



2026 CAO FORUM *Weathering Change*

FEBRUARY 17-19, 2026

Westin Wall Centre, Richmond, BC

We acknowledge this event takes place on the traditional and unceded territories of the *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nation.*

The CAO Forum is an annual offering for local government chief administrative officers (CAOs) to connect, share experiences and in-depth discussions on key topics impacting their work. The Forum will feature interactive, two-way discussions with speakers on subjects of interest to local governments and provide an excellent opportunity for frank and open dialogue. This year's theme, Weathering Change, will provide a lineup of interactive sessions with expert speakers covering topics such as leading with compassion, strategic plans, emergency service cost management, legal updates, and more. A pre-forum workshop is also offered.

[Pre-forum: The CAOs' Compass for General Local Elections](#)

[CAO Forum Registration](#)



T. 250.383.7032 E. office@lgma.ca

[LGMA | 2026 CAO Forum](#)

REGISTRATION DEADLINE

February 3, 2026

**Registration is limited to CAOs,
appointed Deputy CAOs.**

Forum Fees

**Member Early Bird Rates
Until December 31, 2025**
\$847 + GST LGMA Member
\$984.50 + GST Non-Member

Regular Rates January 1

**\$957 + GST LGMA Member
\$1,039.50 + GST Non-Member**

Optional Pre-forum Workshop:

**\$231 LGMA Member
\$258.50 Non-Member**

**In 2026, be sure to update your
LGMA membership before
registering for this event.**

**Cancellations are accepted
without penalty before
February 3, 2026**

(No refunds after February 3)

**Hotel Accommodation Rates
Standard Room \$219 + taxes
until January 26, 2026**

**Westin Wall Centre
3099 Corvette Way
Richmond, BC
T. 604-303-6565**

**[Hotel Reservations can be
made by using the passkey
code link](#)**

Notice of Filming and Photography: When you attend this event, photography, audio, and video recording may occur. By entering the event venue, you consent to such recording media and its release, publication, exhibition or reproduction for educational or promotional purposes.

NEW \$500 Travel Grant:

Through financial support from Lidstone & Company Law Corporation and Young Anderson, grants in the amount of \$500 each are available for eligible local government professionals travelling to the 2026 CAO Forum. [Review the eligibility requirements and submission form found on our website.](#)

LIDSTONE & COMPANY

YA YOUNG ANDERSON
BARRISTERS & SOLICITORS

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2026

Optional Pre-forum Workshop: The CAOs' Compass for General Local Elections

Fee: \$231 LGMA Member, \$258.50 Non-Member

[**Register online separately for the pre-forum workshop**](#)

1:00 – 2:30 PM	NAVIGATING LOCAL ELECTIONS: SETTING YOUR COUNCIL UP FOR SUCCESS
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Panelists: **Anne Yanciw, CAO, Village of Valemount,**
Mark Fercho, CAO, City of Cranbrook, &
Carolyn Mushata, Co-Chair, LGMA Elections Advisory Committee

This panel session brings together seasoned local government professionals to share strategies for navigating the complexities of local elections. From CEO appointment decisions to candidate information sessions and onboarding best practices, participants will explore how to lay a strong foundation for a productive council term.

2:30 – 2:50 PM	REFRESHMENT BREAK
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2:50 – 4:30 PM	CAREER CROSSROADS: RISK MITIGATION AMIDST CHANGE
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Presenters: **Carolyn MacEachern, Barrister & Solicitor, Young Anderson**
Barry Forward, Executive Coach, Reboot Forward
Wallace Mah, CAO, District of Kent

This reflective session explores the personal and professional dimensions of navigating changes at the council/board level, how to keep a steady course for you and your staff, and what to do when you experience the unexpected. Through candid insights from experienced CAOs and subject matter experts, participants will examine how to identify professional priorities and build resiliency strategies.

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Pre-conference Workshop Ends

6:30 – 7:00 PM

CAO FORUM - BUILD YOUR NETWORK MEET AND GREET
Airport Ballroom Lobby

New CAOs and first-time attendees are invited to build their network with experienced CAOs at the meet and greet reception with LGMA President, Keri-Ann Austin, CAO Advisory Committee and LGMA Board Members.

7:00 – 9:00 PM

WELCOME RECEPTION
Airport Ballroom Lobby

Enjoy the opportunity to network with friends, colleagues and meet new CAOs.



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026

7:45 AM

BREAKFAST
Airport Ballroom

8:20 – 8:30 AM

LGMA UPDATE
With Candace Witkowskyj, Executive Director

8:30 – 9:45 AM	GOVERNANCE FOUNDATIONS: ROLE CLARITY AND RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT
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Presenters: **Christina Benty, Strategic Leadership Solutions**
Jeff McConnell, CAO, District of Elkford
Trevor Seibel, CAO, City of Armstrong

This session focuses on the current responsible conduct landscape at the local government level, and the importance of role clarity in setting councils and boards up for success. Participants will engage in tabletop discussions to explore governance strategies, economic considerations, and regional implications.

9:45 -10:05 AM	REFRESHMENT BREAK
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10:05 – 11:05 AM	MANAGING EMERGENCY SERVICES COSTS – PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO A POLITICAL HOT POTATO
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Presenters: **Kevin Ramsay, Innova Strategy Group**
James Ridge, James Ridge Consulting

The Emergency services, particularly fire and police, are a large and rapidly growing component of municipal budgets. In many cases, local government staff have little control over their compensation, and both emergency services have substantial compensation and benefit levels, often more than most other local government staff. Additional challenges such as political pressure, public safety concerns, and competing priorities further exacerbate a complex issue. While challenging, there are ways to manage this dynamic and professionally and effectively push back on the relentless requests for more resources. Learn about strategies that have been successfully employed by Canadian local governments in this important session.

11:05 – 11:15 AM	SHORT BREAK
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11:15 – NOON	MINISTRY OF HOUSING and MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS UPDATE
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NOON – 1 PM	LUNCH
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1:00 – 2:30 PM

LEADING WITH COMPASSION AND CONSISTENCY

Presenter: **Gerald Pinchbeck, CAO, District of Houston**
Ron Mattiussi, Senior Advisor, R.L. Mattiussi Advisory Services Inc.

This session is designed to recharge CAOs during the turbulence of election cycles. Through stories of resilience and leadership, participants will reflect on their role as the consistent anchor for staff and community.

2:30 – 2:50 PM

REFRESHMENT BREAK

LGMA gratefully acknowledges
the financial support of:



2:50 – 5:00 PM

PART 1: KNOWLEDGE CAFÉ AND NETWORKING

Airport Ballroom



Facilitated by: **Heather Nelson-Smith, CAO, District of Port Hardy**
Douglas Holmes, CAO, Regional District of Nanaimo

This session will create an opportunity for CAOs to informally discuss common problems and the solutions that are working for them. Participants will first join breakouts based on community size and identify key topics. Key topics will be prioritized and workshopped in the second part of this Café.

6:00 – 9:30 PM

DINNER and NETWORKING EVENING

Airport Ballroom

Enjoy dinner and networking with your colleagues after a day of professional learning. Dinner for participants is included with the conference fee, but they can purchase an \$80 ticket for their companion or spouse separately when registering for the CAO Forum.

Then relax in the VIP Lounge where participants can further network while playing foosball, ping pong, or other games, or listen to Jazz pianist, Jared Richardson.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026

7:30 – 8:30 AM	BREAKFAST Airport Ballroom
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8:30 – 10:30 AM	PART 2: KNOWLEDGE CAFÉ DISCUSSIONS
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Topics prioritized from the previous day's café will be workshopped to further "dig in" to strategies and solutions.

10:30 – 11:00 AM	REFRESHMENT BREAK
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11:00 – AM - 12:00 PM	LEGAL UPDATE
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Presenter: **Don Lidstone, Lidstone & Company**

An update on the current legal cases of interest and how they impact local government decision-making.

LGMA gratefully acknowledges the financial support of:	LIDSTONE & COMPANY
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12:00– 1:00 PM	WORKING LUNCH
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1:00 – 2:30 PM	STRATEGIC PLANS: STOP STARTING AND START FINISHING
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Presenters: **Jim Zaffino, CAO, Okanagan-Similkameen Regional District**
Mark Koch, Deputy CAO, Okanagan-Similkameen Regional District
& Dean McKinley, CAO, District of Invermere

This workshop-style session dives into the anatomy of effective strategic plans. Participants will dissect real-world examples, share challenges, and explore how to keep planning focused, actionable, and aligned with community needs.

2:30 PM	ADJOURN
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The program was designed with the input of experienced local government practitioners.

LGMA wishes to thank the following people:

Wayne Anderson, CAO, Town of Oliver
Ethan Fredeen, CAO, Village of Fraser Lake
Dan Horan, CAO, Township of Esquimalt
Elizabeth Tracy, CAO, Village of Pemberton
Anne Yanciw, CAO, Village of Valemount
