancouver Island, I left when I was twelve years old, and returned to live in North Cowichan nine years ago. I am a supervisor for the British Columbia Ambulance Service, based in Chemainus. I currently live in Crofton. I am also an active member of the Crofton Fire Department, and I was a member of the advisory working group, that assisted in the formation of the Crofton Local Area Plan for Revitalization in the Crofton Area. Since moving to the area, I have been interested in how the communities of Duncan and North Cowichan might better manage their resources.

Martin Barker: I am a chiropractor in the city of Duncan and have lived in the valley since 1993. Originally employed at the Crofton Pulp Mill, I took advantage of an extended strike and the Forest Renewal program to train out of the forest industry – first with a degree in Kinesiology and then one in chiropractic. I am also one term short of a microbiology degree. I am an avid exercise enthusiast and backpacker and can often be found in the gym, running the local trails, or in a tent on some remote beach. This year, I plan to run my first marathon (Victoria) at the age of fifty. I slowly developed an interest in local politics, which culminated in serving on a past Duncan City Council. Now, as a citizen at large, I am very interested in the future of the valley and feel very fortunate to be involved in the Citizens' Assembly.

Jaye Bryan: After thirty years working and raising a family in Williams Lake, BC, my husband and I retired to our sunny plot of land in North Cowichan nearly five years ago. A former teacher/administrator, I currently volunteer at the local BC SPCA shelter (Cowichan and District) as a dog walker and as the Community Council chair. Along with our family pack of three dogs, I enjoy exploring the many hidden trails and infinite number of back roadways that the Cowichan Valley offers. This ongoing discovery of our district's historical background, and my perceived view of the area's unique mix of rural and urban neighbour-

hoods, made it important for me to join this Citizens' Assembly and have a voice in our community's future.

David Clark: My wife, Anna, and I relocated to the Cowichan Valley in 1988 and have lived in both the Municipality of North Cowichan and the City of Duncan. With over forty years of experience in real estate appraisal, I have had the opportunity to interact with local businesses and municipal governments, which gave me insight into the development process and planning, zoning, and building. We have seen Duncan and the Cowichan Valley grow and prosper. In retirement, there is personal reward in giving back to my community. I participated in the Citizens' Assembly because I believe I have something to contribute to the future prosperity and continuing diversity of Duncan, North Cowichan, and the Cowichan Valley.

Dee Dohm: I was born in this area seventy-six years ago to a wonderful, supportive family. My paternal ancestors were pioneers in the area who, through many hardships, worked to build and support the community. My maternal grandparents moved to the area in the 1920s from French Canada. After completing my education, I had many opportunities to travel and work around the world. When I retired at sixty-eight, I developed an interest in comparing the livability of the places I had visited to my home community, wondering whether it is time for a serious change. My interest in the governance and growth of my community also led me to serve on the Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly.

Nora Dowsett: I was born and raised in the Cowichan Valley but moved to Ontario for fifteen years after getting married. We were fortunate enough to be able to move back to Duncan in 2001 and are loving it! I am a recently retired financial planner, and throughout my career, I helped people achieve their retirement goals and offered advice on investments, tax, and estate planning. I am very involved with the Rotary Club and am currently serving as president of our club. I joined this Citizens' Assembly because I believe it is important to give back to your community when you are able to. In my free time, my passion and main de-stressing activity is gardening.

Beverly Hampson: I've lived on Vancouver Island on and off for over ten years and contributed to multiple community initiatives. My extensive background in statistical data retrieval and analysis led me to become increasingly interested in participating in community organizations. I currently work in post-secondary education and value higher learning, which has contributed to my community interests.

Hendrik Hiensch: I have lived in North Cowichan with my family since my wife and I emigrated from the Netherlands twenty years ago. Currently, I am self-employed as a real estate investor, and prior to entering the real estate business, I worked as a natural stone mason. One of the many reasons I love the valley is because it runs on island time, which fosters a more relaxed culture than mainland Vancouver. Sailing around the Gulf Islands in my spare time is my main hobby, which I enjoy all year round. I volunteered for the Assembly because I want to give back to the community that has been good to me and my family, and I hope the Assembly will have real and positive impact on the future.

Shiyana Hunter: I am the daughter of Sandra Patricia Hunter and Jerry Lee Miller from Ontario. I've lived in BC for most of my life. My fourteen years in the "Warm-land" have seen me in various areas - from the top of the Malahat to my current residence in Duncan. I am a student, mother, and community member. I am working towards a Bachelor of Arts with a major in sociology and a minor in liberal studies, and I volunteer my time to various clubs and student positions. I care deeply about all people and places, and embrace collaborative problem solving, which motivated me to take part in the Citizens' Assembly.

Tyler Jackson: I was born and raised in the Cowichan Valley. For the past fifteen years I have been employed in the construction industry. Currently I am construction superintendent for a family-owned Island Construction Company. I joined the Citizens' Assembly due to deep concern for the future viability of the Cowichan Valley and its citizens. I truly want to see the Cowichan Valley succeed in two ways: as a hub for smaller locally owned businesses and as a vibrant organic agriculture industry.

Kathryn Jacobsen: We moved to Chemainus in 2014 after working in both Toronto and

Calgary. I am thrilled to be back “home” in BC, where I was born. I am the first vice-president for the Chemainus Health Care Auxiliary, a non-profit organization which was established in 1899 and whose mission is to raise money for patient and health care in the province. I take every opportunity to be an active participant in my community, socially, politically and environmentally, because I believe we all have an obligation to nurture and protect how and where we live, now and for the future.

Mona Kaiser: I grew up on Thetis Island, attended school in Chemainus and Duncan, and completed a degree at the University of Victoria (BA Hons. Eng.). Studies took me to the mainland for graduate work in history at Simon Fraser University (MA) and for doctoral work at the University of British Columbia. I have had the opportunity to travel widely throughout Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand – and with my husband, Tom Rimmer, have lived and worked in many small BC communities and Nova Scotia. We returned to the Cowichan Valley in 1999, bringing these experiences with us. As a full-time parent of two with an interest in community planning and engagement, I have enjoyed serving both municipalities through advisory work on North Cowichan’s Community Planning Advisory Committee, and Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee; Duncan’s Totem Committee. Volunteer work includes “Reel Alternatives” (CV Hospice), Parent Advisory Committees, Canadian Parents for French, and most recently, vice-presidency for the Cowichan 2018 BC Summer Games. Some of my most rewarding community projects include establishing SD79’s first outdoor classroom and spearheading funding and construction of the valley’s first intergenerational community playground.

Richard Matthews: My wife Sandi and I have lived in Chemainus for twenty-four years, where we happily raised our two children. I am proud and blessed to work with the youth of our beautiful Cowichan Valley, mostly in Duncan, as a school counsellor with District 79. I love to travel, hike, and take photographs in Cowichan and beyond. I have volunteered in various capacities of community service. I chose to volunteer for the Citizens’ Assembly to engage my valley neighbours in a worthwhile discussion and to celebrate democracy.

Justin McNutt: I am a Canadian-born technology and e-commerce entrepreneur and philanthropist, currently completing a Bachelor of Engineering in Civil Engineering at the University of Victoria. I am currently working on the development of a local mining company and a tech sector in Cowichan Valley. Some of my interests include sports, business, economics, real estate, computer programming, web development, mathematics, geology, and outdoor activities. I also spend some of my time volunteering with the Victoria Innovation, Advanced Technology, and Entrepreneurship Council. I volunteered for the Citizens’ Assembly because I consider community engagement to be a key strategy for achieving lasting change.

Anne Murray: I moved to the Cowichan Valley in 1959 after immigrating from the UK to Prince George in 1958. In 1942, I left Singapore as a refugee. I have five children, and have held several positions in the community. I worked as a hospital nurse, served as a school trustee for twelve years, and served as a Councillor for nine years. I have also volunteered as a community worker in child and senior care and emergency services, in addition to volunteering with museums in the area. I decided to participate in the Assembly because I love being involved with my vibrant community and working to make a positive difference for our future.

Susan Newsns: I was born in England, grew up in South Africa, and immigrated to Canada in the early 1980s, finally landing in the beautiful Cowichan Valley area where I currently live. I am a recently retired English and social studies secondary school teacher, and I appreciate the hands-on opportunity offered by the Citizens’ Assembly to experience the policy development involved in local governance and to brainstorm with my fellow citizens about the best vision for our community. Now that I have some spare time, I enjoy pursuing my artistic interests – painting, , drawing, and writing – and there is certainly no shortage of inspiration all around me in our Cowichan “Warm Land.”

Fred Oud: My parents emigrated from The Netherlands in 1951 along with six children. I am the youngest and have lived in both Duncan and North Cowichan all my life. I have been a union leader, a human resources manager, and most recently the president of the Cowichan Exhibition. Although retired from full-time work, I still run a small consulting

firm, which helps keep my mind active. I have over the years taken a keener interest in the workings of my community and am an active volunteer. Those who know me can attest to my strong passion for things that are important to me. The Citizens' Assembly is a way to volunteer for my community and hopefully make it more successful and livable.

Marilyn Palmer: I live on a lovely little heritage farm, overlooking Quamichan Lake, which we've named "La Ferme des Rêves" (the Farm of Dreams). I've been a big-city architect for many years and am now a flower farmer and volunteer president of the neighbourhood association. I volunteered to be part of the Citizens' Assembly because I'm deeply interested in the process and its outcomes, and I see my participation as a way to contribute to my community.

Lance Reese: I have lived in the Cowichan Valley area for thirty years and moved from Crofton to Duncan four years ago. Before my retirement, I worked at the pulp mill as a pipefitter and was an active member of the PPWC union executive for over twenty years. I live with my wife of twenty-one years, and I am serving as president of our condo Council and an unpaid handyman. I participated in the Citizens' Assembly because I like to learn, and I believe those of us who can give back to their communities should.

Don Reynieer: I've lived in Crofton since June 2016, having journeyed from Prince Rupert, Prince George, Vancouver, and originally Calgary. I have lived many different lives, starting work as a rural and regional land use planner, moving into real estate development and property management, federal land management, and acquisitions. Then I moved into the delivery of education and training opportunities, managing social development programming and finally, First Nations community and treaty administration. My education background covers statistics and regional and welfare economics, through to municipal and transport engineering. I am interested in auto mechanics, hunting, traveling, Spanish and Dutch. I volunteer on numerous committees and non-profit social service societies and boards. I have an interest in municipal governance, having started on this journey in the early 1970s by volunteering for Calgary City Council, and later worked on initiatives to improve and enrich the community of Grandview-Woodlands, in East Vancouver. Now I have the pleasure of being part of Cowichan, I wanted to know more about the valley and offer my impression of where I live, to this initiative on amalgamation.

Kelly Ringer-Soikie: Originally from Ottawa, Ontario, my husband and I moved to beautiful Cowichan Valley nine years ago to pursue a relaxing and nourishing life for our family in a small town full of heritage and character. In the past I've worked as a registered RCA in both Ottawa and the valley. Currently, I'm a stay-at-home parent who advocates for our special-needs family, so that we can thrive as a family with my husband's full support. I am autistic so my interests are fairly restricted and enriching. They include volunteering with my church and local public schools, and personal pursuits such as online gaming, hiking, camping, and sewing. I volunteered for the Citizen's Assembly because I am passionate about participating in community gatherings that have a lasting impact locally. Being a member of the Assembly has been a rewarding and exhausting endeavour above and beyond my daily routine, and I am thankful for the experience.

Ross Shilton: I moved to Duncan seven years ago, after living in Nanaimo for thirty years. I'm currently retired and spend most of my time helping others in the community with small acts of kindness, like taking them to the hospital, painting their house, or helping out at the church. I was motivated to volunteer with the Assembly because, having lived in seventeen different countries, I have seen what happens when cities take care of big issues but forget about the small problems. I wanted to make sure we discussed the problems of water management and Duncan's relationship with the RCMP within the context of amalgamation. I think this Assembly has done a great job of looking forward to the future, and I was eager to be a part of that change.

Barbara Swanson: I have lived in the Cowichan Valley for over forty years. I volunteer as treasurer for our local Chemainus food bank in addition to doing some relief work at our local antique store. I spent twenty-four years working in finance for the CVRD, so I have great interest in municipal procedures and the outcome of amalgamation of the City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan.

Sarah Thibault: Being part of a community is important – it creates a sense of belonging and unites us. Voicing our ideas and perspectives is a start in defining how we move forward and shape our community. I think we helped in a small way to accomplish this through the Citizens' Assembly.

Jackie Thompson: I have lived in the Cowichan Valley for twenty-two years. Before then, I was on the lower mainland for seventeen years. I love that in the Valley, you can go swimming anywhere you want for free - and it's clean. I work in pharmacy, and when I have spare time, I walk my dog, who likes to play in water. As I'm on the borderline of the City of Duncan and Municipality of North Cowichan I experience the border first-hand, and is something interesting to be a part of.

Rick Waddell: My wife and I moved to North Cowichan from Victoria twenty-two years ago. We live on a small farm near Mt. Prevost and raise mixed livestock. After twenty-eight years with a crown corporation, I am presently semi-retired and work part-time with a mechanical engineering firm. I volunteered for the Citizens' Assembly to get a better understanding of both municipal politics and the issue of amalgamation.

Alec Wheeler: Born in Vancouver and raised in the small fishing village of Sointula, I have been a resident of the Cowichan Valley since 2013. My background in arts and culture development (both in the non-profit and local government sectors) have led me on adventures in Portugal, New York, Barbados, New Zealand, Australia, Vanuatu, and Jamaica. I am currently employed with MNP LLP, one of Canada's leading accounting, tax, and business advisory firms, and am a volunteer board member with the Duncan-Cowichan Festival Society. As a member of the Citizens' Assembly, I have gained a deeper understanding of the function of local government, and I am thankful for the opportunity to actively participate in the growth and development of our community.

Gus Williams: I was born in Victoria and raised in Nanaimo, but I have lived most of my life in Duncan. My mother was a member of the Cowichan Tribe in Duncan, and my father was from the Songhees Nation in Victoria. Before retiring, I worked as a cook all over the country and as part of the Canadian and American navies. I have held educational workshops on colonialism in many different countries, and I have been a very active member of my community. I have volunteered as president of the Intercultural Society, with the Canada Royal Youth Program, and Social Planning Cowichan. I volunteer currently on the hospital foundation and with the Cowichan food basket. I volunteered for the Citizens' Assembly because, since they began talking about amalgamation ten years ago, I always thought it was an important discussion. I also wanted to bring a voice for the many tribes in the area that often aren't represented in municipal governance discussions.

Andrew Wilson: I am a Cascadian, flag-flying Vancouver Islander from the Cowichan Valley, living in my beautiful family in my hometown of Duncan. I volunteered for the Assembly because I was aware of the complexities and importance of local government: the Municipality of North Cowichan collects our property taxes, the CVRD gets a cut, and the City of Duncan sends a water bill to our Duncan, BC mailing address. This Assembly was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and a great complement to my current studies in urban and social sustainability at Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo.

Anthony Wingham: I lived in Mesachie Lake my whole childhood and went to elementary, middle, and high school in Lake Cowichan. I played baseball and basketball in the community and have coached the high-school teams. I was in leadership programs as well as student Council president. I moved away after graduating in 2005 and have been back and forth from Vancouver to Duncan over the last ten years. I work in construction and design with my wife. I mostly work in tiling, and my wife in design and drafting. I have worked as a gas jockey in Lake Cowichan and at the local grocery store. I spend my free time with my beautiful wife and son. We explore the outdoors all over this beautiful island for hikes and camping. I am hoping to have a better impact on my community as I grow older. I volunteered for the Assembly because I wanted to have my voice heard on an issue that affected an area I grew up in.

Jackie Wood: I grew up in Edmonton and lived in small communities before moving to the Cowichan Valley with my family sixteen years ago. I worked in the printing industry in

Edmonton for fifteen years and ran my own web development business in Duncan for several years before pursuing a career in real estate. I have been selling properties in the valley for almost ten years. My hobbies include hiking, cycling, kayaking, and living a healthy lifestyle. I enjoy being an active member of the community and appreciate the opportunity to participate in the Citizens' Assembly. I am eager to be involved in shaping the future of the area I live in.

Three additional Assembly members were selected but were not able to complete the process due to illness or changing employment. These members are Michael Mulholland, Fiona Barr, and Vicki Easingwood. We thank them for their contributions.

Appendix

Minority Reports

Each member of the Assembly was invited to contribute a 'minority report' if they wished to express an idea, issue or concern that they believed was inadequately addressed by the Assembly. Minority reports do not represent a consensus view, but the perspective of one or more named members of the Assembly. They are provided for the benefit of the reader so that he or she may consider the additional views of various members of the Assembly.

Tanya Ablonczy: In regard to the proposed amalgamation of Duncan and North Cowichan, my personal opinion is as follows.

While I am not violently opposed to amalgamation, I am decidedly against it. I deeply respect the consensus of my colleagues in this matter, but must agree to entirely disagree. I believe that their inclination to support the recommendation was born of high hopes and a positive attitude rather than likely and quantifiable benefit to the City of Duncan, of which I am a resident.

I believe that the City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan have vastly different demographics, land use and development challenges, and political interests. I believe that essentially nothing would change with regard to Duncan's current success and viability—economically, socially, or in terms of the levels of service delivery.

I believe that there were some legitimate incongruities addressed throughout this process, and I believe that they could all be rectified without the cost, commitment, and upheaval of amalgamation.

I would recommend the following:

- Achieving the greatest possible degree of service integration between the two groups, including one shared infrastructure system and public-works department, a jointly funded administrator or administrative team for the two fire departments, and increasing service integration where possible with the Cowichan tribes. I am entirely in agreement with the recommendation that the two fire halls continue to operate at status quo.
- The implementation of a joint official community plan.
- A binding commitment from each group to require a joint consensus when initiating development plans for borderline properties, and a commitment from each side to contribute equal effort to ensuring smooth physical flow in borderline areas.
- That the City of Duncan should immediately put an end to signage bylaw inequities in situations where businesses directly adjacent on frontage are subject to different regulations. I understand what these bylaws were initially trying to achieve, but when businesses that are contributing to the tax base are facing a clear disadvantage, changes must be made.
- That the issue of inadequate police funding for the required number of staff to adequately handle current call volume in the City of Duncan be addressed in the most aggressive and immediate ways possible, as a joint effort between the Municipality of North Cowichan and the City of Duncan. If necessary, the two

groups should draft a proposal to the provincial government to amend the funding model to address current inadequacies.

- That the City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan immediately and aggressively pursue a cohesive and jointly funded branding of the Cowichan Valley as an aficionado tourist destination of global rank. I believe it would be wise to include the area from Mill Bay to Cassidy, as well as Lake Cowichan, in international branding as part of the Cowichan Valley destination – and recommend that this also be a focus of pursuit.
- That the two Councils should be as continuously co-operative as possible, and that partisanship and special interest should be set aside for the sake of economic and social development of the valley as a whole.
- That both the city and the municipality explore ways by which to lessen tax burdens on local businesses and provide incentives for property upgrades and maintenance. I believe that the city should also consider increasing services to businesses, particularly in the areas of waste disposal and sidewalk snow removal in the downtown core.

I feel honoured and blessed to be part of this process and to have gotten to know such an amazing, admirable, and enjoyable group of individuals as my colleagues, the guests, and the facilitation team. Despite my disagreement with the recommendation outcome, I believe strongly in the value of this process as part of our democratic system.

A special thank you to the staff of Duncan Meadows golf course for providing our venue, complete with great food and service.

To all involved, well done.

Nora Dowsett: I came to this Assembly with the assumption that “of course amalgamation would save money and be more efficient.” However, after going through this process, I learned that there were far more factors to consider than money.

I came to understand and appreciate the importance of a shared future vision for the Cowichan Valley, even though we have many diverse communities and neighbourhoods within our borders. I also had been previously unaware of the existence of local neighbourhood and community associations. I believe that these are a valuable resource for local government to gain a clear understanding of what is important to its citizens. I also believe that it is the responsibility of local government to encourage and foster these associations and to take action on their recommendations.

Mona Kaiser: Two concerns emerged for me from our Assembly discussions.

First was the realization that we could not attach an economic value to the potential benefits of amalgamation. Costs can—and have been—clearly calculated, but in order to keep our recommendation free of conjecture, unquantifiable benefits (such as an even playing field for local businesses, economic development through shared vision and branding, or a unified voice at the provincial table) had to remain outside our calculations, potentially skewing the cost/benefit analysis to appear more expensive than it should.

Secondly, the further we examined the two municipalities, the more I began to question the long-term financial viability of the City of Duncan. Duncan’s limited size has resulted in not only a very narrow tax base, but also one with a disproportionate assessment of business and property tax (no relief through industrial taxes) from its neighbours. Aging city infrastructure will require significant investment on the near horizon (sewer life remaining 15 per cent, roads and drainage 22 per cent), as will police costs once Duncan’s population gains another sixty-six residents. The current policing funding formula contributes to a degree of underservicing in this area, and although taxes are

being collected to help bridge the inevitable increase in police costs, these funds are currently being used to pay for capital projects. Given the degree to which we all benefit from a strong commercial, cultural, and institutional core associated with the City of Duncan, unaddressed financial issues facing the city would likely have implications for the whole valley.

Don Reynierse: I feel I am standing on one side of the fence (amalgamation) and looking over it, seeing a municipality constrained by size (with a limited tax base to raise revenue), while facing major costs both to replace infrastructure nearing its end and increased policing costs. The Municipality's only avenue previously was to allow commercial development in a two-block core, creating a tax base that has—in turn—created horrendous traffic congestion only seen in the likes of major urban metropolises. Any further tax increases will add to its current fate - urban decay. This is an evolutionary event for most, and a dire challenge for even small municipalities heroically facing it.

Drawing from surrounding resources is mirrored by loss of your own destiny – a fate already or inevitably faced by lack of a tax base that has a viable financial future. You also have to carry existing municipal debt from the surrounding area – is this an additional edge to a conventional sword?

Either way, the current situation is detrimentally affecting the 'valley', or 'warm-land'. Needed is a well-thought-out, coordinated and planned implementation. And yet there are overlapping challenges - numerous local authorities and jurisdictions present in the valley; invisible boundaries that are not evident; and resources coordinated separately.

The solution is not found readily in existing regional authorities.

Public Roundtable Meetings

On the evening of Thursday, February 2, 2017, the Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation hosted its first of two public roundtable meetings at the Island Savings Centre. More than seventy residents attended, as did two dozen Assembly members and several local Councillors. Peter MacLeod, the Assembly's Chair, led the meeting and explained the Assembly's mandate.

Following his presentation, he invited residents to discuss four questions in small groups. Assembly members sat at each table and helped to facilitate the discussion and take notes.

Discussion questions

1. How have you seen the Cowichan Valley change?
2. What values do you want local government to exemplify?
3. What issues or concerns do you think matter most when considering whether Duncan and North Cowichan should be amalgamated?
4. What advice would you like to give the members of the Citizens' Assembly?

Below are short summaries of each discussion and examples of the comments that we received.

Question 1: *How have you seen the Cowichan Valley change?*

Growth: Participants observed how the Cowichan Valley has grown. There are many more people, more housing developments, and, frequently, more traffic. They also discussed how the economic base had shifted from resource extraction to services, and how more people were choosing to commute to Victoria. They also cited demographic

changes—each year it seems like there are fewer young people and families, and more retirees. They also discussed the need for a more “coordinated plan” between the two municipalities to better manage growth and resolve outstanding tensions between urban and rural areas.

Sample comments:

- A lot of new people, we used to know everybody
- Increase in split between rural and urban
- Resource-based to service-based community
- Agricultural shift to wineries, etc., has increased tourism
- Chemainus: transformation from mill town to tourist destination
- Aging populations in both municipalities
- Increase of “out-of-town” demographic
- Number of youth/students has decreased
- Increase in traffic; buses are new and improved
- Commuter society, a bedroom community
- Infrastructure changes and fewer services—e.g. no police in Chemainus.
- Even if services are centralised, many people don’t benefit. Services are loaded at the south end of the valley
- Dramatic traffic increase—e.g. crawl through the lights in Duncan. The roads haven’t kept up with the traffic infrastructure. There is more commuting

Character: Participants clearly take pride in the distinct character of the Cowichan Valley and its many unique communities. They described the importance of being a “green” community; maintaining local agriculture and small-scale retail; encouraging new wineries; and appreciating good environmental stewardship. Others mentioned how these features were being diluted by “big box” stores, or threatened by increased crime, periodic water shortages, and management issues.

Sample comments:

- Unique—valley very agricultural
- Community has embraced the farmers market, vineyards, slow food
- Active arts and family events
- Welcoming “big box” stores—unfortunately
- Commercial shift from small businesses to bigger chains, etc. (better shopping)
- Lots of empty storefronts, though now filling up in core of Duncan
- New emphasis on the environment and recreation; many new recreational venues—pool, track, ball fields, parks
- There has been a rise in pan-handlers, homeless, graffiti and drugs
- A substantial increase in population, but needs a coordinated plan
- Loss of green space, agricultural land
- Water shortages— same water source
- Collective attitude
- Lack of opportunity for young people
- “Roots” feeling is coming back
- Duncan has a more “green” mindset
- Rural atmosphere formed my outlook/who I am

Relationship to local government: Many participants felt their relationship with local government had changed and that both municipalities could be more responsive to the concerns of residents. Several participants admitted that they were unsure of the differences between the two municipalities or their boundaries.

Sample comments:

- CVRD—25 employees in the early 1970s
- Property taxes gone up
- More politicians? One Cowichan Valley
- Lot more governance; lot more bureaucracy—and more power
- Slow process for builders

- Local government more involved in management of resources, and less efficient—but taxes more
- Multi-level governments/no coordination of services—more separation of community
- Stronger feeling of support
- Lack of leadership or vision
- Lack of motivation on the part of citizens
- Need to force politicians to get involved

Question 2: *What values do you want local government to exemplify?*

Fiscal Responsibility: Many participants discussed the need for frugality and respect for taxpayer money, but also the need to balance prudent fiscal management with important social investments, like affordable housing or environmental initiatives that protect and preserve the natural habitat.

Sample comments:

- Be frugal
- Less bureaucracy
- Taxes should be used responsibly
- Forward-thinking and willing to encourage and attract new business
- Integrity, accountability, fiscal conservatism, streamlined regulatory processes, protection for small businesses, preserving the environment
- Respect taxpayers
- Don't over-regulate
- Make decisions based on community values
- Fiscal responsibility vs. progress
- Not neglecting culture
- Remember those who came before
- Balance—environment, economy, social aspect (triple bottom line)
- Good fiscal management
- Social value—social issues need to address. E.g. social housing, affordable housing
- Value for our dollars

Community-building: Participants look to local government to reflect local voices and perspectives and to represent the different needs and interests of community members. Many would like to see local government make a stronger effort to listen and respond to community concerns and to take greater care to ensure that the special qualities of the area's many communities are preserved.

Sample comments:

- Listen to the people
- Respect for First Nations
- Representatives that live in the community
- An active listening Council—when public has concerns, they listen.
- Accessible hours for public participation
- A Council keen on exploring issues for all ages: children, working parents, retirees
- More responsibility to citizens' points of view
- Values of old—big picture, long-term
- Government needs to provide tools and not rely on technology to encourage people to become more informed citizens
- Show respect and love for community vision with every decision
- Strength is in diversity
- Engagement of youth, First Nations
- Find what make us, us
- Proactive and exploratory—be open to financing citizen groups, bringing in new info by outside experts and ideas from other groups of citizens. Need to be current

- Local government should value and promote citizen participation, beyond voting in Municipal Elections

Transparency: Participants also felt that there should be more openness and accountability on the part of local government.

Sample comments:

- Transparency—doing what they say they will
- Accountability
- Accessibility (know our government members)
- Councillors that listen to the public and act. Be accountable
- They are part-timers who just fill a seat and don't do a good job. We should pay more to get better people. We should have well-experienced, educated, and full-time Councillors
- Local government open for business
- Government that listens
- Consistency of government rules
- Be more transparent when wanting to put in another service/facility

Collaboration: Many participants noted the lack of communication and collaboration between the two municipalities, believing they should do more to align and coordinate their activities.

Sample comments:

- • Unity, cohesiveness, and working together
- • Collaboration
- • Working together—Council doesn't do this now. Not cohesive
- • Working with CVRD to create a shared environment with shared trails
- • Willingness to share resources—i.e. snow removal, street cleaning, etc.
- • No sense of unity, people are divided
- • Focus on regional goals
- • Tourism vs pastoral
- • Industry community
- • A community theme for region
- • A shared vision

Question 3: *What issues or concerns do you think matter most when considering whether Duncan and North Cowichan should be amalgamated?*

Most participants focused on the financial challenges faced by both municipalities and by residents. Participants expressed concern about the potential cost of the amalgamation process—severance pay, for example—as well as the cost of sharing services. Broadly, participants were keen to better understand the fiscal implications of amalgamation and take a long view toward any costs or savings.

Participants were also keen to discuss what it might look like to take a “whole-of-valley” view of land management and zoning. Many believe it would be advantageous to streamline existing development guidelines, creating a more consistent and balanced plan for growth. They also cited the benefit of harmonizing bylaws, transportation planning, and emergency services.

Participants noted several concerns regarding elected representation and the importance of ensuring that future investments in Duncan wouldn't disadvantage other communities in the valley. To this end, participants repeatedly flagged the importance of preserving and investing in the distinct identity of the many communities in the Cowichan Valley and the importance of maintaining a “small-town feeling.”

Sample comments:

- A community of communities: Respect and celebrate identity, value, vision of each/all: Chemainus; Crofton; Maple Bay; Sahtlam; Quamichan Lake; Duncan; and Genoa Bay
- Role of citizens: citizen participation—harder for larger number of citizens to have access and their voices heard; lose access and government representation
- Efficiencies of services and resources. Proximity, accessibility, and share of services/resources for outer communities
- How do you rationalize resource management between the different communities and avoid disparities in services—e.g. Duncan police response time is faster at the moment
- Don't want amalgamation to make my taxes go up
- Want to make sure things aren't central in Duncan, and every community is fairly represented and not neglected
- Cost to amalgamate? Jobs lost/created—what's the debt burden comparison between Duncan and North Cowichan?
- Will amalgamation bring young people? Will it create jobs? How will future industry/jobs be affected?
- Improve efficiencies; simplify organization; efficiency of resources; relocation of offices; automation/technology
- Look at European examples of separation of town from country
- How to blend community plans?
- Assets: what does each party bring to the table?
- Staffing: severance costs?
- Land management and zoning and sustainability of the whole valley watershed/forest/protected land
- What is the timeline?

Question 4: *What advice would you like to give the members of the Citizens' Assembly?*

Participants urged the members of the Assembly to keep an open mind, think about the long term, and make a rational argument for either option based on detailed analysis.

Sample comments:

- Keep an open mind and listen well
- Review previous amalgamation concerns, and other municipalities' experiences and case studies, including cost comparisons with other similarly-sized amalgamation communities
- Expect mistakes and make the best of them
- Push for quantitative data, and explore the pros and cons
- Develop real criteria to make it worthwhile
- Focus on the facts and analyse the source
- Insist on a clear direction and full documentation with citizen access to the data
- Listen to what citizens and the public have said
- Become an informer to the community at large
- "We, not I"
- Don't allow one community to overcome the other—either the different identities of Duncan and North Cowichan, or in urban/rural identities. Listen to the small communities.
- Be strong advocates of your neighbourhood
- Don't be influenced by perceived limitations or by "expert" opinion. Be brave and innovative—be the champion for community
- Ensure land-use planning is considered
- There should be citizen input post-report
- Go out to the individual communities and hold meetings in each community—not just Duncan Central. Get the whole community involved (i.e. Crofton, Maple Bay, Chemainus)
- Properly advertise—one-month notice and reminders up to the meeting

- These four questions on the website for public feedback?
- Publish your report in a newspaper and hold a series of meetings once your report is done to inform the public
- What should the percentage of vote yes or no be to trigger amalgamation (is 51 per cent enough?)
- Show up early, stay late; be curious and realistic
- Think about the big picture—don't sweat the small stuff, and consider the benefits twenty years down the road
- Don't just focus on economics; consider vision and values equally
- Take your time—as much as is needed
- Don't be stressed by the magnitude of the task
- Keep a sense of humour and keep up the good work

Public Roundtable Meeting 2

On the evening of Thursday, April 6, 2017, the Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation hosted its second of two public roundtable meetings at the Island Savings Centre. More than forty residents attended, as did two dozen Assembly members and several local Councillors. Peter MacLeod, the Assembly's Chair, led the meeting and explained the Assembly's mandate.

Following his presentation, he invited residents to discuss four questions in small groups. Assembly members sat at each table and helped to facilitate the discussion and take notes.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the benefits and drawbacks of amalgamation?
2. How would Duncan residents and businesses benefit or not benefit from amalgamation?
3. How would North Cowichan residents and businesses benefit or not benefit from amalgamation?
4. What would you like us to share or explain in our report? What do you need to know to have confidence in our recommendations?

Question 1: *What are the benefits and drawbacks of amalgamation?*

Benefits

Participants felt that amalgamation would create a better environment for businesses and stimulate local economy.

Sample comments:

- Large population is more attractive to business
- Branding consistency
- Businesses have a level playing field
- Small businesses may have a more enhanced voice
- Ease of doing business with single municipality—single rules/bylaws evens the playing field
- More than one business centre
- Potential revitalization of Duncan businesses

Participants felt there would be benefits through the streamlining of bylaws and services, and greater consistency in planning and policy.

Sample comments:

- Well integrated services
- Streamline bylaws
- Consistent/effective policy and development decisions
- Ability to plan together for the future
- More effective governance of area
- Reduction of political processes requiring decisions from two Councils

Participants also felt that the separate identities of the two areas could create a stronger amalgamated city; that amalgamation would solidify the current interdependence between the two areas; and that amalgamation could lead to a stronger government.

Drawbacks

Participants were worried about the social impact of amalgamation and, in particular, the loss of a small community feel.

Sample comments:

- Losing the personal service in the city of Duncan—the small town feel
- Potential loss of small community identities

Participants worried about the financial impact of amalgamation, and the potential for higher costs (for Duncan residents in particular).

Sample comments:

- City of Duncan residents would pay for the higher policing costs earlier than they otherwise would
- Tax increases for Duncan (based on the provincial government report 2016-07-25)
- Cost of utilities going up
- Duncan—loss of grant money
- Impact on NC businesses
- Potential negative response to NC businesses
- Is Duncan going to become commercially dominant?

Participants were also worried about the political aspects of amalgamation, with less representation for Duncan residents.

Sample comments:

- Potential lack of voice/representation for Duncan
- Loss of easy contact with municipal officials—smaller community more responsive
- Harmonizing policies would be time consuming

Question 2: *How would Duncan residents and businesses benefit or not benefit from amalgamation?*

Benefits

Participants felt that Duncan could benefit by harmonizing their rules and bylaws.

Sample comments:

- Solving current bureaucratic nightmare
- More even playing field for businesses
- Harmonization will be easier to achieve on service fees, licenses, land use controls, zoning

Participants thought amalgamation would create a better environment for business.

Sample comments:

- More level playing field
- Businesses gain a stronger united voice
- Lower business tax rate
- Harmonizes business rules

Participants felt there would be more potential for growth.

Sample comments:

- Better potential for downtown growth
- Real “downtown” feeling for Duncan, and with boundaries removed, Duncan’s economy could grow

Drawbacks

Participants were concerned about the impact on finance, and the risk of higher costs.

Sample comments:

- Some policing costs (anticipated already by Duncan)
- Potential property tax rise

Participants were concerned about Duncan getting fair representation.

Sample comments:

- May lose access to an engaged Council staff—small town becomes big town
- Representation (potentially less for Duncan and businesses)

Participants also worried that Duncan could lose its uniqueness. Becoming part of a larger community was seen as both a positive and a negative. Participants felt that social housing is an issue answered better with amalgamation, and that residents would enjoy more unity between communities.

Question 3: *How would North Cowichan residents and businesses benefit or not benefit from amalgamation?*

Benefits

Participants felt that there would be a better environment for business.

Sample comments:

- Level playing field for businesses
- Harmonizes business rules

Participants felt that North Cowichan would benefit by streamlining regulations and bylaws.

Sample comments:

- Clears up taxation/confusion over addresses
- Harmonization and cost sharing need to be emphasized
- Harmonization will be easier to achieve on service fees, licences, land use controls, zoning

Participants also felt that amalgamation could possibly eliminate issues of multiple street names, and offer a stronger sense of identity to the south end of North Cowichan.

Drawbacks

Participants were concerned about the impact on finance and the risk of higher costs. Participants were also concerned that North Cowichan would face a lack of representation.

Sample comments:

- May lose access to engaged Council staff
- Lose contact with Council/Councillors

Participants mentioned the need to maintain or restore the rural nature of North Cowichan or run the risk of losing a “community of communities.”

Question 4: *What would you like us to share or explain in our report? What do you need to know to have confidence in our recommendations?*

Recurring themes:

- Can Duncan and North Cowichan explore another approach other than amalgamation to solve the “problem”?
- Attendees requested more information about level of consensus among the Citizens’ Assembly: whether they had enough information, clarity, and time to properly discuss issues; and whether they felt there was any bias.
- Attendees would have appreciated more information about what would happen with emergency services after amalgamation.

Additional themes:

- Clarify water issues regarding shared supply, distribution, and control of watershed
- Clarify borders—i.e. mailing address
- Could amalgamation attract a younger workforce?
- What implications will amalgamation have on the abilities of the Councils to carry on their normal business during the amalgamation process?
- Consider more amalgamations in CVRD to reduce the costs
- More has to be known about other jurisdictions in CVRD, seems inefficient
- More has to be known about public space and who owns it
- More details re: cost differences/savings (numbers)

Website

Throughout the Assembly, the secretariat maintained a website, dnc-cama.ca. The purpose of the site was to share copies of various resources and reports, as well as presentations made to the Assembly, with Cowichan Valley residents. These materials will remain available to download until the end of 2017.

Citizens’ Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation Terms of Reference

1.0 Objective of the Citizens’ Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation

The Citizens’ Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation is a deliberative process intended to provide area residents with an opportunity to participate actively in developing and evaluating the case for amalgamating the City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan. The Citizens’ Assembly will be an impartial, advisory body charged with providing detailed recommendations representing a broad consensus concerning the proposed amalgamation. The Assembly will work to represent all residents and exemplify high standards of transparency, accountability, and robust civic participation.

2.0 Mandate of the Assembly

The Citizens’ Assembly is tasked by the City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan (the Municipalities) to learn about the needs and interests of local residents, examine the implications of creating a new, amalgamated municipal structure, and advise local Councillors and their administrations on the conditions under which the

Municipalities should proceed.

Specifically, the Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation will develop:

- A set of values which describe their aspirations for good local governance;
- A list of issues which they believe need to be satisfactorily resolved for municipal amalgamation to merit consideration; and
- A detailed recommendation concerning municipal amalgamation, including any conditions which would need to be satisfied if a merger was to proceed.

To assist the members of the Assembly with their task, an extensive learning program will provide them with the opportunity:

- To examine the Municipalities' respective infrastructure, services, operations, and governance structures;
- To inform and review the Amalgamation Study being undertaken concurrently with the Citizens' Assembly;
- To learn from relevant case studies concerning prior, similar municipal amalgamations in British Columbia; and
- To consult with and learn from independent experts as well as local residents.

The Assembly will also host two Public Roundtable Meetings. These meetings will provide local residents with an opportunity to express the views and make it possible for members of the Assembly to test their assumptions and ideas with other residents.

3.0 Schedule of the Assembly

The Assembly will meet over six days in early 2017.

1. Saturday, January 21, 2017; 9am-4pm (Assembly meeting 1)
2. Thursday, February 2, 2017; 6pm-8pm (Public Roundtable Meeting A)
3. Saturday, February 4, 2017; 9am-4pm (Assembly meeting 2)
4. Saturday, February 25, 2017; 9am-4pm (Assembly meeting 3)

Interim directions document sent to Technical Consultants

5. Saturday April 1, 2017; 9am-4pm (Assembly meeting 4)
6. Thursday, February 8, 2017; 6pm-8pm (Public Roundtable Meeting B)
7. Saturday, April 8, 2017; 9am-4pm (Assembly meeting 5)
8. Saturday, April 22, 2017; 9am-4pm (Assembly meeting 6)

Additional meetings of the Assembly may be scheduled at the Assembly's discretion and with the authorization of the chair. The Assembly will also host two Public Roundtable Meetings, which will be open to all residents of Duncan and North Cowichan.

4.0 Reporting and Communications

4.1 General Reporting

The Municipalities will develop a shared webpage that will list the members of the Assembly, a detailed agenda including all speakers and resources, and the Assembly's Terms of Reference. Following each Assembly meeting, a brief summary of its activities and progress will be posted.

4.2 Interim Directions Document

Following its first three meetings, the Assembly will issue a brief directions document listing its draft values and the issues or questions that the Assembly believes deserve further study and consideration. This document will be conveyed to the Amalgamation Study team for the purpose of shaping their research activities.

4.3 Final Report

The Assembly will deliver its report to the Municipalities no later than May 31, 2017. The report will include a letter from the chair, an overview of the process, and the proposed values, identified issues and final recommendations of the Assembly. It

will also include an appendix that contains copies of all materials considered by the Assembly, a list of the members of the Assembly, and a “minority report” that documents any dissenting perspectives.

4.4 Communications

The Assembly’s chair is authorized as the exclusive spokesperson for the Assembly and will approve all public communications regarding the conduct of the Assembly unless otherwise delegated.

5.0 Composition of the Citizens’ Assembly

5.1 Recruitment Process

Members of the Assembly will be randomly selected by Civic Lottery—a mechanism that ensures that a broad, representative cross-section of local residents are selected to participate. Ten thousand letters will be sent to households inviting residents to register as volunteers before a publicly-specified deadline. Within a week after the deadline, a blind draw will select members of the Assembly from the pool of registered volunteers.

5.2 Criteria for Membership

The Citizens’ Assembly will consist of thirty-six members. In order to be eligible to serve on this Citizens’ Assembly, an applicant must:

- Reside within the City of Duncan or the Municipality of North Cowichan, and
- Be at least eighteen years old at the time of volunteering.

Additional qualifications:

- Prospective volunteers may only submit their name to the Civic Lottery once.
- All residents who live at a household which has received a Civic Lottery package may volunteer to serve on the Assembly. However, only one person per residential address can be selected as a member of the Assembly.
- Residents directly employed by the Municipalities, as well as any current municipal, provincial, or federal elected representatives are ineligible to serve as members of the Assembly.

5.3 Assembly Composition

The Assembly will be composed of:

- Eighteen men and eighteen women;
- A proportionate number of members from four age cohorts: 18-29, 30-44, 45-64, and 65+;
- Twelve residents from the City of Duncan and twenty-four residents from the Municipality of North Cowichan;
- A proportionate number of members from three sub-areas in the City of Duncan and six sub-areas in North Cowichan; and
- At least two members who self-identify as Indigenous.

Proportions will be established based on the 2011 census profile.

To assist the Assembly members in participating, reasonable childcare, eldercare, and transportation costs will be reimbursed. Assistance will also be provided to those members with different physical or learning abilities. The working language of the Assembly is English. Translation services are not available.

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Assembly Members

Members of the Assembly are expected to fulfil their duties and agree to:

- Attend all sessions of the Assembly as well as the two Public Roundtable Meetings;
- Work to understand and represent the varied perspectives of all residents in both Municipalities;
- Treat each other with respect and take an active role in the work of the Assembly; and;

- Work collaboratively to achieve a strong consensus concerning the Assembly's recommendations.

If a member of the Assembly must withdraw owing to illness or unexpected events prior to the third meeting of the Assembly, a new member will be appointed from the pool of volunteers who submitted their name to the Civic Lottery. Members who withdraw following the third meeting will not be replaced unless so directed by the Chair.

6.2 Roles and Responsibilities of the Chair

The Chair of the Assembly is appointed by the firm responsible for undertaking the Assembly and is tasked to:

- Oversee a fair and representative selection process to appoint members of the Assembly;
- Develop and execute a sound deliberative process that upholds high democratic standards and that yields a clear recommendation for consideration by the Councils of both Municipalities;
- Develop and execute a balanced curriculum that will ensure that members of the Assembly are adequately and appropriately informed and able to fulfil their mandate;
- Support respectful dialogue and deliberation amongst members;
- Ensure that regular updates concerning the Assembly's proceedings are made publicly available;
- Produce and deliver a Final Report concerning the Assembly's activities and recommendations before May 31, 2017;
- Exercise discretion in ensuring and safeguarding the integrity and sound conduct of the Assembly;

The chair acts as project executive and lead moderator. Decisions concerning the conduct of the Assembly are made at the Chair's discretion in consultation with the Chief Administrative Officer of each Municipality.

6.3 The Roles and Responsibilities of Other Parties

The City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan will work to support the Assembly and ensure its success. They will endeavour to:

- Provide expertise and access to relevant perspectives, documents and other materials; and
- Give careful and timely consideration to the Assembly's Final Report, responding publicly and in detail to the Assembly's recommendations.
- The Amalgamation Study team will respond to the issues and questions identified in the Interim Directions Document, and support the Assembly in its deliberations by providing impartial expertise.
- Both parties agree to respect and support the independence and integrity of the Assembly.

Program development & facilitation

The Duncan-North Cowichan Citizens' Assembly was designed and facilitated by MASS LBP. MASS is Canada's leader in the use of long-form deliberative and participatory processes to shape public policy.

Since 2007, MASS LBP has led some of Canada's most original and ambitious efforts to engage citizens in tackling tough policy options while pioneering the use of Civic Lotteries and Citizens' Reference Panels. To date, more than 300,000 households across the country have received invitations to participate in 29 Citizens' Assemblies and Reference Panels formed by governments to address a wide range of issues.

To learn more about their work, please visit masslbp.com



**Final Report and Recommendation
of the Duncan-North Cowichan
Citizens' Assembly**