

# EXCHANGE



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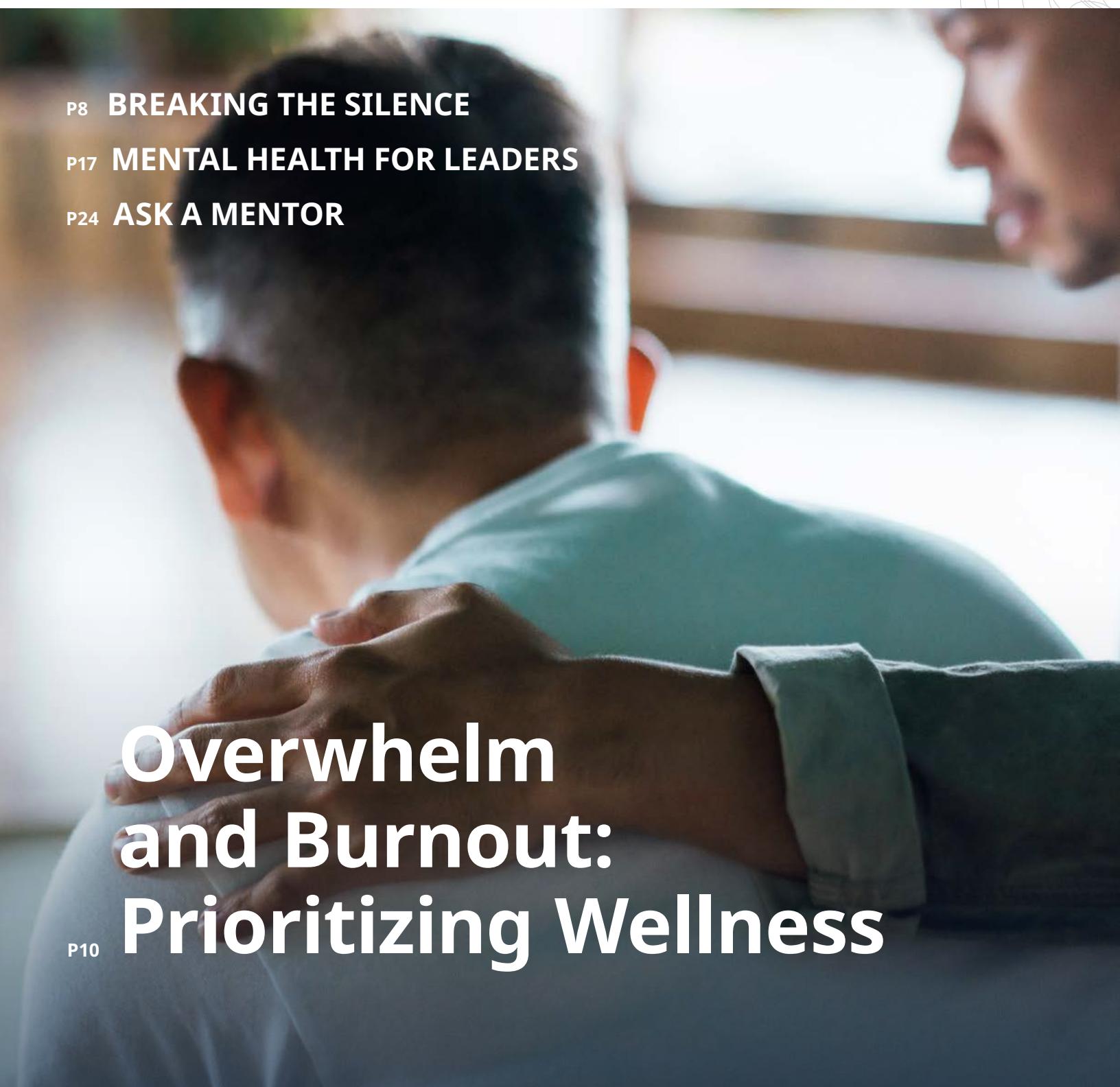
EXCHANGE is a quarterly magazine published by the Local Government Management Association (LGMA) of British Columbia. It's about sharing information, exchanging ideas on best practices, enhancing professional development and building networks. Reach us at [lgma.ca](http://lgma.ca).

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## EXCHANGE

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### Why Mental Health is Not Optional at Work

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## IN THIS ISSUE

**M**any of us didn't grow up talking about mental health or learning about coping strategies for when we feel stressed or overwhelmed. I'm sometimes envious of my younger nieces and nephews who seem to talk about mental health with such ease compared to how I was as a teenager.

Learning how to manage stress before it leads to burnout is an important skill that many struggle with and it's something we talk about in this issue of *Exchange*. For some, understanding how to coregulate your team may come naturally after years of learning and experience. Or maybe you've never heard of the terms coregulate, psychological safety, micro-aggressions and burnout. And that's okay, we're all at different points on a journey to understanding what mental health is and what it means to have a workplace that is physically and psychologically safe.

Instead of the usual case studies you see in *Exchange*, three experts share their deep insights into the many facets of mental health. You'll hear from a former local government leader with firsthand experience of harassment and bullying and the toll it took on their mental health. Executive Coach Barry Forward shares insights into the challenges facing leaders across B.C. and strategies to support personal mental health in a high stress environment. And HR specialist Denise Lloyd discusses why leaders need to commit to long-term, ongoing mental health support strategies in the workplace and how to do it.

I hope you gain insights and tools to aid in your personal mental health journey and support your workplace. If you have any questions or comments, please email me at [editor@lgma.ca](mailto:editor@lgma.ca).

*Manjot Bains*  
Editor

*I write on the traditional and unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and am committed to solidarity with First Nations and pushing for change through my work and art.*



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

**H**ello! I am honoured to write this column from the traditional territories of the lək̡wənən (Lekwungen) Peoples, also known as the Xʷsepsəm (Kosapsum) and Songhees Nations. I hope your holidays were all that you needed and your new year is off to a great start!



Our 2026 Membership Renewal Campaign is underway—sign up for or renew your membership to be entered into our membership renewal draw. Each month from January to March, we will randomly select an organization that has renewed membership to win \$150 each towards program fees for up to five members.

We have been busy preparing for the year ahead. In addition to our usual programs and events, we are excited to host the third First Nations – Local Government Land Use Planning Regional Workshop in Prince George from May 5-7, in partnership with the First Nations Public Service Secretariat, with the support of Fraser Basin Council and the guidance of the advisory committee. If you want to enhance your relationship-building skills and learn about regional considerations for First Nations – Local Government land use planning, sign up for this important workshop.

On top of a busy year, the sector is ramping up for the 2026 local elections. Thank you to Elections Program Advisor Sonia Santarossa and all the incredible volunteers on the Elections Advisory Committee who updated the *LGMA Elections Manual*, Elections On-Demand Course, Advanced Elections Workshops, Local Government Election Townhall for Voters Living on Reserve and election resources. A big thanks to the FOI/Records Management Committee for creating many important resources, including Onboarding and Offboarding Records and Information Management for Employees and Elected Officials. Check out the website or contact the LGMA team for support for elections.

I extend my gratitude to everyone preparing for the 2026 local elections, in addition to the usual work local governments do to serve their communities every day.

*Candace Witkowsky*  
Executive Director

## BOARD & CHAPTER UPDATES

Hello everyone, and welcome to the Winter edition of *Exchange*. I am writing this column from the ancestral, traditional and unceded territory of the Okanagan Nation and the Syilx People where I am proud to live and work. I hope your holidays were restful and your new year is off to a great start!

I write this not long after the LGMA Board of Directors gathered to review the Association's accomplishments in 2025. This past year, we achieved a great deal thanks to the generous support of LGMA volunteers, directors, sponsors, partners and members. In 2025, the LGMA delivered 25 in-person, online and on-demand programs, hosted two complimentary townhalls and published a number of new or updated resources and toolkits. A total of 275 volunteers gave 2,438 hours to support LGMA's advisory committees, board of directors, or as presenters/volunteer guest faculty at a variety of LGMA's training opportunities.

As we look ahead to another year of strengthening our profession together, I'm inviting you to take a moment to begin or renew your membership with the Local Government Management Association of BC.

Our sector continues to navigate rapid change, rising expectations and increasing complexity. Through it all, LGMA remains the place where local government professionals find professional development, connection and community.

Your membership is more than an annual transaction—it is a commitment to excellence in public service and to supporting one another as we lead our organizations through uncertainty and opportunity.

If you've been part of LGMA for years, thank you. Your continued membership ensures that our Association remains strong, relevant and ready to meet the needs of our evolving sector. If you're considering joining for the first time, there has never been a better moment to step into this community of practice.

I encourage you to renew or sign up today and continue shaping the future of local government leadership in British Columbia.

Together, we are stronger.

*Keri-Ann Austin*  
President



### LGMA Chapter Updates

Remember to renew your Chapter membership at [lgma.ca/lgma-chapters](http://lgma.ca/lgma-chapters).

#### North Central

The North Central Chapter Conference will take place April 22-24 in Prince George. The NCLGMA Executive extends their gratitude to everyone who joined last year's AI Online session.

#### West Kootenay Boundary & Rocky Mountain

The West Kootenay Boundary-Rocky Mountain Joint Chapter Conference will be held May 13-15 in Castlegar. Save the date and watch for registration opening soon.

#### Thompson Okanagan

The TOLGMA Chapter Executive is planning their Conference April 15-17 in Sicamous.

#### Vancouver Island

The VILGMA Chapter Conference will be held May 7-8 in Parksville. Save the date and watch for registration opening soon.



By Lianna Chang  
Young Anderson

## CASE of INTEREST



# When Accommodation Isn't Enough

**I**t is a well-accepted and core principle under human rights law that employers are required to accommodate an employee with a disability, up to undue hardship. Generally, employees who are seeking accommodation for a disability are expected to make that request with their employer and to disclose sufficient medical information to enable the employer to fulfill its duty to accommodate.

However, there are certain situations where the employer has an obligation to inquire with the employee about their well-being and need for accommodation before making any adverse employment decisions. For example, where the employer has a reason to believe that the employee has a medical condition that is negatively affecting their job performance. Per the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal in *Martin v Carter Chevrolet Oldsmobile*, 2001 BCHRT 37:

... However, when an employer is aware, or reasonably ought to be aware, that there may be a relationship between the disability and the performance, the employer has a duty to inquire into that possible relationship before making an adverse decision based on performance...

An employer who fails to dispense with their duty to inquire before making an adverse employment decision, when they knew, or ought to have known, that the employee has some sort of health condition affecting their performance may lead to a finding that the employer breached the *B.C. Human Rights Code* or that there was no just cause to terminate or discipline the employee.

The decision of *Integra Support Services v Hospital Employees Union*, 2022 CanLII 51881 is an example of just that. In this case, the grievor's employment was terminated because she arrived late to work on two occasions, completed her timesheet incorrectly and changed the timesheet of her coworkers on those days, and was allegedly dishonest during the investigation process. On one of the days that she was late, the grievor was at the hospital, and in the months preceding her termination, the grievor had been on a workers' compensation claim and taking medication due to a mental health injury from an altercation with another employee.

**Certain situations will trigger an employer's duty to inquire about an employee's well-being before making any adverse employment decisions.**

The arbitrator found that the employer knew that the grievor had a mental health injury due to an altercation and was on medication, but despite this knowledge, failed to take into consideration whether that affected her work or ability to get to work. As a result, the arbitrator found that the employer's investigation was not conducted in a thorough or fair manner and that the grievor's dismissal was excessive in the circumstances:

78. It is well established in arbitral and human rights jurisprudence that an employer who knows or who ought to know that an employee's performance may be affected by a mental health issue has a duty to inquire of the employee whether that issue is affecting their performance... I find the Employer's failure to inquire or to even consider that [the grievor's] conduct was related to her ongoing health issues resulting from the workplace altercation was a failure to conduct a thorough and fair investigation.

While the duty to inquire is not a standalone duty, meaning that employers do not have a duty to inquire when there is no reason to believe that the employee has a health condition affecting their performance, certain circumstances may trigger that duty. For example, uncharacteristic changes in an employee's behaviour or performance, behaviour that is out of the ordinary social norms, lengthy sick leaves, or recent traumatic experiences at work or in their personal lives. Where these circumstances or others arise which make it reasonable to question whether an employee's disability is affecting their performance, the employer has a duty to inquire before making any adverse decisions regarding the employee.

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# Breaking the Silence

## The Mental Health Costs Facing Local Government Staff

By Cynthia Lockrey

Many people choose to work in local government because they want to make a positive difference in their community. They take pride in their work. But the shift in public discourse and personal attacks against public sector employees has changed how some employees and leaders see their job.

Having held leadership roles in local government, M. Smith is one of many people who had to leave their role earlier than planned due to mental health challenges related to a negative working environment. In their case, it was a toxic relationship with a Council/Board member.

### A SHIFT IN CULTURE

“Through my time working in the public sector, we’ve seen increased pressure on local governments to do more with less,” says Smith. “Add to this, the public has become less respectful. Social media provides a platform for people who are uneducated on a topic to lash out and bully others.”

In Smith’s organization, like many other local governments across Canada, the social media harassment escalated to the point of having to turn off comments on posts as it negatively impacted the mental health of staff who were targeted and monitoring the hostility.

This is just one area where vitriol aimed at staff was taking its toll.

“For many years, we provided \$3,000 in annual paramedical benefits,” explains Smith. “Staff could use this money for services such as chiropractic, massage, counselling and more. Seeing the stress on our staff, we added additional funding to be used specifically for mental health support.”

The result—a 50 per cent increase in the amount of people accessing mental health services in just one year.

### REDUCING THE STIGMA

While increasing paramedical benefits allows staff to access additional supports, Smith says it’s only a small part of the bigger challenge.

“Unfortunately, there’s still much stigma about mental health,” says Smith. “While people might have empathy for someone who is struggling, when it happens to them, they wonder, ‘Why can’t I be stronger?’ Too often mental health challenges are viewed as a weakness.”

Smith says this attitude is costing local governments in lost productivity, money and talent.

*Editor’s note: To protect the identity of the interview participant, they are being identified as M. Smith with pronouns they/them. We have also made every effort to protect the identity of the local government where they worked to ensure the safety of all involved.*

*We appreciate the courage the participant took in sharing their story and talking openly about mental health challenges in local government.*

“If someone breaks their leg, they’re off for six weeks,” Smith explains. “But if someone goes on leave for mental health challenges, they’re off for six months or indefinitely.”

Many times, the stigma around mental health means staff don’t disclose their challenges or get the support they need until they’ve reached a breaking point and need to go on leave.

“We did a cost analysis on lost productivity time due to mental health-related absences,” says Smith. “What we found was that it’s increasing exponentially. When we started tracking, nearly a quarter of injuries reported were mental health-related. Just a few short years later that number more than doubled.”

This not only results in disruptions in service, but also an increase in WorkSafe BC premiums. Smith explains that annual premiums are based on the past year’s ratings. So, the increase in mental health injuries also meant higher premiums for their organization, with injury claims taking three years before they’re off the books.

### LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

When it comes to mental health challenges in local governments, Smith says there has been a significant increase in how volatile elected officials are towards staff.

“I’ve seen elected officials harass staff to make themselves look good,” Smith observes. “What goes unseen is the stress it causes on staff. You can feel the tension among all staff when there’s a negative Council or Board member. It’s very tough for the organization.”

Smith says in their case, they’ve been the target of harassment from residents who’ve been egged on by a politician.

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**“It’s important as leaders that we walk the walk, stand up and share our vulnerability. I used to think vulnerability was a weakness. I’ve learned it’s not.”**

“After an elected official publicly made negative statements about me, I had community members harassing me,” Smith explains. “I got a 2 a.m. call from someone threatening me and my family. I was also verbally assaulted in a grocery store by a stranger, based on what the elected official said.”

Smith says they, and many of their local government colleagues, are concerned there’s little being done to hold elected officials accountable.

“WorkSafe BC can’t fire elected officials, so how do you protect staff?” Smith wonders. “WorkSafe BC needs to do more to create safe government workplaces.”

“Why does no one else in the province have to put up with abuse in the workplace yet there’s nothing to keep local government employees safe? There’s honestly not much that administration can do when the abuse is coming from elected officials.”

## PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP NEEDED

To further protect staff, Smith believes the provincial government needs to provide a leadership role and create legislation which holds elected officials accountable. Many working in local government are in support of the provincial government introducing this kind of legislation.

While some Boards and Councils have codes of conduct, these don’t always stop the harassment. They also don’t allow an elected official to be terminated for actions that would see staff losing their jobs. Smith believes that this ability to terminate needs to come from the province.

It’s not just staff who struggle with belligerent elected officials—it can impact their peers.

“In my role, I had many elected officials in my office sharing their personal struggles with their challenging colleague,” Smith explains. “As a leader, it’s hard when you want to protect people but don’t have the tools to do so.”

## MOVING FORWARD

When asked what advice they would share with local governments that want to prioritize mental health, Smith says it’s important to have a culture where it’s safe for people to bring up concerns. And more importantly, ensure people are held accountable for their negative actions—regardless of their position.

They also said counselling and other mental health resources need to be readily available for staff as well as other supports, such as offering flexible work hours.

“To break down the stigma, as a leader you need to show it’s okay to be open,” Smith stresses. “Make it part of your routine to honestly check in with people to see how they are truly doing.”

“I shared my personal experience with mental health with my management team. It’s important as leaders that we walk the walk, stand up and share our vulnerability. I used to think vulnerability was a weakness. I’ve learned it’s not.”

Smith concluded by saying the reality is there are mental health challenges in every organization. Ignoring the issue only makes it worse. It will cost your organization money, productivity and valued staff.

“If my experience and honest conversation about mental health helps one person, then I’m happy to share my story,” said Smith.



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### BCMSA & PWABC Joint Annual Conference & Trade Show

The Joint Annual Conference & Trade Show will take place in Penticton from October 5–7, 2026. Call for Presentations and Sponsorship registration is now open.

### BC Frontline Workers Occupational Awareness Training

The Psychological Wellness Training is a free online course for anyone working for a BC municipality or organization. It’s designed to provide learners psychological tools necessary to navigate a career on the frontline.

### BCMSA Webinars

Stay current on trending topics with our free one-hour interactive webinars. Overview, Q&A, and insights included!

### Open Enrollment Training Calendar

BCMSA hosts a variety of open enrollment health and safety training. Ensure you are compliant with WorkSafeBC regulations or work your way through our certificate programs.

### ABOUT THE BCMSA

Our primary goal is to create safer and healthier workplaces for everyone, eliminating workplace injuries and reducing safety-related financial costs.

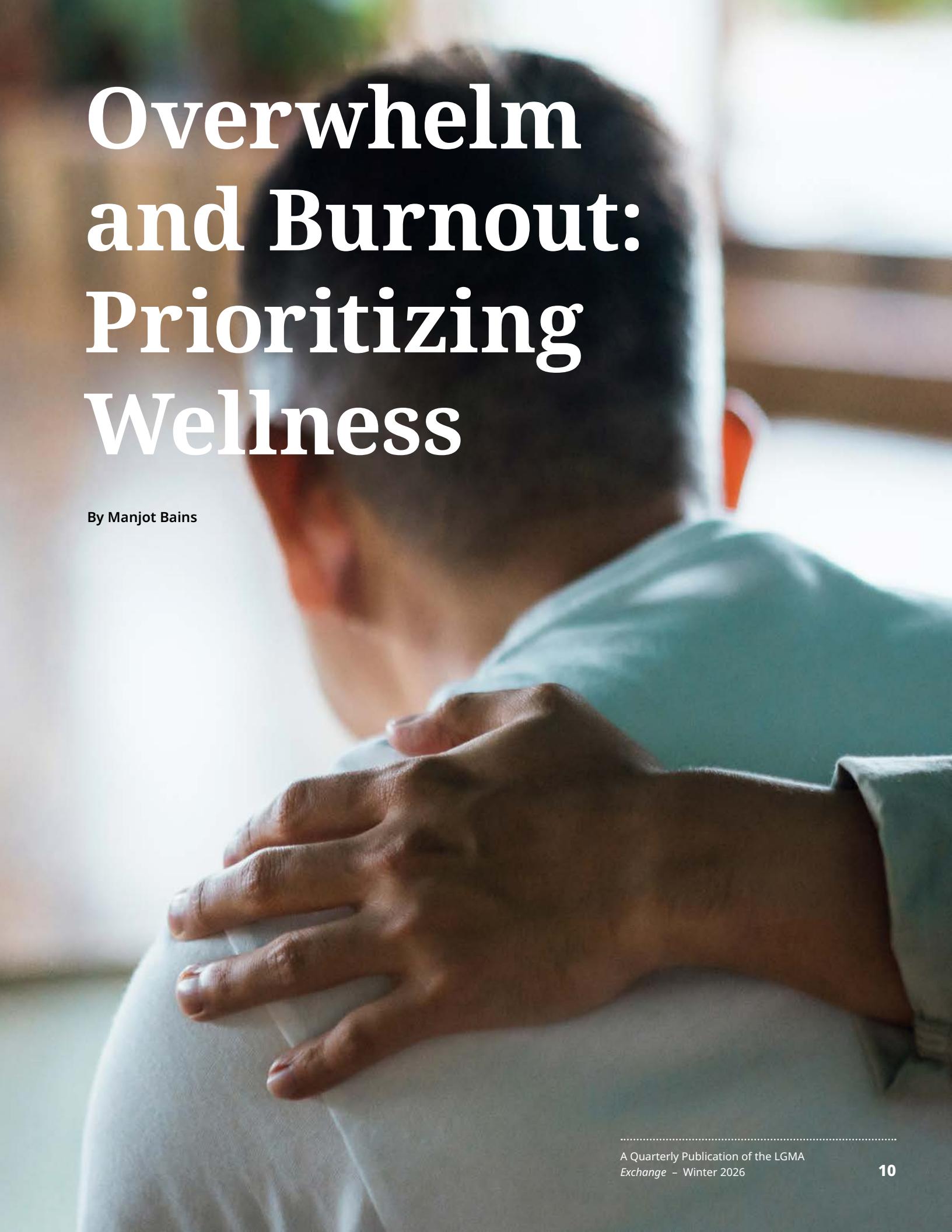
### CONNECTION TO CARE PROGRAM

The BC Municipal Safety Association (BCMSA) and BC Association of Clinical Counsellors (BCACC) are proud to continue offering Connection to Care, a collaborative mental health and wellness initiative designed to foster resilience within the local government community.

Starting January 5, 2026, Connection to Care is available during its new operational hours Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m. through a dedicated call-service, providing free, confidential mental health support for local government workers (CU 753004).



# Overwhelm and Burnout: Prioritizing Wellness



By Manjot Bains

# Stress, overwhelm and burnout are on the rise.

Local government leaders and staff are facing increasing pressure and expectations. The list of challenges is long: more responsibilities, budget constraints, tariffs, divisive politics, public safety challenges and retention issues.

Some local government employees are also experiencing adverse mental health impacts related to responsible conduct issues from elected officials, public vitriol and systemic discrimination.

“There are significant work stressors that lead to burnout,” says Mike Roberts, Chief Executive Officer of British Columbia Municipal Safety Association (BCMSA).

“Many are feeling the weight of growing workplace demands, and some report heightened stress as traumatic work-related events increase. In certain situations expectations and capacity are not always fully aligned, and over time, this strain can contribute to burnout.”

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FEEL BURNT OUT?

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) explains job burnout as, “physical, emotional, and cognitive exhaustion—feeling frustrated, tired of going to work, finding it hard to deal with others at work.”

Roberts adds, “When organizations are forced to operate reactively, attention is often focused on immediate demands rather than early warning signs of burnout. Indicators like withdrawal, disengagement, declining work quality, increased sick days, changes in behaviour or communication, and a rise in errors may not be recognized until burnout has already taken hold.”

A sense of overwhelm can grow under stressful circumstances. According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, “To be overwhelmed means to feel a sense of being wholly overcome or unable to cope due to an excessive amount of stress, responsibility, or emotion. It can make someone feel mentally or physically drained, anxious, or unable to manage everything they are facing.”

And it’s not just employees who are feeling overwhelm and burnout—leaders are increasingly overworked and stressed.

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**“In certain situations expectations and capacity are not always fully aligned, and over time, this strain can contribute to burnout.”**



**Mike Roberts**

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While the conversation about mental health has expanded in recent years, there is still a stigma attached to speaking about it at work or even with friends.

“For leaders, one of the most important things is you have to normalize the conversation on mental health,” says Roberts. “It’s needed right now and it’s not something we should be avoiding.”

## CHANGING WORKPLACES

Why are mental health issues getting worse? Workplaces have changed in ways that are different from what many working in leadership and human resources have seen in the past.

“The biggest change we saw was the onset of COVID,” says Gerry Parker, Senior Manager of Human Resources at Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) since August of 2014. “A lot of people ended up working remotely and culture shifted dramatically. It meant that you didn’t have the workplace exchanges, you didn’t have social interaction and people started losing their social skills. They weren’t engaged in conversations, it was a quick text or email. A lot of that, in my experience, has led to a problem where people are back to work or heading back to work, and some of them just don’t know how to do it anymore.”

In addition to working with the SCRD, Parker is also a consultant providing training for respectful workplaces and the author of three books meant for leaders facing HR challenges.

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Parker notes that the rise of incivility in the workplace between colleagues and with the public is another issue impacting mental health for local government employees.

"It might start off with someone being a little bit discourteous or with poor communication," says Parker. "If you think someone doesn't like you, how might you treat them? Or they got the promotion you thought you should get. How will you then communicate with them? Conflict is something that happens within you, and it sometimes involves other people."

Parker adds, "Imagine you're having a bad day, you bring it to work and then someone gets in a confrontation with you. Unless you're trying hard to address it in a positive and collaborative way, you're at risk of having a blow-up. There are so many pressures on people, and we're not robots."



**Gerry Parker**

He adds: "We can't just throw the switch between coming to work and going home. Some then engage in unhealthy coping mechanisms such as consuming alcohol."

Bullying and harassment are serious issues that can have damaging effects on people's mental health and well-being. "Most people go for training in technical skill areas but not necessarily for the people skills. Soft skills are hard," adds Parker.

"I often get into discussions with my colleagues around the province about challenges they're facing. In speaking with some CAOs and other leaders, bullying and harassment is still an issue. That's the challenge. It's still out there, and unless people have the skills to deal with it, they can very easily mess it up and it gets worse."

**Continued on page 13**

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## CREATING A PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE WORKPLACE

Employers have a responsibility to their employees to create a psychologically safe environment. The CCOHS explains psychological safety as, “preventing injury to the mental well-being of workers. A psychologically safe and healthy workplace is one that promotes workers’ mental well-being and does not harm employee mental health through negligent, reckless or intentional ways.”

Safe workplaces most often focus on the physical aspects of a space, and may not consider mental or psychological safety.

“We need psychological safety, which is a sense of well-being and worth, and the safety to make mistakes and learn and grow,” shares Jane Beaumont, Director of Clinical Practice at B.C. Association of Clinical Counsellors (BCACC). “That includes showing up as yourself in your work environment without fear of negative consequences to your self-image, your status in the workplace, or your career over time.”

Although the term “psychological safety” may be new to some, Beaumont shares that the concept has been around since early organizational psychology research from the 1940s and into the 1960s.

“A psychologically safe environment is where team members feel comfortable asking the dumb questions,” says Beaumont. “Admitting where they’ve made a mistake, looking for opportunities to learn and where they can provide honest feedback to one another. They can talk about challenges without any fear of being punished or perhaps being excluded from conversations.”

What happens when someone is feeling overly stressed or overwhelmed in the workplace and they don’t feel psychologically or mentally safe? The brain moves into a stress response that can range from protective, defensive, fight, flight, freeze and flop, says Beaumont.

“Heightened emotions like anger are a really good signal that we’re feeling pretty overwhelmed, and our brain is going into that fight-flight mode,” she adds.

## THE COST OF MENTAL HEALTH

Talking about mental health and finding ways to support staff is important for the health and well-being of everyone working in local government. But there’s also a significant financial cost and impact to workplace culture if the mental health needs of employees are ignored.

From 2019 to 2025, allowed psychological injury claims in B.C. workplaces increased by seven per cent, compared to 33 per cent in local government.

“Overall, data from 2019-2025 shows an upward trend in allowed psychological injury claims,” explains Roberts. “Across B.C., allowed claims are up seven per cent, while in local government they are up 33 per cent.”

Roberts notes that in 2025, a total of 205 psychological injury claims were allowed in local government, the highest number recorded to date. And on average, in 2025 the number of days off before the first modified return-to-work day sits at 332.

In addition, data from BCMSA finds that in 2022, 73 per cent of people that had a psychological injury claim returned to work with the same employer. In 2025, that decreased to 68 per cent. In 2022, return-to-work with a new employer or new department was 12 per cent, while in 2025 it was eight per cent.

“The really alarming statistic here for local governments is that in 2022, 15 per cent of psychological claims were non-return-to-work,” says Roberts. “In 2025, that went up to 24 per cent. This means they are unable to return to work anywhere.”

“We’re interested in all of this because the costs for our mental health injury claims are increasing significantly,” explains Roberts. “The primary driver of costs is the presumption of legislation regarding mental health injury costs, which began climbing in 2019.”

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**Building Public Trust**  
with Kent Waugh  
Managing Partner

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The Group logo: a stylized 'W' inside a square with the word 'THE GROUP' below it.

Roberts notes seven areas where psychological claims are impacting local governments:

- 1. Rising WorkSafeBC Premiums:** It's costing organizations more money because psychological injuries are longer and increase assessment rates over time.
- 2. Long-Duration Absences:** Employees affected by psychological injuries are often off work longer than with physical injuries.
- 3. Service Delivery Disruptions:** Vacancies or long-term leaves create gaps in the system, slow down services and can lead to operational bottlenecks.
- 4. Workforce Capacity Strain:** Small teams struggle when one member is absent, increasing risk of burnout among remaining staff.
- 5. Increased HR & Supervisory Workload:** Complex psychological claims require more documentation, coordination and return-to-work planning.
- 6. Organizational Culture Impacts:** Claims linked to harassment, conflict or trauma weaken trust and erode safety culture.

## 7. Strategic Pressure to Improve Psychosocial

**Safety:** Local governments must invest in leadership development, respectful workplace practices and proactive mental-health systems.

He adds that new regulatory guidance is expected from WorkSafe BC on psychological health and safety, but in the meantime, he recommends employers focus on strengthening training programs, expanding resources and fostering ongoing conversations with employees.

A few years back, mental health first aid training was brought in for staff at the SCRD, a resource used by leaders and employees. See *Tips & Tactics* on page 23 for more training and learning opportunities.

## A DUTY TO INQUIRE

As discussed in the *Case of Interest* on page 6, employers have a duty to inquire and accommodate under the B.C. Human Rights Code.

"If you think someone's performance is affected and you think it might be due to a health issue, as a leader you have a duty to ask them," notes Parker. "We have a duty to inquire about mental health, dependency, addiction, etc., if we think it might be a factor. Many people are afraid to do that because they don't want to delve in too deep and get accused of handling a situation inappropriately, and you do have to know what you're doing."

He notes that training in sensitivity and human rights can help build the skills and confidence to speak with employees.

"If I think that somebody might be struggling with their mental health or using alcohol as a coping mechanism, there's a duty to inquire," shares Parker. "I say, 'I'm concerned that you might be having a challenge with alcohol dependency.' I'll go there. But I also make it clear up front that it's a safe environment."

Parker stresses that creating a safe environment for employees is important. "People need to know that they can tell you that they're struggling, and that you're not there to punish them, you're there to help. They need to trust that it's okay, and if you can accomplish that in the first five minutes of a meeting, then you can open the door to some meaningful dialogue."

As the conversation on mental health in local government continues to evolve, some leaders are already looking at different ways to improve mental health and safety in the workplace.

**Continued on page 15**

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**“For workers, staying engaged in their jobs can provide a sense of normalcy at a time when stability matters most. For employers, the return on investment is clear. Early intervention is the right approach and getting help to someone before they reach a breaking point is key.”**

## WHAT CAN LEADERS DO?

Learning and leading with curiosity may sound simple or complex depending on where one is on their journey to understanding mental health.

As Beaumont notes, “Great leaders will normalize learning. They’ll normalize that we make mistakes. Ask yourself and your staff, ‘What’s the learning that we got from this decision, or this response to a decision we made, or how do we change this?’ So, rather than looking for who’s accountable or to blame, a great leader will actually say, ‘Well, what did we learn?’”

She also encourages leaders to embrace curiosity. “What we want to do is have genuine curiosity, to sit back for a minute and say, I wonder what is going on for this other person, or I wonder what’s happening for my colleagues. So, being really curious is more important, in my opinion, than utilizing micro-skills like active listening, paraphrasing and things like that, because that can come across as dismissive and inauthentic.”

Inviting everyone in a team environment to be curious can open up trust and safety within the workplace.

“To really shift things, be genuinely curious and ask questions like ‘Tell me more about what’s happening here for you,’ or ‘Tell me more about your thought process on this point,’ or ‘Tell me more about how you came to this conclusion,’” suggests Beaumont.

And having a safe space to be open is critical to supporting and protecting the mental health of leaders and workers.

It’s also important to find ways to support one’s own mental health. *Supporting the Mental Health of Leaders* on page 17 outlines the challenges faced by leaders, techniques to manage stress and strategies to better support employees.

## FREE SUPPORT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Developed in partnership with the British Columbia Association of Clinical Counsellors (BCACC) and BCMSA, Connection to Care is a confidential, anonymous, call-in support service aimed to support the mental well-being of local government workers across B.C.

“Our goal is to have a confidential space for people who are looking for some support but don’t want to talk to their partner, spouse, friend or employer,” says Roberts. “Connection to Care is a one-call service with practicum students enrolled in graduate-level counselling programs, as well as qualified mental health professionals.”

Connection to Care offers a dedicated call-in line at 778-247-2273 for local government workers to access support. Operating hours are Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Pacific). In addition to the practicum student, registered clinical counsellors are on the call for more complex conversations.

The companion website includes over 70 resources vetted by registered clinical counsellors. The call-in support program has received approval for the next two years after a successful pilot phase.

Roberts says that while psychological injury claims are often complex and costly, there is clear value in supporting people early. If employees who are struggling can remain healthy and at work while accessing therapy and professional help, the benefits are twofold.

“For workers, staying engaged in their jobs can provide a sense of normalcy at a time when that stability matters most,” adds Roberts. “For employers, the return on investment is clear. Early intervention is the right approach and getting help to someone before they reach a breaking point is key.”

**Continued on page 16**

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**A painting night provided a creative break for participants of a Corporate Officers Forum.**

## **CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR WELLNESS**

Local governments need more supports for mental health, and recognizing this need, LGMA provides resources on their website on the Mental Health Resources page and has included sessions within various programs focused on mental health. They recently held space for a wellness room at the First Nations – Local Government Land Use Planning Workshops, in partnership with the First Nations Public Service Secretariat. LGMA has also hosted a painting night during a forum for a creative break, and incorporated movement breaks during events, such as the Administrative Professionals Conference.

*For more insights, read interviews with additional subject matter experts starting on page 17. Additional resources for leadership and employees, including training and support services, can be found in Tips & Tactics on page 23.*



## **UPDATED LGMA HUMAN RESOURCES TOOLKIT**

The Human Resources (HR) Toolkit is a foundational guide to understanding how HR operates within local government. This Toolkit is the go-to reference for those with HR responsibilities or who want to deepen their knowledge in this area.

Local governments without an HR department will find this guide particularly valuable as it provides practical, proven solutions, resources and templates that are customizable to meet the unique needs of each organization.

Releasing in Spring 2026, the fourth edition of the HR Toolkit was developed with support from the LGMA Human Resources Advisory Committee and Advancing Equity Working Group. In addition, an expert HR contractor and a legal advisor provided input to ensure information and legislation are current.

The latest edition introduces several updates designed to reflect the evolving nature of human resources and improve usability, including:

- Legislative revisions ensuring compliance and delivering expert HR solutions.
- A new section on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Indigenous Reconciliation, to integrate these principles across all stages of the employee lifecycle.
- Fresh insights on information technology and security.
- And more.

The HR Toolkit will be available this spring on the LGMA website ([lgma.ca/manuals1](http://lgma.ca/manuals1)) in electronic and electronic + print formats

# Supporting the Mental Health of Leaders

By Manjot Bains

Executive coach Barry Forward joined *Exchange* for a conversation on the complex challenges facing local government leaders and shared useful tactics to help manage stress and overwhelm in the workplace.

Forward is a Professional Certified Coach, former executive and a senior career management consultant. He works with senior leaders and professionals across a broad spectrum of industries, including local government.

## ***What are the common challenges faced by local government leaders today?***

Public scrutiny. They're constantly in the public eye, which in turn leads to political pressure. Leaders are sometimes under-resourced, especially in the smaller communities, where they're often one-person shops. In some municipalities, the expectation of being available at all times is a challenge.

There are big issues at play, and a lot of folks including Council members, the Mayor and staff are competing for your attention, so it can be difficult to manage your time.

Then, of course, we've got the polarization of politics. CAOs and other leaders have to be careful about their statements, because they can be politicized in a heartbeat. It's really tense on the public side. You have huge public expectations, and with the magnifying glass on leaders, it's hard to manage.

Culture-wise, we have people working in-office, from home or hybrid and that complicates things. Managing this workforce is harder. Team-building, collaboration and opportunities to move in your career are different than before.

## ***How do you see all of these big, complex issues manifesting as mental health challenges for leaders?***

Chronic burnout. It comes from being "on" like that all the time. It can lead to emotional exhaustion when you're worried about your perception in the community all the time.

And all the things that come with burnout: you don't sleep very well, you don't eat very well, you get isolated because it's just you dealing with all the issues. You've got so much on the go and you're so exhausted.

.....

**"What the pandemic did was say, okay, everyone has to be resilient, you have to be tough. And you're going to do it on your own."**

.....



**Barry Forward**

What the pandemic did was say, okay, everyone has to be resilient, you have to be tough. And you're going to do it on your own. Within the leadership world, people learned that this is the way it is, we have to hunker down and get tough. It normalized that way of thinking and has led to additional challenges.

## ***Are you seeing this with most people you're talking to?***

Everyone's experience is different, so we don't want to generalize. Some leaders are able to do the things that they need to do to take care of themselves and avoid burnout. For some, the work culture they land in is really supportive, so it all depends on the situation. Once you hit burnout, especially in this microcosm of attention where people are watching you, it doesn't always end well.

**Continued on page 18**

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As a [local government] leader, you're often isolated, even in a larger municipality or regional district. You have to work hard to have those places of safety where you can go out and have conversations. When we isolate the chasm gets farther to cross. You're reluctant to engage in conversations with folks. And then, of course, you've got the political nature that we see in government.

### ***If a leader is experiencing burnout or stress, where do they go for support?***

There are lots of places they can go, but I think the first piece is recognition. That is the hardest one for high performers. They've got a lot on the line and they identify around being successful. It can be hard to step back and go, okay, this is getting really serious and decide to really look into it. Self-awareness is important.

A counsellor or therapist can help. An executive coach can help even before the stress gets bad. They can help analyze your support system. One thing I recommend is having a personal board of advisors.

Curating a group of people over the years that you can reach out to and talk to about your career and experiences. People who can give you a safe place to vent and give you feedback.

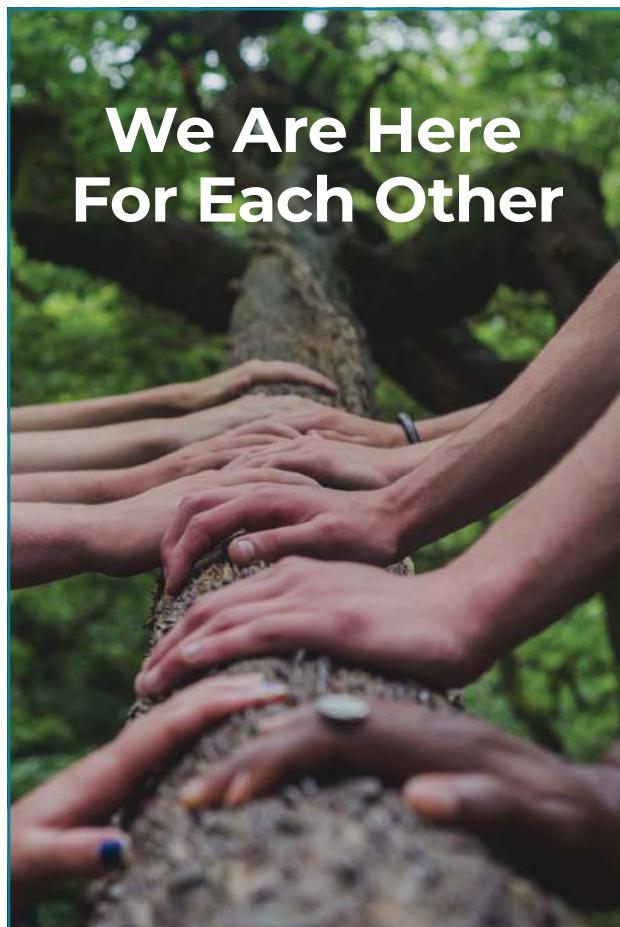
In work cultures, we call it psychological safety. Do you have a safe culture for people to talk? Within our careers, we need that as well.

### ***What are some of the barriers that leaders face when seeking help with their mental health? You mentioned that self-awareness is important.***

You're under the microscope and there can be a fear of looking weak. And you're exhausted and so busy, the last thing you want to do in your free time is go out and get support. You'd rather go home and watch a Netflix movie.

It can snowball. Stress is something that happens every day. There are deadlines coming up. Burnout is constant. It just keeps going, and you get more tired, you get more anxious, you don't eat well.

**Continued on page 19**



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## **“Learn to set good boundaries. When you schedule, have some guardrails around your time. Boundary setting is a learned skill.”**

What do you do in the moment with stress? This is where people have an opportunity. Each one of us can manage our stress in the day, in the moment. But high performers often see that as a weakness.

Burnout happens over time, so we need to develop self-awareness. If you feel the stress coming on, don't wait too long to reach out and get support, and do some of the things that can help you. If you wait too long, it just gets harder.

### ***What techniques can help in moments of stress and overwhelm?***

When you feel the stress cycle coming, stop and breathe. It might get tough, but try going for a walk and reach out to your network. Or take a few moments and watch a little comedy. Laugh. Breathe. Get out of your head.

Practice mini meditation or 4-7-8 breathing. Breathe in for 4 seconds. Hold it for 7. Exhale for 8. This is a simple tool that has been proven to calm us down and relax us a bit. But we have to do it regularly.

Take a break. Take 10 minutes for a nap or just a mental break. Sit in a comfy chair, block out 10 minutes and just breathe. And put some routines in place. Don't go on your phone just before you go to bed. Get good sleep, and drink lots of water. It all makes a difference.

Make sure you've got some places in your life for laughter. We all want to produce so much and we want to be successful, and we can be unwilling to laugh about nothing. Connection is a big one, being connected to something outside of your work like a service community or a hobby.

### ***How do you support your team if you are experiencing your own mental health challenges?***

Psychological safety is a key element of environments where you feel safe. If you're not experiencing that yourself, how can you pass that on to your staff?

Learn to ask better questions of your staff instead of advising people all the time. We talk about giving feedback, but psychological safety is absolutely paramount if you give feedback to people.

### ***If people don't feel safe how can you create an environment where feedback is encouraged?***

Learn to set good boundaries. When you schedule, have some guardrails around your time. Boundary setting is a learned skill. We're either taught by our parents or maybe a mentor, or somebody we work for.

Some people say, well, I can't set boundaries, because my staff may not like me because I have a firm boundary. But think of the people and the leaders you respect. They have great boundaries, guaranteed.

You can start small. Look at what you're doing; are you saying yes to everything? How can I say no to one thing today? Try it. Setting boundaries helps you reduce burnout. Boundaries allow you to take a 10-minute walk, or take Saturday off to go canoeing or something. It helps people work better with you and people will understand you better.

Leaders who invest in well-being, including their own well-being, will see the benefits in their work culture and within the team they're leading.

*This conversation was condensed and edited for Exchange. Contact Barry Forward at [barry@rebootforward.com](mailto:barry@rebootforward.com) or find him on LinkedIn.*



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# Why Mental Health Can't Be Optional At Work

## What Leaders Must Do to Create Holistic Workplaces

By Cynthia Lockrey

Having worked in human relations for over 30 years, Denise Lloyd supports staff and leadership teams at a wide range of organizations including non-profits, local governments, trades and more. Since the pandemic she, like many HR professionals, has seen an increase in the prevalence of mental health issues and the conversations around them.

"More than any time in history, people are not only struggling with their mental health but also feeling much more comfortable talking about it," explains Lloyd, Founder and CEO of Engaged, a B.C.-based human resources consulting company.

"Twenty years ago, staff didn't talk to their managers about their mental health. But now people are recognizing their challenges and asking for support. While we're in a place where people are more open, many managers and leaders aren't ready or feeling skilled to have these conversations."

Lloyd has seen that while leaders are looking for solutions and resources to help their staff, there's still a generational gap in the comfort level and acceptance of mental health challenges. Leaders need to understand the challenges and accept the reality of mental health support. This includes ending the blame. Comments such as, "the younger generation is too soft" aren't new, nor are they helpful.

### HOLISTIC SUPPORT

In her work, Lloyd has also found that while the leadership team can be resistant to these conversations, they can also be in the loneliest roles, needing additional support. Even when they're personally struggling, leaders are less likely to seek out the support they need or prioritize their own mental health.

"I don't think that leaders have the same acceptance about mental health for themselves as they do for others. They often believe that by being in a leadership position they shouldn't need extra help. Sometimes they are their own worst enemies and get in their own way of accessing assistance. It's okay to access support."

When asked what's being done to create healthy workplaces and ensure everyone's mental health is supported, Lloyd said it's about providing a mix of tangible and intangible supports.

**"What's key is normalizing mental health. As soon as we normalize it, we can have the important conversations that are needed."**



Denise Lloyd

"We've seen an increase in the acceptance and discussion about psychological safety inside organizations, with efforts being made to keep staff safe," Lloyd explains.

This commonly looks like increases in health spending accounts and paramedical benefits to allow staff greater access to counselling; workplace wellness programs; and more robust EFAPs (employee and family assistance programs) that are promoted widely throughout the organization.

She's also seen low-cost initiatives that can create positive results. One example is a monthly wellness email providing insights or reminders on how people can support their mental health.

"What's key is normalizing mental health," says Lloyd. "As soon as we normalize it, we can have the important conversations that are needed on topics such as how do we change our time off policies or introduce non-traditional supports."

These can include a subscription to a mindfulness and meditation app, gym memberships, or pet care benefits so people don't have to stress about veterinary bills.

"We need to expand our thinking of how we can help our employees," explains Lloyd.

Working with Indigenous communities, she's seen wellness committees prioritize cultural safety. For local governments, there are many options for non-traditional supports that are relevant to their own organizational or local context.

**Continued on page 21**

This could mean allowing staff to swap a statutory holiday for a culturally significant time or holiday, or providing grandparent leave so staff can be there to celebrate the birth of a grandchild.

## ENDING TOXICITY

Another critical piece in supporting staff in their wellness journey is having a firm commitment to ensure a psychologically safe and healthy workplace.

“In addition to my HR work, my partner and I also operate Libratum Workplace Investigations, a business where we investigate harassment and bullying complaints,” explains Lloyd. “Never have we had a busier year with investigations than 2025.”

“We’ve seen a sharp increase in bullying, harassment and negative behaviours in the workplace. These situations could be avoided if unacceptable behaviour was addressed, regardless of the person’s role in the organization. If they’re behaving inappropriately you need to address it, not tolerate it.”

Lloyd says regardless of the mental health supports provided by an organization, if they’re allowing toxic behaviour then the negative impact will overpower everything else.

To identify problem areas, she recommends leaders pay close attention to turnover rates, sick leaves and absences. If there’s a particular department or work team where these are high, you need to figure out why. Then give the manager the tools and supports needed to change their behaviour instead of simply turning a blind eye.

## JOB HUGGING

What happens when this negative behaviour is left to fester? When people’s mental health is not supported and toxic environments are unchecked, the result is often an increase in absenteeism and a decrease in productivity and employee retention.

“Whereas we once talked about quiet quitting and the great resignation, the new hot topic is job hugging,” Lloyd explains. “This is when people are staying for the wrong reasons—often because they can’t financially afford to leave or are unable to find another job.”

“These employees are unhappy, dialing it in, not engaged and doing the bare minimum. They’re disengaged and not contributing positively to the workplace.”

Another impact can be high turnover of new hires, resulting in a never-ending recruitment cycle.

## REFLECTION OF SOCIETY

Another challenging trend is the public’s interaction with local governments. Just as staff are struggling with their mental health, so are members of the public. They are coming into local government buildings with shorter tempers, have more needs than before and may be harder for staff to deal with.

**Continued on page 22**



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Normalizing mental health in professional settings is critical. For example, LGMA built a movement break into its 2019 conference to provide attendees with a much-needed physical and mental reset.

"As a result, staff have a lot more coming at them," says Lloyd. "When the public's having a bad day, so are your staff. So how do you help them not get stuck in the negativity and take it home with them?"

She feels it's important to recognize these challenges and support staff in meaningful ways. This can include providing de-escalation training for those who deal directly with the public or quiet spaces to decompress.

## ONGOING COMMITMENT

Lloyd recognizes that since leaders don't always see an immediate return when prioritizing mental health, it can be hard to sustain.

"You need to trust that doing the right thing, building a healthy workplace and normalizing mental health truly is helping," Lloyd stresses.

She recommends looking at the areas you can measure—such as increased retention, decreased absenteeism and increased usage of your benefits programs.

"You can't stop talking about mental health or take a one-and-done communications approach," she says.

"You need to keep the conversation going. You never know when it will land so you just need to keep talking about it to ensure the information is available when people need it."

Lloyd has seen a change in organizations where mental health is normalized. The more conversations about mental health take place, the more staff use the supports. As more people access resources, the organization benefits as a whole.

Her final piece of advice is for leaders to take an active role in checking in with their staff.

"If you notice someone who was normally super engaged, go quiet for a few weeks, check in with them," says Lloyd.

To truly create healthy workplaces and support the mental health of staff and elected officials, it's important that it's an organizational priority and everyone works together.

*See Tips & Tactics on page 23 for resources.*



# tips & tactics

## Mental Health Resources for Local Governments

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

- Connection to Care is a phone service providing free, anonymous and confidential support to local government workers in B.C. and B.C. forestry workers. Call 778-247-2273 (CARE) Monday to Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Connection to Care also provides free mental health resources online, including worksheets and presentations: [connectiontocare.ca/resources](http://connectiontocare.ca/resources).
- BC Municipal Safety Association (BCMSA) offers a free Psychological Support Toolkit, including a virtual summit with industry experts and information packs, checklists, and access to an online discussion forum: [bcmsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Psychological-Health-and-Safety-Toolkit-Version-2-compressed.pdf](http://bcmsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Psychological-Health-and-Safety-Toolkit-Version-2-compressed.pdf).
- LGMA's HR Toolkit is available in electronic and electronic + print formats. The 2026 updated version will be available this spring: [lgma.ca/manuals1](http://lgma.ca/manuals1).
- LGMA Mental Health Resource Page: [lgma.ca/mental-health-resources-for-local-and-first-nations-government48f54cd3](http://lgma.ca/mental-health-resources-for-local-and-first-nations-government48f54cd3).

### OTHER GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

- B.C. *Workers Compensation Act* definition of mental disorder and eligibility for compensation: [bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/19001\\_00\\_multi#section135](http://bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/19001_00_multi#section135).
- B.C. safe workplace legislation: *Workers Compensation Act*, Occupational Health and Safety Regulation B.C. Reg. 296/97, Part 4 (see 4.19 to 4.31): [bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/296\\_97\\_02#section4.1](http://bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/296_97_02#section4.1).
- Create a psychologically safe workplace with the Comprehensive Workplace Health and Safety Program by Canadian Centre for Health and Occupational Safety: [ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/wh/mentalhealth\\_work.html](http://ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/wh/mentalhealth_work.html).

### COURSES & TRAINING

- Mental Health First Aid provides training for participants to recognize changes in mental health, respond supportively and apply practical actions: [openingminds.org/training/mhfa/](http://openingminds.org/training/mhfa/).
- The Mental Health Commission offers evidence-based mental health training and resources for Canadians: [mentalhealthcommission.ca/courses](http://mentalhealthcommission.ca/courses).
- Guarding Minds at Work helps organizations assess their current workplace and develop a plan and implementation strategy for psychological safety: [guardingmindsatwork.ca](http://guardingmindsatwork.ca).

### ADDITIONAL LEARNING & SUPPORT

- *The Master HRist Series*, a compelling trilogy of books from Senior Manager of Human Resources at Sunshine Coast Regional District, Gerry Parker. The books provide a roadmap for leaders facing today's pressing HR challenges, including transformational leadership, workplace conflict and building inclusive teams: [therespectfulworkplace.com](http://therespectfulworkplace.com).
- Six leading mental health and substance use non-profit agencies in B.C. collaborate to provide support: [heretohelp.bc.ca](http://heretohelp.bc.ca).
- *Courage Confab* podcast by Executive Coach Barry Forward and Dagmar Meachem, covering setting boundaries in the workplace, the challenges of giving feedback and how to get better at it, and accountability: [open.spotify.com/show/7se9mrtEBhVo27fYC9jP2I?si=52506735ae894685](http://open.spotify.com/show/7se9mrtEBhVo27fYC9jP2I?si=52506735ae894685).
- William Bridges' book *Transitions* on coping with life and organizational changes.

# ASK A MENTOR?



In this regular feature, your questions are answered by local government leaders who share their insights and wisdom. If you have a topic or question you would like a mentor to discuss, please email us at [editor@lgma.ca](mailto:editor@lgma.ca).

## GUEST MENTOR ELIZABETH TRACY

Elizabeth Tracy has been Chief Administrative Officer for the Village of Pemberton since 2022. Previously, she spent ten years as Director of the Whistler Public Library and at times served as Acting General Manager of Corporate & Community Services for the Resort Municipality of Whistler. She relocated to Whistler in 2012 from Telluride, Colorado, where she managed Youth Services at the Wilkinson Public Library. Earlier in her career, Elizabeth worked in research consulting, the arts and non-profits. She finds joy in living where she can explore the mountains, raise an outdoor-loving child, and give back to her community.

### ***How do you build relationships and find support across your region?***

I am as introverted as someone could be, which can quickly become isolating in the sometimes chaotic space of local government. I have to remind myself that there is always something to learn and many people to learn from if I am brave enough to reach out.

I deeply value the relationships I have with my most trusted advisors, and I am fortunate to have support from a handful of other CAOs as well as colleagues, mentors, coaches and inspiring leaders whom I have stayed connected with throughout my career.

### ***How can someone build genuine relationships rather than just collecting contacts?***

Genuine relationships take time and a willingness to reach out and make time to connect. A short Zoom, lunch or a cup of coffee with an important connection can quickly recenter me, make me feel less isolated, expose me to something new, or remind me that I also have something to offer.

I tend to value one-on-one time or small group conversations, as these situations foster more authentic connections beyond working the room or simply exchanging business cards.

### ***How can someone balance seeking help from others with offering support in return?***

Offering support can be a way to show gratitude for the help of others, but it can also mean taking the time to ask about their biggest challenges or what might be keeping them up at night. You may not always have the answer, but support can be a willingness to listen or connecting a colleague with someone who might have the expertise they need.

### ***Are there any common mistakes people make when trying to network that you'd advise avoiding?***

Sometimes people focus too much on what they will get from a connection instead of being authentic and open. Good support and meaningful connections come in many different forms, so don't be afraid to look beyond the local government sector. Take the time to listen and don't hesitate to offer your help first.

## LGMA Local Election Resources

Visit the LGMA website for a variety of resources:

- Local Government Elections Information webpage: [lgma.ca/election-resources](http://lgma.ca/election-resources).
- 2026 BC Local Elections Manual: available in February at [lgma.ca/manuals1](http://lgma.ca/manuals1).

- Updated Elected Officials Orientation Resource Kit: [lgma.ca/elected-officials-orientation-resource-kit](http://lgma.ca/elected-officials-orientation-resource-kit).
- On-demand online elections course (available now) and Advanced Elections workshops in April (registration to open in February): [members.lgma.ca/events-and-training](http://members.lgma.ca/events-and-training).



# Volunteer Spotlight

Each issue, we profile an LGMA volunteer who is making an impact in our local government communities.



## VOLUNTEER BRYAN TEASDALE

For more than 20 years, Bryan Teasdale has served as a local government CAO and senior management professional, known for providing strong leadership and thoughtful guidance to elected officials, managers, staff and consultants. Currently the CAO for the City of Rossland, he is also a former Director of the LGMA's West

Kootenay Boundary Chapter and a long-standing supporter and volunteer of the association.

### ***What other roles have you filled in local government?***

Corporate Officer, Approving Officer, Finance Officer, Manager of Infrastructure and Sustainability, Operations Manager, community therapist, Engineering Planner, Grant Writer, event security, Chief Elections Officer, Deputy Chief Elections Officer, local historian, Airport Manager, unofficial weather forecaster, Bylaw Enforcement Officer, community volunteer, Drainage & Sewer Operator, Parks Gardener and General Labourer... just to name a few.

### ***What roles have you filled as an LGMA volunteer?***

West Kootenay Boundary LGMA President & Vice President, Board Chapter Director (including various board-appointed committees), previous chapter conference host, previous annual conference presenter, and most recently as an avid supporter of any regional/sub-regional action here in the south Kootenays.

### ***What motivated you to get involved with LGMA as a volunteer?***

When I started in local government administration, I reached out to a neighbouring community on a specific question. Based on that initial conversation, I was inundated with emails from many others on my question—and thought, “this is pretty cool...who are you?” Additionally, when attending my first MATI®, the number of great facilitators and the resources available to help you get stuff done when you get back to your community was amazing.

I've actively tried to pay it forward and give back to the profession that has given me so much. LGMA provides incredible resources and networking opportunities, and volunteering allows me to help strengthen those offerings while connecting with peers who share a passion for local government.

### ***Can you share a story or highlight from your experience volunteering with LGMA and with the LGMA Board?***

I was always excited to review items leading up to setting the Annual LGMA Conference agenda and enjoyed bringing a “Kootenay flavour” to our Board meetings. Also, pitching a shut-out at our first-ever East-West Kootenay Joint Chapter Conference Ball Game would be right up there (I even have a souvenir cup to prove this momentous effort).

### ***What is the most fulfilling part of volunteering with LGMA?***

Knowing that the work we do helps others succeed. Whether it's creating learning opportunities or fostering connections, it's about building a stronger local government community. I know our team up here in Rossland is also at the forefront of volunteering for their respective associations.

### ***What do you enjoy doing outside of work?***

I'm a back-to-back local curling club champ with sights set on a third consecutive title. I try to play softball, volleyball, golf and downhill ski. Our family loves to hang out, camp and go on tropical vacations.

### ***What advice would you give to someone starting their career in local government?***

Be curious and open to learning. Local government offers a wide range of opportunities, and the more you understand about different areas, the more valuable you become. Build relationships, seek mentors, and don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone.

### ***Is there a book you read or a movie you watched recently that you would recommend?***

I cannot ever turn off the movie *Moneyball*. I always see parallels in that movie to us here in local government; success isn't always about having the most resources, but rather about leveraging what you have in smarter ways, building trust within your team, overcoming adversity, and staying focused/committed to your vision—even when the path you've taken may be unconventional.

## MEMBERS PAGE

### MEMBER MOVEMENT

**Melody Crawford**, Bylaw Services Clerk, Sunshine Coast Regional District. Formerly Corporate Records Administrator Assistant, District of Sechelt.

**Rick Green**, CAO, City of Merritt. Formerly Director of Public Works, Engineering & Development Services, City of Merritt.

**Carey Herd**, CAO, City of Vernon. Formerly CAO, Municipality of Central Elgin, Ontario.

**Prab Lashar**, CAO, District of Lantzville. Formerly CAO, Village of Fruitvale.

**Dyra Pridham**, Labour Relations Manager, City of Vernon. Formerly Business Manager, Government of BC.

**Donna-Lynn Rosa**, CAO, City of New Westminster. Formerly CEO, Atira Women's Resource Society.

**Kris Schumacher**, CAO, District of Port Edward. Formerly Manager, Communications and Engagement, Cowichan Valley Regional District.

**Peter Weeber**, City Manager, City of Delta. Formerly CAO, City of Vernon.

### RETIREMENTS

**Bruce Lennox**, Director of Planning, City of Fernie.

**Lisa Spitale**, CAO, City of New Westminster.

### 2026 LGMA EVENTS & PROGRAMS

#### Connect Lunch Series (Online)

February 9, October 19

HR Connect

April 2, October 29

Communications Connect

April 10, November 13

CAO Connect

April 22, September 9

Corporate Officer Connect

#### Events & Programs

February 17-19

CAO Forum

Westin Wall Centre, Richmond

February 20-25

MATI® The Successful CAO\*

Harbour House, Salt Spring Isl.

February 26

Local Government Election

Townhall for Voters Living on

Reserve (Online)

April 1, 8, 15

Supervisor Essentials (Online)

April 12-17

MATI® Advanced

Communications\*

Harbour House, Salt Spring Isl.

April 14, 23 or 29

Advanced Elections Workshops  
(One-day workshops, online)

April 26-May 1

MATI® Leadership\*

The Bayside Resort, Parksville

April 30-May 1

Approving Officers Workshop

(Online)

\* These MATI® programs delivered in partnership with Capilano University.

May 3-8  
MATI® Managing People\*  
Harbour House, Salt Spring Isl.

May 5-7  
First Nations – Local  
Government Land Use Planning  
Regional Workshop North (in  
partnership with First Nation  
Public Service Secretariat)  
House of Ancestors,  
Prince George

June 9  
Communications Forum  
Penticton Trade and  
Convention Centre

June 9-10  
Tradeshow  
Penticton Trade and  
Convention Centre

June 9-11  
Annual Conference  
Penticton Trade and  
Convention Centre

September 3-December 3  
Foundations of Local  
Government Learning Series  
(Online)

September 13  
CAO Dinner

Vancouver

September 14, 21, 28  
Minute Taking Online  
Course

October 7, 14, 21, 28  
Coaching Essentials (Online)

November 4-6  
Admin Professionals  
Conference

Delta Victoria Ocean Pointe  
Resort, Victoria

November 25-27  
Corporate Officer Forum  
Westin Wall Centre, Richmond

### 2026 PARTNER EVENTS

March 11-13  
LGMA Annual Forum  
Richmond

April 22-23  
Municipal Finance Authority  
of BC Financial Forum & AGM  
Victoria

May 17-21  
International Institute of  
Municipal Clerks Annual  
Conference  
Reno, Nevada

May 25-27  
Canadian Association of  
Municipal Administrators  
Annual Conference  
Whistler

May 27-29  
Government Finance Officers  
Association of BC Annual  
Conference  
Kelowna

June 4-7  
Federation of Canadian  
Municipalities Annual  
Conference  
Edmonton

October 17-21  
International City/County  
Management Association  
Long Beach, CA

Learn more and see our  
on-demand courses at  
[lgma.ca/programs-training](https://lgma.ca/programs-training).

### Save the Date!

### LGMA Annual Conference in Penticton June 9-11

Faced with emerging issues and increasing challenges of an ever-changing world, effective leaders reinvigorate relationships and cultivate connections while learning from each other and growing together.

LGMA2026 will inspire; infused with local flavour, highlighting our host location Penticton and showcasing community solutions. Local government leaders, experts, and partners will return to their communities with a strengthened peer network and actionable ideas for a resilient future.

Registration opens in the spring. Watch [lgma.ca/lgma-annual-conference](https://lgma.ca/lgma-annual-conference) for details.





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