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April 20th, 2020

Dear Mayor Haynes and Saanich Council

It comes as a great disappointment to learn of Mayor Haynes' proposal to disband the agreement for the Citizen's Assembly with the City of Victoria. We wish to express our deepest concern and frustration.

The notion of assembling 75 people in a room at this moment in time is a serious concern. But the citizens have spoken. Deliberating amalgamation has received the strongest of support. The idea of full abandonment is completely unwarranted. Frankly, ignoring your constituents is reckless and autocratic.

The idea that his proposal would "free up important resources internally" is very short-sighted. One of the possibilities of amalgamation is that significant resources would be freed up for the long term greater good. Any saving by cancelling is dwarfed by future possibilities.

The entire world is finding ways to interact by using innovative and readily available alternatives, such as on line meetings, distance work groups, or simple postponement until it is safe to resume gatherings.

We would remind you that...

- In 2014 Saanich voted to Saanich residents voted 88.5 per cent in favour when asked: "Do you support council initiating a community-based review of governance structures and policies with Saanich and our partnerships within the region?"
- In 2018, 16,852 residents voted in favour of exploring the costs, benefits, and disadvantages of the amalgamation of Saanich and Victoria through a Citizens' Assembly process.

As elected officials you must respect your constituents and be accountable.

In January 2020 Saanich entered into an agreement with the City of Victoria to explore a citizens' assembly to study the amalgamation of Victoria and Saanich, Time to live up to that agreement.

Make process implementation adjustments relevant the times we are in. You have been given a clear direction by the people and the ballot box.

Please consider the postponement as opposed to the cancellation of this commitment made to Saanich residents.

Sincerely

John Wilson
President & CEO
Wilson's Group of Companies
(Head office District of Saanich)

