



## Questions for the Technical Consultants

February 28, 2017

*Members of the Citizens' Assembly drafted the following questions which were transmitted to technical consultants at Urban Systems Inc. who have been retained by the Duncan and North Cowichan to provide an independent assessment of the fiscal, infrastructure, service and governance implications of amalgamation. Urban Systems will provide a report on their findings to the municipalities and the Assembly on or before April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.*

*To learn more about the Assembly, please visit: [www.dnc-cama.ca](http://www.dnc-cama.ca)*

### General

- 1) What lessons can Duncan and North Cowichan learn from Abbotsford and Nanaimo? How do the circumstances concerning amalgamation compare?
- 2) Why consider amalgamation now? Is there a better time or scale at which Duncan and North Cowichan should consider amalgamating?
- 3) What strategies could an amalgamated municipality adopt to preserve the distinct character and identity of local communities?

### Land Use & Planning

- 4) Is there anything we can learn concerning the development or harmonization of OCPs from other amalgamated municipalities in BC or other provinces?
- 5) What would be the approximate cost of creating a new Official Community Plan (OCP) for the amalgamated municipality as well as Local Area Plans for each of the communities within an amalgamated municipality, and harmonizing corresponding land use bylaws? What would be a reasonable timeline for completing this work?
- 6) Is it possible that the province could provide one-time funding to develop a new OCP and LAPs as part of transition funding?

## **Governance**

- 7) How would the by-laws of the two municipalities be harmonized? Would they continue to co-exist, would new by-laws be drafted or would the existing by-laws of one of the two municipalities supersede the other?
- 8) How have comparable municipalities in Canada changed their council systems following amalgamation? Is there a case for expanding council or implementing a ward or hybrid ward and at-large system? What factors should be considered when determining the appropriate council system for an amalgamated municipality?

## **Environment**

- 9) What environmental regulations would be affected by amalgamation? How would these regulations be harmonized?
- 10) Would an amalgamated municipality be better able to invest in local alternative energy sources, such as biomass, geothermal, tidal, or wind power? Would an amalgamated municipality be better positioned to attract alternative energy investment?
- 11) Would an amalgamated municipality be better able to influence provincial or federal environmental regulation? How would amalgamation affect our ability to responsibly manage and protect local water sources?
- 12) Would an amalgamated municipality be better able to protect and advocate for the local bioregion?

## **Taxation and finances**

- 13) What is the likely impact of amalgamation on tax rates for residents and businesses in Duncan and North Cowichan?
- 14) What factors related to amalgamation could lead to increased taxes for residents and businesses?
- 15) Could amalgamation have an adverse impact on low-income residents? If so, what might it be?
- 16) What provincial funds might be available – for what use, period and amount – to offset transition costs?
- 17) How would amalgamation change North Cowichan and Duncan's eligibility for specific provincial and federal funding programs?

## **Efficiencies, services, infrastructure**

- 18) How would an amalgamated municipality harmonize its services and infrastructure? Where are the widest gaps between existing services and infrastructure affecting residents and businesses of the two municipalities?
- 19) If amalgamation was to occur, in which areas could local administration and services could be streamlined and what savings are likely to result?
- 20) Where have previous amalgamations typically found cost savings and improved methods for delivering municipal services?
- 21) Given anticipated capital expenses in the next 5 - 10 years, how would amalgamation affect the overall costs of these projects and how would it impact the taxes of residents in both Duncan and North Cowichan?
- 22) Are there any anticipated new capital costs associated with amalgamation?
- 23) What are the anticipated costs of integrating services, governance, bylaws and zoning? How do these costs compare with anticipated savings during both the implementation period and over twenty-five years?
- 24) How would user fees and parcel fees change for residents if the municipal were to amalgamate?
- 25) What advantages would an amalgamated municipality enjoy in terms of cost efficiency, quality of services and infrastructure and standing with the provincial and federal government?
- 26) If the municipalities amalgamate, what would happen to existing service contracts? Are there any specific liabilities with regards to these contracts?
- 27) How should emergency services be delivered in an amalgamated municipality? What are the likely costs or savings and consequences for services?
- 28) Would an amalgamated city be in a better position to provide social and affordable housing?

## **Economic growth**

- 29) How is amalgamation likely to affect local economic activity and growth?

- 30) How does population and economic growth in Duncan and North Cowichan compare with the province as a whole and comparable municipalities over the past decade?
- 31) What are the current bylaw and policy differences between Duncan and North Cowichan that led to competitive advantages/disadvantages between municipalities?
- 32) What are the likely economic or opportunity costs of not amalgamating?
- 33) What advantages or disadvantages might accrue to local businesses from amalgamation?
- 34) Without amalgamation, does North Cowichan's continued growth pose a challenge to the viability of Duncan businesses and its tax base?
- 35) Would amalgamation strengthen area tourism?