

EXCHANGE



LGMA

EXCHANGE is a quarterly magazine published by the **Local Government Management Association (LGMA)** of **British Columbia**. It's about sharing information, exchanging ideas on best practices, enhancing professional development and building networks. Reach us at www.lgma.ca.

FALL 2014

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Asset Management: From Awareness to Action

How can local governments meet their communities' short-term needs while planning adequately for the future? Three Canadian cities show how small steps can go a long way.



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Stepping Forward. Stepping Back.

While local governments are making progress in their asset management efforts and more help is becoming available, new challenges to infrastructure management continue to emerge.



EXCHANGE

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ELECTIONS BC
Province of British Columbia

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2014 Elections Update

As election day approaches, British Columbia's Chief Election Officer Keith Archer writes about local government campaign financing and the resources available to help.



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A Visit to Vernon

In this edition of Our Town, we find out what's special about the City of Vernon in the North Okanagan.

IN THIS ISSUE



It's funny how we view things differently when working in the world of local government. For most people, I'm guessing they see landscaped boulevards and appreciate the beauty of the trees and flowers. For me, I appreciate the beauty, but I also see the challenges of ongoing maintenance, and I wonder if they have to close lanes to do the work or if they needed to add sprinklering systems to the area. Most people use roads, water and sewer without a thought of the work behind the scenes. I use those services with an appreciation of value for tax dollar. And never again will I buy a house without first checking on the community plan for the area.

It's a bit of a skewed vision, but it comes from the extra awareness of the complexity and demands of local government operations. As we worked on this edition of *Exchange*, my vision was even more focused than usual as I was hyper aware of asset management and aging infrastructure challenges. My trip to Montreal this summer included shopping and gazing with alarm at multiple overpasses that seemed to be stitched together with patching and metal straps. As we moved along to Winnipeg, I flinched at the extensive damage the winter does to roads and wondered about how the City manages to maintain – let alone replace – an extensive network of roads pitted by potholes.

My vacation became an amateur condition assessment exercise, and my sympathies were with the various communities I visited. It's tough to grapple with the reality of the challenge to address aging infrastructure, but in *Asset Management: From Awareness to Action*, we learn from three communities who are taking steps to address the needs in their community.

It quickly became evident that even small steps forward are essential and valuable. In *Stepping Forward. Stepping Back*, we learn that there is progress towards new funding resources, greater awareness of aging infrastructure as a critical risk area, and more collaboration and integration of asset management into regular operations. At the same time, new risks in the area of natural disasters and unfunded liabilities are adding new challenges to the mix. It's a quagmire for sure.

Recognizing the challenges – and the frustration of being the generation tasked with dealing with such a monumental task – I believe the situation becomes more alarming as we move into election mode. Those who truly understand the funding gap and critical risks of failing infrastructure likely share my shudder when candidates campaign on a “zero tax increase” platform. Even worse are those who say they'll cut taxes. It shows a blatant lack of understanding of what is truly needed to ensure that the infrastructure we enjoy today is maintained and replaced to provide safe and reliable services. It also tells me the work around communication is not done. There may be growing awareness of the challenges at a Council and staff level, but I look forward to the day when discussion at the local coffee shops is about how we need to look for ways to support financing for replacing infrastructure and build sustainable funding models for all new assets. Maybe I'm tilting at windmills.

Regardless of where each local government is at, the problem will not go away on its own. There are multiple resources and examples of best practices emerging to support asset management, and Asset Management BC is the best place to get started. My thanks go to all of the people who shared their stories and expertise with us in this edition of *Exchange*. If you have a story to share, please let us know at editor@lgma.ca.

Therese Mickelson, ABC
Editor

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Upcoming themes for *Exchange*:

Winter 2015
Revitalizing Your Community

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Each goal in the Strategic Plan is a stepping stone that moves us ahead as individual professionals, as a group of local government managers and as an organization.

Responsive. Innovative. Dynamic. These are great words and they are embedded in our new Strategic Plan's vision for the Local Government Management Association (LGMA). Add in a few more, like enthusiastic, motivated and energized, and the combination captures the essence of how I feel as a member of the team that will be taking action to implement the strategies outlined in the LGMA's new Strategic Plan.

I can guarantee the Strategic Plan approved by the Board this past June will not be one of those plans that sits on a shelf until its next update. Many of you were directly involved in providing input on where we want to go as an organization and how we plan to get there. I'm impressed by the Strategic Plan's inspiring vision, with clear, achievable goals backed by practical strategies.

As we start out this new Board year, I find myself in the exciting position of being able to work with the LGMA Board, staff and members to jumpstart this new strategy. We are focused on our refreshed vision "To be a responsive, innovative and dynamic organization promoting professional excellence for local government professionals in BC." Our strategy is anchored by a clear mission statement and backed by important values entrenched in professionalism, high ethical standards, and a commitment to innovation and looking ahead to anticipate future needs.

For myself, I see this updated strategy as a clearly-defined map that will guide us and keep us focused on shared goals that truly reflect our members' interests and priorities. As a Board, we'll use the strategies and performance measures identified to deliver value to members. We also know we can't do it on our own. Our amazing team of volunteers across the province is integral to achieving each goal in the plan. We recognize the value you bring with every moment of time you give to the LGMA. We value the knowledge and expertise you share with us. Your efforts to give back to our profession and to your colleagues are at the heart of what makes local government an amazing place to work and grow as professionals.

Looking at the five goals in the Strategic Plan, I see each one as a stepping stone that moves us ahead as individual professionals, as a group of local government managers and as an organization within the LGMA. I also like that our goals are defined by building on our core strengths. This translates into relevant goals that directly support

our members and our vision. For example, we excel at education and professional development, and we're aiming our energies at being best-in-class. We know how to leverage professional networking – we have stories to share in abundance – so I'm thrilled to see a goal in place to support our connections with colleagues. The strategy recognizes that increasing demands and imposed changes in local government evolve and emerge at a rapid pace, and we have a goal in place to anticipate those changes and equip you with resources that meet the specialized needs of local government. In addition to these resources, we have a goal that recognizes the importance of delivering value through our services as an organization. And for our operational longevity, we have a goal that focuses on a sustainable model for attracting and retaining members and volunteers.

If I had space, I'd provide more detail about the objectives and strategies that support each goal. Instead, I encourage you to visit www.lgma.ca and read the Strategic Plan as it will guide our actions and decisions for the next five years. This is a great time to be a part of the LGMA. There are many opportunities to gain extra value from your membership and build on the core strengths that make LGMA one of the most valuable resources available to local government managers in B.C.

I am very proud to be representing you on the Board, and I look forward to connecting with you in person, by email, by phone and by any of the other new platforms that keep popping up for networking and collaboration. We're here to serve, so stay in touch!

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Acting President*

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Three elements of leadership seem essential: having a strong vision, understanding the context or situation where leadership is necessary and having the courage to act.

The LGMA recently concluded its 31st MATI Foundations course with an excellent session on leadership by the ever-popular and very knowledgeable Tracey Lee Lorenson. As I sat and listened in, I was struck – again – by just how fortunate we are in local government to have so many talented leaders within the profession as well as access to faculty and guest speakers who understand the challenges of leadership within the local government context. The class of 2014 MATI Foundations itself was a great cohort of leaders, including a number of young professionals who are carving out their careers and several seasoned leaders who have recently joined local government, bringing with them decades of experience.

Leadership seems to be a hot topic in the increasingly complex environments in which we work today. *Amazon.ca* alone has over 90,000 books from gurus of all stripes offering hundreds of different definitions of what constitutes good leadership and dispensing advice on how to be an effective leader. Some say leaders are born, not made, but the evidence from business and psychology studies proves overwhelmingly that while some people have a natural disposition towards leadership, all of us can learn good leadership skills and practices.

So what does it take to be a good leader? If you look at the characteristics of great leaders across history, from Abraham Lincoln to Martin Luther King to Nelson Mandela and others, three elements of leadership seem essential: having a strong vision; understanding the context or situation where leadership is necessary; and having the courage to act. I would add that beyond these individual leadership traits, we shouldn't ignore the powers of group collaboration and the essential characteristics of inclusivity needed for effective organizational leadership and change management.

The LGMA offers multiple professional development opportunities to help local government professionals enhance their leadership skills. In addition to MATI Foundations, we partner with Capilano University to deliver MATI Leadership and the new Successful CAO course, which will be offered in October 2015 and will focus on leadership skills for new and aspiring CAOs. Our teaching methodology and peer-learning model are working well, judging from the very positive feedback from participants of our leadership courses.

Our approach includes leadership effectiveness exercises and self-assessment, interacting and learning from local government leaders and mentors, and hands-on simulation exercises that help to build interpersonal and team leadership skills.

Our guest faculty and the mentors LGMA engages to help participants become highly effective leaders all share lessons from their own leadership journeys, and this is undoubtedly what has the most impact for participants. These leaders can articulate what they wanted to change and why, and how they made that transformation both personally and organizationally. While the transformative journey can be hard, the stories from the trenches help reinforce that when things get tough, the “why” helps motivate personal energy and drives the team forward. Momentum for the journey also comes from leaders openly acknowledging their shortcomings and flaws and making a public declaration of their willingness to change. The leadership frameworks, tools and strategies being shared help demonstrate how to be successful as a team, not just as a leader. The LGMA mentors and faculty also stress that leaders must be coaches but must also be willing to receive coaching.

Developing strong educational and training opportunities for leadership skills development is one of the critical platforms in our Strategic Plan. What should the LGMA be doing to up the leadership quotient in our educational programming? How can we be even more effective in helping local government professionals grow or fine-tune their leadership skill set, whether they are seasoned or promising leaders?

We know there is no one leadership style for everyone or every situation. Good leaders learn to use the style to suit the goal – and we have lots of great leaders to draw on from local government to model what that looks like. We would love to hear from you if you have leadership course ideas or want to become more involved in assisting us develop the next generation of leadership training and professional development courses.

Nancy Taylor
Executive Director



By Lorena (Lori) Staples
Lorena Staples, Q.C.

CASE of INTEREST



Caselaw and the New Election Laws

There are no cases on the recent changes in election legislation since the first election occurs this fall. Some of the changes are educational, intended to prevent a candidate from making the blunder described in *David Stow v British Columbia (Attorney General)*. Stow was an “also ran” in the 2008 election in the Town of Gibsons. He tried to file a disclosure statement after the 120-day time period mandated under the former Section 90 of the *Local Government Act* (LGA), now repealed and replaced with the disclosure provisions of the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* (LECFA).

Having also missed the 30-day grace period under Section 90.2, Stow was required to pay a \$500 fee for late filing. His filing was rejected because he refused to pay the fee, insisting there was no statutory deadline for the payment. His petition to the B.C. Supreme Court for relief from the additional penalties for late filing and failure to pay the fee – disqualification from being nominated or elected to a local government office until after the next general local election – was denied, as was his appeal to the B.C. Court of Appeal. Subsequently, the Supreme Court of Canada denied his application for leave to appeal.

The Court of Appeal agreed with the decision of the chambers judge that “... the Legislature intended to make full compliance with a condition precedent to a person obtaining relief from the consequences of failing to comply...” and added “The language of s. 90.2(a) must be read in its entire context and harmoniously with the scheme and object of the Act...”.

Any lack of legislative clarity with respect to when the late filing fee is payable has been addressed in Section 47(2) of LECFA, which requires the late filing fee to be paid as a condition of the acceptance of the late disclosure statement by the BC Chief Electoral Officer.

Under section 72(3) of the LGA, the solemn declaration that candidates must include with their nomination documents contains a statement that the candidate is aware of LECFA, understands LECFA’s requirements and restrictions regarding candidates, and intends to fully comply with them.

This places the onus of awareness of the LECFA limitations and requirements, e.g. filing a disclosure statement, on the candidate and prevents a candidate from blaming either the local election officials or the candidate’s agents for the failure.

In case it has not come to the attention of current election officials, the 2012 judgment in *Baziuk v Shelley* also bears mentioning. Mr. Shelley was a volunteer firefighter who was declared ineligible to hold office after being elected as a Harrison Hot Springs councillor in the 2011 election. He was deemed an employee, not a volunteer, because he received monetary compensation from the municipality over and above the amount exempted under the *Volunteer Eligibility for Office Regulation*, deposited on Sept. 19, 2011, close to the start of the nomination period.

However, the devil is in the details, as they say. Under the regulation, a person who provides volunteer services to a municipality or regional district is not an employee if the person does not receive monetary compensation for the services. “Monetary compensation” does not include:

- reasonable and necessary expenses actually incurred and reimbursed that arise directly out of the performance of the volunteer services for a municipality or regional district;
- the provision of insurance coverage, workers’ compensation coverage, personal clothing, equipment or training directly related to the performance of the volunteer services for a municipality or regional district; or
- gifts in recognition of long service or exemplary service in the provision of volunteer services to a municipality or regional district.

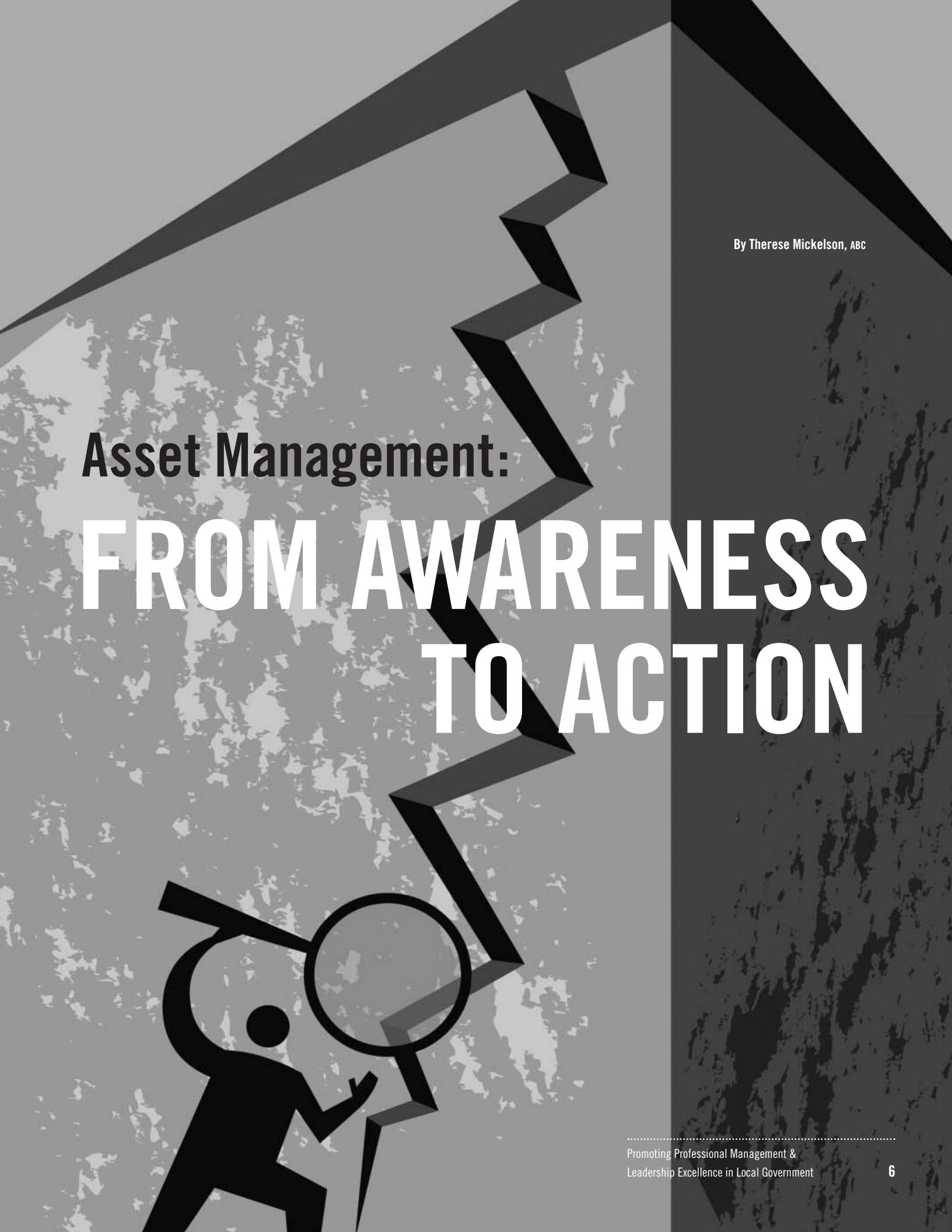
With all of these details in hand, local election officials and aspiring candidates who volunteer for their local government will be able to determine if the candidate is qualified.

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By Therese Mickelson, ABC

Asset Management: FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

Bridges and overpasses collapse. Water and sewer pipes burst. Roads crack and crumble. Buildings become uninhabitable.

It's not Armageddon. It's not even a natural disaster (though that poses its own risks). It's the worst-case scenario when aging infrastructure fails, and it leads to serious life safety and health issues. Clearly, failure is not an option. And asset management is the first step towards successful solutions.

While there is consensus that aging infrastructure is a serious issue, there is also a significant funding gap that leaves local governments well short of the financial resources needed. Despite these challenges, communities are moving forward with asset management planning to address their infrastructure challenges. Some are just in the early stages and others are well on their way to implementing solutions.

TAKING THE FIRST STEP – CITY OF TERRACE, B.C.

For some communities, the magnitude of the problem and the inescapable reality of the huge financial challenge make tackling asset management intimidating. For Terrace, it's been a matter of taking numerous small steps with manageable resources – and every step is improving the City's ability to manage its assets. It started with the work to meet the Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) 3150 requirements to collect an inventory of their tangible capital assets, and that led to a better understanding of their infrastructure-funding backlog.

"When we first heard about PSAB 3150, it seemed like a tedious and time-consuming process that was being imposed on us," says Heather Avison, Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Terrace. "But over time we saw the value as the scary story in terms of where our infrastructure situation sits began to emerge, and now we clearly understand the challenge we face."

Despite a slow economy along with limited staff and time, a team with representatives from all departments pulled together to develop a detailed capital assets valuation, including a comprehensive inventory with layers of information catalogued on Excel spreadsheets.

"One thing that has been a huge benefit is that all of our information is linked to our GIS system, so it helps to ensure the information is at the fingertips of everyone involved – including data on when the infrastructure went in or was replaced," says Avison. "It's not a fancy program, but it works to inform our planning process."

With the information available and the challenges more clearly defined, Avison and her management team have worked to educate Council about the challenges, and the data is being used to make recommendations for budget planning and other Council decisions.

"We remind our Council that anything new means more maintenance costs and the need to set aside replacement funding."

As an example, once the inventory was complete, it was noted that Terrace has approximately 100 kilometres of paved road in the community, with funding to replace about one kilometre per year. The data showed that based on when they were built, many of the roads are due to be replaced at the same time.

"I'm fortunate because when we presented the information, I didn't have to convince Council that this is important – they trust us as experts and that we are working for them to recommend priorities," adds Avison. "It's easy to throw out a big number – such as our \$44 million backlog – but we are also diligent about providing Council with the context of what that actually means, how we have to assign money going forward to chip away at the challenge and find a balance that works for our community and with our resources."

In Terrace, this means making changes such as using an overlay program to repair asphalt surfaces where appropriate rather than replacing the entire road, which extends the road's life by about 20 years and allows those funds to be allocated to more urgent infrastructure needs. Staff have worked with Council to emphasize the importance of maintenance, renovations and priority-setting using limited resources.

"We can't always do what we'd like best – like replacing infrastructure such as a pool – but we may be able to do some refurbishing," says Avison. "And we remind our Council that anything new means more maintenance costs and the need to set aside replacement funding so they understand it's not just the capital costs, but also the long-term costs that need to be considered."

Terrace applied this strategy to its existing pool, which is 40 years old. The City cannot afford to replace the pool yet, but it is a valuable asset in the community. Instead, Council approved a plan to repair and refurbish the pool to make it a nicer facility, such as replacing damaged walls, adding natural lighting and upgrading the air quality systems.

Looking ahead, Avison notes there is a need to be cautious about what is feasible without generating a lot of work for staff.

Asset Management: From Awareness to Action

Continued from page 7

With an aim to improve their understanding of asset management and applying multiple strategies, City staff attended the National Asset Management Strategy Training offered through Asset Management BC. The training highlighted different programs to support asset management and the need for an asset management plan for their community, but Avison notes that Terrace is not yet ready to implement new programs.

"While I believe there are other good programs out there, I would look to my staff to advise me about when we are at the point where we need to expand into something more robust," says Avison. "I also recognize that we may need to have an asset management plan in place to gain access to grants and other funding in the future, so it's something else we'll be considering in future."

Avison adds that the most important step is to get started.

"You can't ignore the problem, but you can take small steps that work for your community," says Avison.



Heather Avison

"We've built a solid base that we can build on. Yes, it can be overwhelming, but you just need to recognize that it's okay to start small and build up as you go along. Even small steps are really helpful."

ESTABLISHING BEST PRACTICES TO SHARE – CITY OF EDMONTON

Some communities in Canada started their initial small steps several years ago and have now built up a comprehensive asset management strategy and related processes that offer insight and practical solutions that can be applied as best practices.

The City of Edmonton started its asset management work 15 years ago. In 2000, the City developed its first infrastructure strategy and identified its funding gap. Early steps involved developing a common platform to provide a standardized rating system for all of the City's infrastructure. This included a consistent approach to defining infrastructure and processes to determine the replacement value of assets.

The standardized rating system included assessment of the condition of the asset, its functionality in terms of how well it was meeting the needs of the end user, and the demand for the asset, such as whether there are enough lanes and large enough pipes.

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"We quickly realized there were many ways to measure value and that we needed a standardized approach," says Konrad Siu, who led the City of Edmonton's asset management program and was the Director of the Office of Infrastructure and Funding Strategy. "With our standardized rating system, we could look at what we owned, along with the value and the condition of the asset, so we could assess what we needed to do with each asset, when it needed to be done and what it would cost."

As the City increased its understanding of its assets and strategies to determine what needed to be done each year and in the future, it expanded its asset management plan to incorporate risk assessment to determine the impact of an infrastructure failure.

"If a bridge fails, multiple people could die. If a water treatment plant fails, there can be excessive damage to the environment," says Siu. "So we look at the state of the infrastructure and the risk failure impacts, and we use this to determine where to allocate resources."

By pulling together the standardized ratings for infrastructure, measured against the risk of failure and available budget, the City is better able to assess its spending and has a clear picture of the situation today and in the future. The data has been integrated into the City's 10-year capital investment agenda.

"When we go to Council with requests for funding, such as two per cent tax increases to build a sustainable fund for neighbourhood road improvements, we are not just pulling numbers out of the air," says Siu. "We have clear data that is easy to understand based on the model we have developed."

Over time, the City's ability to define and describe its infrastructure challenges has grown. In 2001, it used a simple assessment method of one, two or three stars to establish the condition of assets. In 2004, it had a comprehensive report based on its standardized assessment system, including a detailed inventory and options to address problems.

"You can't just ask Council to write you a blank cheque," says Siu. "You need to show them what the costs are and why the money is needed and back it up with research and options for how they can finance it in a way that is politically acceptable. We initially told Council the gap was \$1.8 billion and they laughed at us, figuring we were just trying to scare them. But several years later, they understand the magnitude and realistic options for funding – like two per cent per year. That's manageable."

Looking back, Siu identifies a number of tactics the City applied that have emerged as best practices in addressing aging infrastructure and the need for asset management plans.

Communication and collaboration have been essential. To reach citizens, City staff initiated a media relations program that included meeting with the media in person to explain the methodology and highlight the challenges and risks.

"About 15 years ago, no one was talking about infrastructure and asset management, so when we met with the media, we were seen as leaders in this area and that made us newsworthy," says Siu.

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“Our work generated national coverage, and we leveraged our credibility to promote our methodology and rating system with Council.”

The City also engaged the community by including representatives from different professional associations on an Infrastructure Technical Advisory Committee. The expertise and experience of the engineers, chartered accountants, provincial government employees, landscapers, university professors and land development professionals have provided valuable insights into different approaches that could be implemented.

“The Committee started as a source for expert opinion and advice, but after a few years, they have also become our champions,” says Siu. “They have been very supportive of what we are doing, and they share their support with elected officials locally and provincially.”

Internal collaboration started early, with managers from multiple departments involved in generating data and developing practical solutions. As departments became involved, they also soon came to understand the benefits of clearly-defined infrastructure needs.

“I don’t tell managers and working teams what to do in their department – they have ownership of their operations – but I ask them to collaborate with us, and over time, they realized that there was some financial return for their extra work,” says Siu.

“Parks didn’t know what they owned and now they do – and they have embraced asset management as it has provided them with a way to get funding where they need it based on proven data.”

Communication and collaboration are also integral to knowledge transfer. The City recognized that a tremendous amount had been learned and significant progress made over the past decade, but that there was still a long road ahead. To that end, it has introduced a knowledge transfer program involving 10 half-day sessions to share information about what asset management means to the City, how it affects different areas of the organization (such as city planning, information technology, accounting and other disciplines) and how to integrate asset management into municipal operations.

And at its core, the City’s approach – developing a systematic methodology to apply a standardized rating system and consistent approach to identify the need, timing and cost of its infrastructure replacement – has cemented its position as having a clear, informed strategy for the future.

“Fundamentally, we have solid information to demonstrate the need and outcomes,” says Siu. “When we ask for \$1 million, we can show what the need is, how we will use the money and what will happen if we don’t invest the money in the identified projects.”

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TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES – CITY OF GRAND FORKS

For most communities, the challenge of addressing asset management and the infrastructure-funding gap may seem insurmountable. But Grand Forks saw it as an opportunity. Working with partners including Selkirk College, the Asset Management Working Group, Urban Systems and the Public Works Association of BC (PWABC), the City has created a certificate course, called Asset and Maintenance Management Processes, to provide training on effective maintenance management techniques and asset management.

The course is designed for public works crews who are in the field, and it applies hands-on training.

“As part of my involvement with Asset Management BC, I was looking for ways to help fill the gaps on what asset management is all about, and in my role here in Grand Forks, we are always looking for opportunities for economic development,” says Doug Allin, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Grand Forks. “This program helps support both areas.”

“The big gap we found was bringing our public works crews on board with understanding asset management and how the work they do every day has a financial impact on the community,” adds Allin.

In addition to the practical tasks of asset management, the training focuses on making the connections between the time spent on public works tasks, like sealing a crack in the road, with how extending the life of that road has a financial value to the community.

“Some guys have been on the job for 30 years and are near retirement, so they may be wondering why we are telling them they need to do asset management. But the reality is that they have been doing asset management work all along, they just didn’t know it,” says Allin.

Recognizing that the course participants are used to being outside and not sitting at a desk in a classroom, the course provides a different approach to learning. The competitive format involves groups who take on different challenges and practices in asset management.

The groups are sent out into the community, where the local infrastructure forms the “science lab” for their assignments. They complete a number of asset management tasks, including assessing the condition of infrastructure, meeting with engineers, and gaining an understanding of strategies for maintenance and replacement programs. There are prizes for winning teams, and participants receive a Certificate of Completion from Selkirk College and Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) towards professional development.

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Asset Management: From Awareness to Action

Continued from page 11

Key deliverables of the course include learning how to apply practical tools and best practices to maintain, report and track infrastructure; how to complete maintenance management plans; what strategies extend the life of assets; and how to complete condition assessments as well as why they are important. The first course was offered this September, and the hope is it will expand to other communities.

"We already have interest from a B.C. university and the idea is to eventually take it overseas as a way to attract students and bring in

revenue to B.C.," says Allin. "But that's a few years out. For now, we are delivering it in Grand Forks, and it could move easily to other communities as we all have the lab for the students to use – they get to work with our infrastructure in the community."

From an economic development perspective, the idea was originally generated as part of discussions about how to take something that seemed like a liability – such as aging infrastructure – and turn it into an asset. The tangible economic returns may be small, but for Grand Forks, it will mean attracting people to their community who can share their own ideas and expertise, which benefits everyone involved. Shared knowledge will support the City's efforts to manage well-maintained infrastructure and deliver reliable services, which are essential for attracting and retaining businesses. As well, hosting the course and working with partners is helping to raise awareness about asset management in the community.

"We're investing in our industry, not just our community," says Allin. "Employees come and go, and the more training that is in place, the more we all benefit as they move around the province."

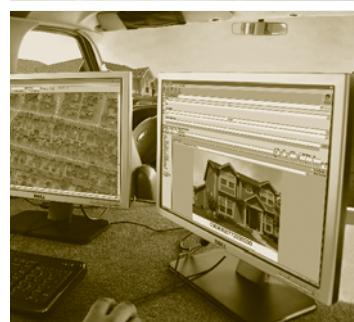
For more information on the Asset and Maintenance Management Processes Course, visit www.pwabc.ca or call 1-877-356-0699.



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Stepping Forward. Stepping Back.

By Therese Mickelson, ABC

Progress towards bridging the infrastructure-funding gap can be measured in stages ranging from baby steps to leaps and shuffles. Awareness and understanding of the challenges is growing, with some local governments just starting to grasp the magnitude of the gap and others moving ahead with plans and options to deal with their funding shortfalls.

At the same time, Asset Management BC and its partners regularly take a step back to have a fresh look at the progress to date and assess risks and opportunities going forward. Their observations and the emerging considerations affecting aging infrastructure will influence next steps for local government asset management.

One significant step forward since 2010, when *Exchange* highlighted the challenges of asset management and the infrastructure-funding gap (Bridging the Abyss), is the broader awareness of asset management, what it involves and why it is important.

"Until 2010, Councils did not have a handle on the value of their assets, let alone the scope of the challenge to fund their replacement," says Wally Wells, Executive Director, Asset Management BC. "Now we can quantify the value of their assets, how much money is involved and what their responsibilities are as elected officials. It could be a very long period of time to reach financial self-sufficiency for dealing with assets, but we are seeing more local governments recognizing that this is worth doing."

In addition to recognizing the importance of asset management, there is also growing understanding that it takes coordination across departments and leadership at a corporate level to make progress.

"We've seen a significant culture change from a few years ago when people didn't understand why they needed to talk to each other across departments," says Wells. "They worked in silos doing their jobs well, but now asset management is seen as a corporate-wide function."

Wells notes that asset management is also becoming integrated into daily business rather than being viewed as a special project, and that's an important shift towards a more sustainable model for managing aging and new infrastructure.

"We all see that 50 to 60 years ago, municipal budget processes never contemplated renewal and replacement, and we're the children and grandchildren who are dealing with the legacy of aging infrastructure," says Wells.

"Now we don't talk about it as a future problem; we talk about it as something that needs to be dealt with as part of our daily decisions."

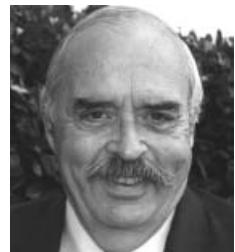
There is also an increasing effort to include asset management considerations in budget processes – including providing quantifiable

information to Council for annual spending decisions as well as long-term planning – and to identify performance indicators that help local governments track progress and report back to Council and citizens.

Beyond these positive actions, more and more B.C. local governments are taking the initiative to develop comprehensive asset management plans based on extensive data about tangible capital assets, their current condition, and replacement costs and timing. It's important to note the asset management plan is the framework for making informed decisions and outlining options and opportunities. Making progress involves implementing practical solutions based on the asset management plan, the financial plan and corporate processes.

"Asset management isn't even really the right word for the broader strategy or plan because what it really takes is a corporate commitment," says Wells.

Continued on page 14



Wally Wells



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Stepping Forward. Stepping Back.

Continued from page 13

“This means gaining buy-in, looking at your organization to make sure everyone is on board, and making sure Council is committed to decisions that support dealing with the problems of aging infrastructure.”

Asset Management BC is looking at how to define the broader framework for successfully managing assets to ensure all of the components are considered. This includes addressing issues and needs in strategies like the long-range financial plan, corporate strategic plan, communication plan and the asset management plan, along with process and structure changes such as an asset management policy supported by Council, and corporate structure changes that define leadership roles and facilitate working together between departments.

Another key component involves leveraging financing opportunities. A number of grant programs are emerging or are being developed.

The federal Build Canada Plan, the New Build Canada Fund, includes a \$10-billion Provincial-Territorial Infrastructure Component (PTIC), which supports infrastructure projects of national, regional and local significance that contribute to economic growth, a clean environment, and stronger communities. The PTIC is divided into two sub-components: \$9 billion for national and regional projects (PTIC–NRP); and \$1 billion for projects in communities of fewer than 100,000 residents through the Small Communities Fund (PTIC–SCF).

The Build Canada Plan also includes a renewed Federal Gas Tax Fund (GTF), which the Government of Canada website describes as “predictable, long-term, stable funding for Canadian municipalities to help them build and revitalize their local public infrastructure while creating jobs and long term prosperity.”

For B.C., the website notes the GTF allocation is about \$1.3 billion over five years. Funding is provided up front, twice-a-year, to provinces and territories that pass them along to their municipalities. Municipalities in B.C. can pool and bank this funding, providing significant financial flexibility. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) channels the funding to local governments in B.C.

“We have a tripartite agreement in place with the provincial and federal governments that identifies UBCM as the administrator of the Gas Tax Fund program, and there is a commitment to support local governments to move forward with asset management as part of the agreement,” says Glen Brown, General Manager, Victoria Operations, at UBCM.

“Under the agreement, funding is focused on capital infrastructure, so the desire here is to build roads, sewers, water and other eligible infrastructure projects, and it’s not just new infrastructure – it includes renewal and replacement of existing aging infrastructure as well.”



Glen Brown

To provide strategic direction under the Gas Tax Agreement, a Partnership Committee with representatives from UBCM and the provincial and federal governments is responsible for approving criteria and clear requirements for local governments. The goal is to have the asset management framework and criteria in place this fall. It is expected the criteria will include identification of the current asset management status, a plan on how to implement asset management in the community, and monitoring and/or reporting on success.

“I believe the approach will ensure that there is flexibility and recognition that local governments have different capacity and are in different places in terms of their asset management planning,” says Brown. “It’s not going to be cookie-cutter. We want an approach that is determined locally, through a needs assessment by the local government, and with options to help them move forward based on where they are at today and where they want to get to, including meeting milestones they establish over the course of the agreement.”

As announced at the recent UBCM Conference, an additional \$1.5 million in provincial funding will be available to local governments to support the development and implementation of asset management. UBCM is developing an Asset Management Planning Grant Program in collaboration with the Province to assist with allocating this funding. This program will align with the asset management requirements under the Gas Tax Agreement and further support local governments meeting their asset management objectives. It will also involve funding opportunities to support building in-house capacity through training, or bringing in outside expertise.

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Given that funding remains a significant – and sometimes alarming – challenge in addressing aging infrastructure needs, any new funding programs are seen as a positive step forward. But Brown notes that lack of funding should not prevent local governments from taking action.

“Financial challenges should not deter local governments from embracing asset management,” says Brown. “And further, having an asset management plan does not mean money is going to appear. What it does give you is the information needed to make sound decisions on how to spend money you do have and a better understanding of how to allocate money going forward.”

“Asset management is a journey, not a destination,” adds Brown. “And it is important to start the journey, even if it is an incremental first step.”

ADDRESSING UNFUNDED LIABILITY RISK

One of the key benefits of staying focused on asset management as part of daily business, and taking incremental steps forward, is that it improves understanding of all of the factors related to infrastructure. New data and better understanding of what is involved can also reveal unforeseen challenges and risks that need to be addressed.

This ongoing focus and evaluation and attention to asset management has recently uncovered another significant risk to community infrastructure. Prompted by provincial and national studies and reports on emergency preparedness and potential costs, research by the Municipal Insurance Association of British Columbia (MIABC) discovered that as much as 75 per cent of local government capital assets are not covered by any insurance.

“When we talked to local government managers, they all said the same thing: If the big one comes, we have a safety net because the province and federal governments will step in and pay for everything,” says Tom Barnes, Chief Executive Officer, MIABC. “But when we looked at this senior government safety net, we found a pretty big hole in it because it’s an indemnity program, not a grant program, and only reimburses up to 80 per cent of the costs, assuming the work qualifies.”



Tom Barnes

Continued on page 16



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It became clear that local governments were not generally aware that replacement costs were not fully covered, and that they did not know the value of the actual risk. To estimate the potential costs, Barnes used a recent study by the Insurance Bureau of Canada that forecasts up to \$75 billion in damage if there was a major earthquake in B.C. If only five per cent of those costs involve damage to uninsured local government infrastructure, that's \$3.5 billion. With 80 per cent coverage, there would still be \$750 million in costs with no funding allocated.

"Whenever there is a natural disaster, the damage costs are always higher than forecast, so the simple quandary I have been trying to wrap my head around is: if we know there is a 12 per cent chance of a catastrophic earthquake in the next 50 years, and we know that it will

have devastating effects on local government assets, and we know we don't have funding in place to make repairs, what are we going to do today to address it?" says Barnes.

Local governments need to be able to rebuild core infrastructure quickly to recover from a major disaster and provide a safe environment for residents and businesses to rebuild. Without this infrastructure, communities don't recover. Recognizing that the status quo is not acceptable, Barnes is exploring options for how the MIABC can support local governments.

"The MIABC could provide a mechanism to address this funding gap," says Barnes. "We could plug away at building the fund over a long period of time because we are grappling with a potentially huge number."

One proposed approach is to accumulate approximately \$250 million in funds over 10 years through a combination of pooled contributions and reinsurance. The idea would be to create a pool of \$15 million in the first year, funded by all levels of government. The proposal involves taking \$1.5 million of the fund to do the planning and scenario assessments recommended by the BC Auditor General and another \$3.5 million to buy reinsurance on the global market. This would likely buy about \$75 million in coverage. So even if there were a major natural disaster in the first year, there would be some money that would make a small but significant contribution to the unfunded liability. The process would be repeated each year, and as the amount of money in the pool increases, it would be possible to buy larger amounts of reinsurance coverage.

Barnes forecasts that by the end of 10 years, there would be about \$250 million available through a combination of contributions to the pool, investment returns and reinsurance amounts.

"When I first started looking into this as a risk factor, I had the same assumptions about coverage and recovery financing as most local government managers and elected officials. I soon learned that these assumptions weren't sound and that there are significant gaps in the support available," says Barnes. "We don't have to look far to see what happens when a disaster occurs. Even if government is relatively ready to deal with it, unforeseeably complex situations arise. There are entire areas of Christchurch and northern Japan that are fenced off as uninhabitable. At the other end of the spectrum, Thailand and New Orleans are still trying to recover."

Barnes summarizes the situation by noting that the status quo is clearly not acceptable, the MIABC can help, and by working together, a lot can be accomplished in a measured way.

"It's important to remember that even though the odds are a 12 per cent chance of a catastrophe in 50 years, that means the odds are the same for the earthquake to happen tomorrow," adds Barnes. "We don't have to solve the problem today; we just need to get started."

tips & tactics

Five Tips for Better Asset Management

- 1. Your inventory of assets (asset register):** Don't let it get out of date. For most organizations, this inventory resulted from implementation of the accounting standard PSAB 3150. It is now the base document for an ongoing inventory of existing assets. Make sure the asset register is updated as maintenance, rehabilitation or repairs are carried out. This needs to become a routine task.
- 2. New developments:** Have the developer (single property or a new development) submit the as-built information in a format that includes the technical and financial information needed to allow immediate entry into your asset register and accounting system.
- 3. Condition Assessment:** Only concern yourself with the details of condition assessment for projects to about a 10-year maximum. Don't waste money on the longer term. What you know today is likely good enough for the long term. Refine it later. The condition will change. Focus on the details in the shorter term.
- 4. Short-term Projects:** Before capitalizing a project, look hard at the data to see if you trust it – especially condition assessment. This year, spend a little money and time to refine your data for projects two and three years out as part of your current work plan.
- 5. Looking for information?** How often have you looked for the name of a supplier or contractor respecting a particular asset only to find the invoice or reference is in an accounting file? You know it's somewhere! Keep a file for each major asset and keep all records for that asset in that file for easy reference.

Many thanks to Wally Wells, Executive Director, Asset Management BC for these Tips and Tactics.

2014 Election Update

By Keith Archer, PhD
Chief Electoral Officer, British Columbia

As the Chief Electoral Officer for B.C., I want to express how pleased we at Elections BC are to form new relationships and strengthen existing ones with local government administrators and local elections officers as we take on the responsibility for local elections campaign financing.



Keith Archer

In May of 2010, the Local Government Elections Task Force recommended that Elections BC be given a key role in local elections due to our organization's history of fair and impartial administration of the provincial electoral process and successful administration of the provincial electoral finance provisions of the Election Act. Four years later, on May 29, 2014, the Local Elections Campaign Financing Act (LECF) received Royal Assent, giving us a mandate to:

- Collect, review and publish disclosure statements;
- Register third party sponsors;
- Ensure compliance with finance and sponsorship rules; and
- Undertake investigations and audits.

As a non-partisan Office of the Legislature, we look forward to supporting local elections participants with the same level of expert client service that we provide provincial election participants. We have multiple resources to help local elections candidates, elector organizations, third party sponsors and former campaign organizers understand the new rules and their campaign financing requirements. These include forms and guides as well as a team of compliance specialists, with over 30 staff available to answer questions.

Local elections campaign financing resources on our website include:

- Two bulletins – one for campaign organizers and one for candidates, elector organizations and third party sponsors – that outline the transitional rules for the 2014 General Local Elections.
- Two guides – one for third party sponsors and one for candidates and elector organizations – that explain the new regulations and procedures and list important deadlines.

- Forms for campaign organizers, candidates and elector organizations to disclose their financial transactions (available soon).
- Forms for third party sponsors to register and to disclose their financial transactions.
- Guides that explain how to complete the forms (available soon)
- A glossary of key terms, such as sponsorship information and campaign organizer, defined by the legislation.
- A list of other local elections contacts.
- A list of all registered candidates, elector organizations and third party sponsors (available by Oct. 15).

Although Elections BC is not involved in the voting process for local elections, we can provide an extract of the provincial voters list to jurisdictions that want one. To learn more about using the provincial voters list, contact our Voter Services department at 1-800-661-8683.

The 2014 General Local Elections are fast approaching, and many participants are still adjusting to the new regulations. However, we are confident that by working together for this inaugural event run under LECFA, we will set a standard of elections administration excellence for all future local elections.

Please do not hesitate to access our resources on our website at www.elections.bc.ca/lecf or by phoning our local elections campaign financing team at 1-855-952-0280.

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Delcy Wells, MMC, City of Chilliwack is congratulated on achieving the prestigious Master Municipal Clerk (MMC) designation from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC).

Board of Examiners

The following local government employees have been recognized for their education and work experience in the local government field, and are being awarded the following Certificates by the Board of Examiners:

Certificate in Local Government Service Delivery:

- Felicity Adams, Director of Development Services, Town of Ladysmith
- Paul Dupuis, Planning Technician, District of Peachland
- Susan Hunt, Executive Assistant, Sunshine Coast Regional District
- Brian McLoughlin, Engineering Technologist, City of Campbell River
- Garrett Schipper, Manager of Technical Services, City of Chilliwack
- Kimberley Stratford, Community Recreation Coordinator, Neighbourhoods, City of Victoria
- Stefanie Vukelic, Clerk Stenographer, District of North Vancouver
- Anson Yeung, System Analyst, District of Saanich

Certificate in Local Government Administration:

- Mark Koch, Director of Planning and Development, District of Lake Country
- Polly Pereira, Director of Corporate Administrative Services, District of Port Edward

Certificate in Local Government Statutory Administration:

- Polly Pereira, Director of Corporate Administrative Services, District of Port Edward

Important Changes to Courses Required For Certification by the Board of Examiners

The Board has concluded the review of its programs and, in response to your feedback and based on the recommendation of the LGMA Board of Directors, is pleased to announce significant changes to the Certification program.

For full details, refer to "Policy 1 – Core Courses Mandatory for Certification" at www.cscd.gov.bc.ca/lgd/gov_structure/board_examiners/index.htm. Questions may also be emailed to the Administrator at Leta.Hodge@gov.bc.ca.

Our Members in the Spotlight



Fred Banham
Chief Administrative Officer (retired)
Peace River Regional District

- ▶ Long-standing LGMA guest faculty for professional development, with special talent and expertise for clearly explaining the complexity of regional districts at MATI Foundations
- ▶ Active in supporting the development of the local government system as Past President, CivicInfo BC Society and Past President, North Central Local Government Management Association
- ▶ Served as a Director of the Tumbler Ridge Riders Snowmobile Club
- ▶ Former Member of Tumbler Ridge Curling Club and Tumbler Ridge Search and Rescue
- ▶ Liaison Host for Team BC for the 2012 U18 Women's Hockey Team training camp
- ▶ Housing Volunteer, 2009 Canadian Olympic Women's Hockey Team training camp
- ▶ Member of the Fossils Old-Timers Hockey Club – Dawson Creek
- ▶ Hockey granddad and teacher to kids of all ages

MEMBER MOVEMENT

Ross Blackwell, Manager of Planning and Development, Cowichan Valley Regional District (formerly Manager, Land Use Services, City of Campbell River)

Ron Bowles, General Manager, Corporate Services, City of Campbell River (formerly Director of Finance, City of Terrace)

Brian Carruthers, Chief Administrative Officer, Cowichan Valley Regional District (formerly Chief Administrative Officer, Central Kootenay Regional District)

Mark Fercho, Chief Administrative Officer, Municipality of Jasper, Alberta (formerly Chief Administrative Officer, District of Mackenzie)

Heidi Frank, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Oliver (formerly Chief Administrative Officer, District of Sicamous)

Geoff Goodall, Director of Engineering & Public Works, City of Nanaimo (formerly Manager of Planning & Operations, City of Williams Lake)

Tanalee Hesse, Chief Administrative Officer, Village of Hazelton (formerly Acting Chief Administrative Officer, Village of Hazelton)

Theresa Lenardon, Manager of Corporate Administration, Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (formerly Executive Assistant, Regional District of Kootenay Boundary)

Natasha Letchford, Community Planner, District of North Vancouver (formerly Deputy Municipal Clerk, District of North Vancouver)

Raeleen Manjak, Director of Human Resources, City of Vernon (formerly Director of Corporate Services, District of Sparwood)

Chris Plagnol, Director, Board & Information Services, Chief Election Officer, Metro Vancouver (formerly Deputy Corporate Secretary, Metro Vancouver)

Daniel Sailland, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Qualicum Beach (formerly Chief Administrative Officer, Village of Pemberton)

Janice Schmidt, Manager, Legislative Services, City of Victoria (formerly Manager, Corporate Planning & Policy, City of Victoria)

Sheila Van Nus, Special Projects/Sustainability Manager, Strathcona Regional District (formerly Manager of Administration, Comox Valley Regional District)

Bruce Woodbury, Chief Administrative Officer, Village of New Denver (formerly Owner/President, Headwaters Development Consulting)

RETIREMENTS

Carol Gordon, Chief Administrative Officer, Village of New Denver

Elaine Kumar, Director of Corporate Administration, Regional District of Kootenay Boundary

Gloria Perry, Deputy Clerk, Village of Canal Flats

Susan Rauh, Corporate Officer, City of Port Coquitlam

Tom Szalay, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Oliver

2014 PROGRAMS & EVENTS: PG 20

OUR TOWN: CITY OF VERNON

Before my family moved to Vernon a year ago, I halfway believed that life in the Okanagan was overrated and that it could never live up to the hype. I believed that we would be disappointed in our new home—sort of like how you think Disneyland is going to be the vacation of a lifetime until you find yourself paying \$9 for a turkey leg and waiting an hour and a half with three cranky children for a three-minute ride. But after living here and seeing all it has to offer, I'm convinced that the North Okanagan, and Vernon as the region's largest municipality (approximately 40,000 people), is vastly underrated.

With four seasons of ideal weather (mild winters, hot summers, warm and colourful springs and autumns), Vernon is a city for outdoor lovers and for people who value lifestyle over rat race. The boundaries of the city touch on three lakes: Okanagan, Kalamalka and Swan. The hills and mountains that surround the city are visible from almost every vantage point in Vernon, ensuring that almost everywhere you go in town, you have a lovely view. The hills and valleys also change from season to season, shifting from lush green in spring to golden in summer through to red and orange in the fall and finally to powder white in the winter. The changing nature of our hills and lakes are attractive to adventurers of every kind. Silver Star Mountain Resort and Sovereign Lake Nordic Centre draw in enthusiastic downhill and cross-country skiers in the winter, and hikers and mountain and downhill bikers in the summer.

Golfers can get a quick nine in at any of the beautiful courses around Vernon or play the round of a lifetime at the world-class Predator Ridge Resort. Nearby Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park is one of the region's greatest gems, and a favourite spot for hikers, mountain bikers, runners, birdwatchers, equestrians, swimmers, kayakers, canoeists—and those who just like to be surrounded by natural beauty. Vernon also has several lovely urban parks, including Kin Beach along Okanagan Lake and peaceful Polson Park near the downtown core. There are also plenty of opportunities for road cyclists, standup paddleboarders, water-skiers, paragliders, mountain climbers, and so much more, all within 15 minutes of Vernon's downtown—20 minutes, tops.

Continued from page 19

► LGMA 2014 PROGRAMS & EVENTS

October 15-17, 2014
Clerks and Corporate Officers Forum
Four Points by Sheraton, Kelowna
Airport

October 19-24, 2014
MATI School for Statutory Approving
Officers
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November 7-9, 2014
Effective Fire Service Administration
for Fire Chiefs and Local
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Regional District of Fraser Fort
George, Prince George



Kin Beach along Okanagan Lake is one of Vernon's urban parks.

And what a downtown it is. The main street, 30th Avenue, is a busy, eclectic and charming city centre. Coffee shops, high-end restaurants and street-side eateries along with one-of-a-kind shops and boutiques are all found along 30th Avenue. On Friday afternoons in the summer, the street is partially closed to traffic for a popular farmers market that brings in artisans and vendors from around the region, including some of the most delicious locally grown produce I've ever tasted.



Tanya Laing Gahr

Another farmers market takes place twice a week at Kal-tire Place (the city's largest arena and home of the Vernon Vipers Junior Hockey Club), and residents and visitors alike turn out in droves to support the vendors.

For people of good taste and who like things to taste good, Vernon boasts a major brewery (Okanagan Spring) as well as a new microbrewery. It also has a distillery (Okanagan Spirits), a cidery (BX Press Cidery & Orchard), a meadery (Planet Bee) and several nearby wineries including Gray Monk Estate Winery. Bottoms up! There are numerous restaurants for every taste and pocketbook, although dinner at the Peakfine Restaurant at the singular Sparkling Hill Resort should be on everyone's bucket list.

Vernonites know how good we have it, although we often downplay it. Not because we don't like to brag (because who wouldn't want to) but because we know that a place as special as this is rare and precious. We're often tempted to keep it to ourselves. That said, we welcome visitors and prospective new residents with open arms, because we love it when someone loves this place as much as we do. There's a lot of love to go around for this (vastly underrated) city that we call home.

— **Tanya Laing Gahr**, Communications & Grants Coordinator, City of Vernon



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