



# 2026 Local Government Communication and Engagement Professionals Forum

Tuesday, June 9

Penticton Trade and Convention Centre, Salon A  
273 Power Street, Penticton, BC

Join us for a one-day session featuring panelists who will share practical approaches, best practices, lessons learned and wins in their role as local government communicators. Take this opportunity to learn from peers, increase the effectiveness of your organization's communications efforts, and expand your professional network.

### Registration fees:

\$418 + GST during Early Bird registration (until April 30, 2026)

\$478.50 + GST during regular registration (May 1 – May 26, 2026)

[Register online](#) before May 26, 2026

Rates include continental breakfast, two coffee breaks and lunch.

For information on hotel accommodations, visit the [LGMA Annual Conference webpage](#).

**8:30am**

### Introduction and Welcome

LGMA and Julie Rogers – Julie Rogers Communications

**8:45-9:45am**

### Prepared to Communicate Under Pressure: A Roadmap for Municipal Crisis and Emergency Response

Shawna Bruce – MD Bruce and Associates

When something goes wrong, municipal communicators become the community's front door for trusted information. Sometimes it's an emergency demanding immediate, life-safety direction. Other times, it's a crisis that tests the organization's preparedness, credibility, and reputation. And often, it's both at once.

This keynote provides a practical roadmap for building or strengthening a crisis communications plan that holds up under real pressure. Participants will learn the essential steps to create or refresh a plan that is effective, not just a written checklist: the must-have components, the decisions to lock in ahead of time, and the structure that supports fast, consistent, and credible public updates across channels. You'll leave with a clear picture of what your plan needs and understand the next steps to make it operational, so you can pivot seamlessly from everyday communications to crisis and emergency response.

**9:45-10:30am**

### Communications Collaboration with Operations

Jennifer Smith – Manager, Communications, Resort Municipality of Whistler

Like many communities, Whistler is navigating big pressures: rapid growth, economic change, evolving technology, and climate impacts. They were also working in silos, which was not serving them, so they borrowed a great idea from their neighbours on the mountain. At Whistler Blackcomb, daily and weekly collaborative meetings produce a simple, one-page snapshot of everything staff need to know to operate safely and smoothly. They adapted that model for municipal communications. Today, they bring departments together in fast, focused weekly collaboratives supported by intake forms, lightning meetings, and a lively Teams chat. They've cut red tape, encouraged people to

skip formalities, and focus on helping each other in real time. Paired with a change charter and new engagement practices, the result is better problem-solving, stronger relationships, and a lot more fun working together.

**10:30-10:45am**                      **Coffee Break**

**10:45-11:55am**                      **Integrating Communications into Council Orientation Panel**

Kristen Rodrigue – Communications and Strategic Partnerships Director, City of Kamloops  
Lindsay Vickers – Manager of Communications, District of Sechelt  
Christina Benty – Strategic Leadership Solutions Inc.

Moderator: Julie Rogers – Julie Rogers Communications

After every election, councils/boards arrive with fresh energy, new mandates, and varying levels of understanding about the communications function. When communications is missing from orientation, confusion around roles, media protocols, and social media can quickly become reputational risk, legal exposure, and staff burnout.

This candid panel brings together two municipal communications managers working in difficult council environments and a consultant who coaches elected officials across the country. They will explore what goes wrong when orientation is limited, what must be covered to reduce risk, and how to design practical sessions that stick. Expect real-world examples, tough lessons, and tools you can adapt for your own post-election playbook.

**12–1pm**                                      **Lunch**



**1-2pm**                                      **Public Engagement Innovations Panel**

Lisa Moilanen – Communications and Engagement Manager, Cowichan Valley Regional District  
Jill Brooksbank – Senior Communications Officer, Resort Municipality of Whistler  
Claire Thwaites – Communications Manager, City of Prince George

Moderator: Elaine Popove – Communications Coordinator, Strathcona Regional District

This panel brings together local government communication ground breakers to share real-world examples of innovative community engagement. Panelists will briefly describe an engagement approach they tried, the problem it was designed to address, and what prompted them to take a different path. The discussion will focus on what worked, what did not, and the lessons learned along the way, including assumptions that were challenged and risks that emerged.

Rather than polished case studies, this session is about practical insight. Panelists will reflect on internal constraints and community response. The session will provide clear, actionable takeaways for communicators considering new or unconventional engagement approaches.

**2-2:45pm**                                      **New Westminster Community Assembly: How to Utilize the Citizen Jury Concept for Effective Engagement**

Jennifer Miller – Deputy Director, Community Services, City of New Westminster  
Zaria Alibhai – Supervisor, Public Engagement, City of New Westminster

Hear about New Westminster’s Community Advisory Assembly, a deliberative engagement initiative that began as a pilot in January 2024 and was recently approved as a permanent advisory body by City Council. The Assembly brings together a broadly representative group of about 36 residents who meet regularly to deliberate on city projects, plans

and priorities and provide advice to Council and staff. Members are selected to reflect the city’s demographic profile and supported to engage meaningfully across topics, from strategic priorities to climate action and public space planning. This session will share insights from the pilot, lessons learned about inclusive deliberation, and how the model is now embedded in the city’s engagement framework.

**2:45-3pm**                      **Coffee Break**

**3-3:45pm**                      **Countering Misinformation in Local Government: research, readiness, and real-world tools**

Candace Denison – Director of Strategic Services, City of Chestermere

Misinformation is now a frontline issue for local governments, shaping public trust, staff wellbeing, and decision making. In this fast-paced session, participants will learn how misinformation takes hold in municipal environments and why traditional communication responses often fall short. Drawing on the latest research and real local government examples, the session focuses on practical readiness, leadership considerations, and tools that can be applied immediately. Attendees will leave with clear strategies to recognize early warning signals, respond with confidence in high-pressure situations, and strengthen their organization’s capacity to counter misinformation in a complex and politically sensitive landscape.

**3:45-4:30pm**                      **AI in Communications: the Good, the Bad, and the Human**

Daphne Thomson – Catch the Beat

Small communities often rely on one person to manage a wide range of communication tasks, yet the expectations for clarity, speed, and transparency are the same as larger centres. In this workshop, Daphne Thomson looks at how generative AI can support communications professionals who are managing growing workloads with limited resources. We’ll explore practical ways to use AI to draft clear public updates, manage social media, simplify engagement tasks, and strengthen crisis communication without losing authenticity or human judgment.

Participants will discover tools like govAI and other emerging platforms designed specifically for government communication work. Through live demonstrations and collaborative exercises, we’ll walk through the good, the bad, and the human side of integrating AI into day-to-day public messaging. Attendees will leave with ready-to-use prompts, templates, and a clearer sense of how AI can help them work with confidence and intention rather than urgency and overload.

**4:30pm**                              **Closing Remarks**

Julie Rogers – Julie Rogers Communications

Participants are invited to join the LGMA Conference welcome reception on the tradeshow floor starting at 5 pm.

