

EXCHANGE



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.

Summer 2026

CASE STUDIES P16

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS P23

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT P25

The Budget Balancing Act

P8



Comprehensive legal services for municipalities and regional districts throughout British Columbia.

We help to lay the foundation for growth and success in large and small communities across the province by supplying local governments with the legal advice and strategic support required to help them carry out their mandates.

VANCOUVER OFFICE

1616-808 Nelson Street
Box 12147 – Nelson Square
Vancouver, BC V6Z 2H2
T: 604.689.7400
F: 604.689.3444
Toll Free: 1.800.665.3540

KELOWNA OFFICE

201-1456 St. Paul Street
Kelowna, BC V1Y 2E6
T: 250.712.1130
F: 250.712.1180

www.younganderson.ca

Update

In this Issue	4
Executive Director Report	4
Board Update	5
Case of Interest	6
Volunteer Spotlight	25
Members Page	26

Professional Development

Tips & Tactics: Resources for	22
Budgeting and Financial Management	
LGMA2026 Conference Highlights	23
Ask a Mentor	24
Programs and Events	26

The LGMA office is located on the traditional territories of the lək'wəḡən (Lekwungen) Peoples, also known as the X̱sepsəm (Kosapsəm) and Songhees Nations, whose relationships with the land continue to this day. We extend our gratitude to them and to the many Indigenous Nations on whose territories we work.

6

Procedural Fairness and Decision-Making

Case of Interest discusses case law regarding the obligation for procedural fairness when it comes to targeted cost-recovery.



EXCHANGE

Exchange is the magazine for members of the Local Government Management Association of British Columbia. *Exchange* is distributed quarterly to more than 1,100 local government professionals and affiliates.

Exchange is printed on Sappi Opus Dull, with 10% recycled fibre and an FSC Mix Credit CoC claim (FSC-C014955), at Royal Printers.



LGMA Office:
Suite 710A
880 Douglas Street
Victoria, BC V8W 2B7
Telephone: 250.383.7032
Email: office@lgma.ca
Web: lgma.ca

Contact the Editor:
Email: editor@lgma.ca

Cover Image: District of Saanich municipal hall. The District is highlighted in this edition.

Photo courtesy of the District of Saanich.



16

Strategies for Revenue Generation and Budget Communications

Get advice and inspiration from other B.C. local governments related to revenue generation and budget communications.

8

The Budget Balancing Act

Hear from B.C. local governments and financial experts about the complexities of local government budgeting and ideas for potential solutions.



26

Program Highlight: North Central Chapter

In this edition, we highlight the North Central LGMA chapter and their work connecting members over long distances.

IN THIS ISSUE

At every brunch and in the group chat, conversations inevitably shift to global politics, the economy and the increasing cost of living.

Money and politics are topics that are sometimes taboo in social settings, but I'm finding more and more people are delving into these subjects. Maybe it's because of the geopolitical climate, the cost of gas or the increased price of basic necessities like groceries, toothpaste and t-shirts. Or the alarming and sometimes confusing news headlines from across the border. Tensions are higher and people are reacting in surprising ways. One day, after waiting in line for even more expensive gas, my partner declared it was time to buy an electric car and leave the gas economy behind.

Just as we feel the pinch of inflation at the checkout, local governments are being impacted by inflation, tariffs and geopolitical issues. Every local government experiences the push and pull of balancing the budget and providing services to the community, but the current conditions are making financial planning even more challenging.

In this issue of *Exchange*, experts discuss the complex financial issues that local governments are facing, and breakdown the different approaches to budgeting and debt financing. In the case studies, we learn how District of Lake Country is using partnerships for revenue generation, and look at creative work being done in budget communications and engagement.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue, including the interview participants who took the time to share their thoughts on various aspects of the budget and financial planning process. If you have any questions, comments or story ideas, please email me at editor@lgma.ca.

Manjot Bains
Editor

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



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Hello! I am honoured to write this column from the traditional territories of the ləkʷəŋən (Lekwungen) Peoples, also known as the Xʷsepsəm (Kosapsum) and Songhees Nations.

I am still feeling energized after driving home from the beautiful Syilx Okanagan territory in Penticton, where we gathered for our 2026 Annual Conference. It was wonderful to bring together local government professionals from across British Columbia and beyond for three inspiring days of learning, connection and shared purpose.

We were honoured to be welcomed with the Okanagan Song and keynote shared by skniʔm Anona Kampe, and to conclude with an insightful closing keynote from Dr. Roslyn Kunin. I loved hearing about the learnings gleaned from the numerous concurrent sessions as speakers shared their wisdom and expertise at the conference. Because of the incredible support of speakers, partners and sponsors, we were able to offer important learning sessions alongside mentorship opportunities, pension consulting, and other member services. A big thank you to the LGMA team, Board of Directors and special guests who helped make this event a success.

While summer often brings opportunities to recharge, many local government professionals know that the season can be just as busy as any other. Whether responding to emergencies, preparing for local elections, or helping ensure communities remain safe, welcoming and vibrant, local government professionals continue to demonstrate remarkable dedication and service. We appreciate all that you do for your communities and we are committed to supporting you every step of the way.

LGMA continues to offer a range of resources and services, including our Mental Health Resources webpage for local and First Nations government professionals, election-related resources, on-demand training, and other programs to support professional and personal well-being.

As the summer season continues, I hope you find moments to celebrate your accomplishments, enjoy time with family and friends, and take care of yourself. Please know that LGMA is here to support you, and we encourage you to reach out.

Candace Witkowskyj
Executive Director



BOARD UPDATE

Greetings. I am sending this message from the traditional territories of the ləkʷəŋən peoples, represented by the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the WSÁNEĆ peoples, represented by the Tsartlip, Pauquachin, Tsawout, Tseycum and Malahat Nations. I am grateful to live and work on these lands and acknowledge the enduring relationships these Nations have with their territories.

It is an honour to serve as President of the LGMA. I am thankful for the confidence placed in me by our members, Board of Directors, volunteers and staff team. I also extend my appreciation to Past President Keri-Ann Austin for her steadfast leadership and commitment to the Association during her term.

This year, the LGMA continues to advance the priorities set out in our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, which focuses on fostering meaningful connections, supporting professional growth, and building a resilient foundation for the future of local government management in British Columbia. The plan reflects the voices of members from across the province and reinforces our commitment to be responsive, relevant and forward-looking to support local government professionals.

Our recent annual conference once again demonstrated the strength of the LGMA community. Through thoughtful discussions, practical learning opportunities and valuable networking, members came together to share ideas, build relationships, and explore solutions to the challenges and opportunities facing our sector.

As we look ahead, local governments are busy managing all that is involved with local elections. Election periods bring change, renewed community conversations and heightened expectations. They also highlight the essential role local government professionals play in supporting good governance, maintaining organizational continuity, and providing trusted advice to elected officials and communities.

The LGMA remains committed to equipping members with the resources, professional development, and peer connections needed to navigate this important work with confidence.

Thank you for your continued dedication to public service. I look forward to connecting with you in the year ahead as we continue to learn, lead and grow together.

Angila Bains
President



Discover the Value of LGMA Membership

Are you ready to elevate your career and make a greater impact in your community?

An LGMA membership opens the door to resources and opportunities designed specifically for BC local government professionals. Gain access to these and other benefits:



Savings on
program fees
with member
discounts



Career transition
counselling
and executive
coaching



A chance to expand
your horizons
with the Overseas
Exchange Program



Tailored expertise
from the pension
consulting service

Learn more at lgma.ca/membership or call 250-383-7032.



By Katherine A. Reilly
& Trevor Wilson
SMS Law

CASE of INTEREST

Procedural Fairness and Decision-Making

Local governments are facing ever-increasing financial pressures and challenges in the work they do, particularly when it comes to infrastructure costs and budgeting.

A recent British Columbia Court of Appeal decision (*Ironclad Developments Inc. v. West Kelowna (City)*, 2025 BCCA 191), sheds important light on some of the constraints local governments face when handling latecomer arrangements for development works and the imposition of similar charges on developers.

This case dealt with a latecomer charge authorized under sections 507 and 508 of the *Local Government Act*, which gives local governments authority to mandate a “late-coming” developer to contribute a proportionate share of the construction costs of excess or extended services.

The dispute arose when a developer, WestUrban, received approval to develop a property in West Kelowna (the “City”) and was required by the City to also build “excess and extended services,” extending beyond the developer’s own property. The City had a “latecomer fee” regime in place to recover construction costs of excess and extended services proportionally from nearby property owners who benefitted from the construction, and to compensate the developer who was required to build them.

In this case, the largest portion of the cost was assigned to Ironclad, the developer-owner of a property adjacent to the WestUrban site. A dispute arose regarding how the costs were calculated, and Ironclad’s limited participation in the City’s decision to charge it. Ironclad brought a court petition seeking judicial review of the City’s decision.

The initial decision from the B.C. Supreme Court (2024 BCSC 1285) upheld the City’s decision to charge the latecomer fee to Ironclad. The court based its decision on its finding that the decision was legislative in nature and not administrative. Because the decision was initially found to be legislative, the City was found not to have owed Ironclad a duty of fairness. These determinations were overturned on appeal.

Legislative vs. administrative

Before you can assess whether a party is owed a duty of fairness, you must first determine whether the decision being made is legislative or administrative. Administrative decisions attract a duty of procedural fairness, whereas legislative decisions do not.

In *Ironclad*, the Court summarized the hallmarks of legislative decisions as (1) The decision is general in nature; (2) The decision is based on broad considerations of public policy; (3) Mechanisms of political accountability exist in respect of the decision; and (4) Adversely affected interests are numerous, diverse or diffuse.

While the decision to establish a charge regime would be a legislative decision that does not attract procedural fairness, the implementation of the policy may attract the duty of fairness if the criteria listed above are not met. As the Court of Appeal articulated in *Ironclad*, “The markers of a legislative decision are not present.”

The underlying rationale in the *Ironclad* case extends to any targeted financial obligation not shared more generally with the surrounding community, including development cost charges, amenity cost charges, and similar obligations arising under works and services agreements.

Meeting the duty of procedural fairness

If you have determined that the decision is administrative in nature and a duty of procedural fairness is owed, you will then need to consider the content of that duty and what steps must be taken by the local government to meet its obligation.

It is important to understand that procedural fairness does not entitle a party to a specific outcome. *Ironclad* provides guidance that local governments must, at minimum, follow procedures set out in the relevant bylaw and communicate with, and allow feedback from, the payer of the charge.

The specific requirements of the duty of fairness are highly flexible and depend on context. If you face a situation where a duty of fairness might be owed, consult with legal counsel.

Practical implications

The most significant financial implication of *Ironclad* for local governments is that procedural fairness obligations towards developers may create uncertainty in cost recovery for infrastructure projects. Procedural fairness requires heightened administrative and clerical requirements to provide developers subject to a charge with a forum for input or review. This decision solidifies an appeal ground for developers that could disrupt a local government’s financial planning and infrastructure funding assumptions.

Advice and Advocacy for Local Government

Providing legal services to
local governments throughout
British Columbia since 1988



For regular updates about the latest
developments in local government law,
visit our website:

SMS.BC.CA

**Stewart McDannold Stuart
Barristers & Solicitors**

2nd Floor, 837 Burdett Avenue
Victoria, BC, Canada V8W 1B3

T: (250) 380-7744

F: (250) 380-3008

The Budget Balancing Act

By Manjot Bains



PHOTO COURTESY DISTRICT OF SAANICH
Gorge on Art, an annual artist
showcase in Saanich, is one of the
programs and services supported
by the District of Saanich.

A Quarterly Publication of the LGMA
Exchange – Summer 2026

Balancing the budget is always a challenge.

Every year, local governments experience the push and pull of creating a budget that reflects community needs and fiscal responsibility.

They face complex financial issues including navigating the negative impacts of tariffs, inflation and budget cuts at every level of government. The demands and pressures on local governments continue to grow while revenues often don't meet the needs of the community. With each budget, local governments increasingly have to do more with less.

How do you cut when there is nothing left to cut?

"There are always opportunities to reduce, but there are major implications to doing that because you will hit a point where you start to compromise the core services that you're entrusted to manage," says Trevor Seibel, Chief Administrative Officer at City of Armstrong.

Trained in accounting, Seibel spent years in public practice accounting and municipal auditing before transitioning to local government in 2006. He worked as the Chief Financial Officer for the District of Tumbler Ridge, before serving as CFO and then CAO at District of Coldstream and then Deputy CAO in the City of West Kelowna.

"It's always a challenge when Councils give a directive to maintain a specific maximum [tax] increase, which will inevitably lead to potential service reductions. This will mean a compromise in the services and their effectiveness for residents. And if you cut too deep, you lose the human resources and expertise to be able to manage those assets and services your residents rely on."

Deep cuts can also impact staff morale as they deal with internal and external pressures—something seen across other sectors as well.

"They're having to try and provide things that could be outside of their scope or comfort level, and they're being asked to try and do more with less, which can eventually impact people," shares Seibel.

"If you cut too deep, you lose the human resources and expertise to manage those assets and services your residents rely on."



Trevor Seibel

"That becomes a morale and culture issue if you're continually cutting as a way to try and keep up with increasing costs."

It's common for Councils and Boards to request budget cuts to maintain lower tax rates, but with inflation and other financial issues impacting local governments across the province and country, the impact of budget cuts is deeper than before.

GLOBAL ISSUES, LOCAL IMPACT

Tariffs, war, increasing prices of oil and gas and rising inflation have all influenced where local governments spend their money.

"As finance directors, wherever we are, this is our struggle: how do we get to a district or municipality that is financially sustainable and has healthy reserves?" shares Paul Arslan, Director of Finance for the District of Saanich. "It's a difficult climate with tariffs, energy prices going up and inflation in general. It's been a struggle."

Peter Urbanc, Chief Executive Officer at the Municipal Financial Authority (MFA) adds, "Inflation is impacting local governments in an accelerating way. Over the past 10 to 15 years, local governments have felt the impact of rising costs around construction inflation, which has been two to three times higher than the inflation rate we typically see. Now we're seeing all the other costs increasing as well."

Continued on page 10

MFA is a financial services organization that serves B.C.'s local governments by providing low-cost and flexible borrowing and investment services.

While it may feel like these issues are unique to local governments in B.C., inflationary pressure is also being felt across Canada and the world.

"During the COVID [pandemic], there was a spike in inflation. We thought we were past that, but now we have new geopolitical issues that are rekindling this worry," Urbanc notes. "You also have provincial and federal governments, and this is happening globally, dealing with budget deficits and borrowing a lot of money, and that is, in fact, inflationary."

Families are having a hard time making ends meet as the costs of tariffs and fuel are offloaded onto everyday expenses like groceries and gas.



Peter Urbanc

Local businesses are struggling with the burden of changing tariffs and trade uncertainty, and all these financial strains also impact local governments.

"It's not just the cost of the infrastructure, we have bigger long-term financial pressure around every cost," Urbanc says. "For example, fuel costs impact a family, but they also impact the fleet and public works cost of energy. And local governments are dealing with this big inflationary spike that's not set to come down anytime soon, which has also increased interest rates, especially longer-term rates."

Urbanc notes that three years ago, 10-year interest rates in Canada were close to less than one per cent, but are now close to four or five per cent.

"All these cost pressures, including the cost-to-service debt, are squeezing local governments. So what happens globally has a very direct impact here."

STRAIN FROM BUDGET PRESSURES

In addition to the global context, local governments are dealing with other pressures.

"There's increased provincial downloading, which we've seen for many years," says Urbanc. "Things like housing, homelessness, mental health, public safety issues, even climate adaptation, that are not necessarily the purview of local governments, but they are taking them on and dealing with those problems in their own communities."

Seibel notes that local governments in B.C. are dealing with many more social issues than they have in the past. "These pressures have continued to escalate over the past few years and have really put a strain on our ability to deliver our core services: roads, water, sewer, police, fire, parks and recreation."

The ability for local governments to generate revenue is restricted, which adds additional challenges.

"There's a structural imbalance between revenues and responsibilities within local governments, and there are many things that lead to that," explains Urbanc. "Local governments have concentrated, limited and somewhat inflexible revenue tools compared to provincial or federal governments, so there's a high reliance on property taxes and user fees. And there is some reliance on direct transfers from upper layers of government."

Across Canada, all levels of government are dealing with similar financial challenges, and provincial and federal governments are running larger and larger budget deficits, resulting in fewer transfers to local governments.

"This means there's more reliance on their own revenue generation," Urbanc adds.

Continued on page 11

LTSA

ParcelMap BC

Your trusted cadastral source for BC.

Reliable. Current. Easy to use.
Explore now.
LTSA.ca/parcelmap-bc

Innovation | Integrity | Trust

Increased demands from legislative amendments related to responsible conduct, emergency management and accessibility - all important issues - also contribute to increased costs for local governments.

Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) has repeatedly noted that local governments are facing financial pressures because of services being downloaded to them by provincial and federal governments. A number of member resolutions over the past fifteen years—including more recently 2025 RR43, 2024 NR2, 2020 EB34—note the financial strains that downloading has on local governments and the need for adequate compensation to cover the increased service costs.

“Growing infrastructure deficits due to megatrends like an aging population, population growth and aging assets to serve that aging population and growth, all contribute to rising operating costs,” adds Urbanc. “Add to that inflation and increases in labour costs, policing, firefighting, insurance, and local governments are feeling pressures on both sides.”

So how do local governments respond to all these constraints and pressures during budget time?

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO BUDGETING

Across British Columbia, local governments are doing their best with the resources they have. There are different types of budgets, revenue generation and financial planning, and each government chooses the approach that suits their specific needs and direction from the Council or Board.



Paul Arslan

Zero-based budget:

With zero-based budgeting, a local government will start the fiscal year at zero and input the programs and associated expenses.

“It can eliminate unneeded spending, but this approach can be extremely time-consuming and labour-intensive,” says Arslan. “You need to justify each program and expense every year, which adds a lot of work.”

Continued on page 12

Our objective is simple:
exceed your expectations.

Local Government Law, since 1885.

Fulton & Company LLP



Fulton.

in 250.372.5542 | fultonco.com

Arslan has worked in local government for 28 years, all with the District of Saanich. Prior to working in local government, Arslan, who has a Bachelor of Engineering degree and is a CPA, CA, worked for KPMG and audited several municipalities.

Priority-based budget:

With priority-based budgeting, funding is allocated based on key strategic goals.

“Your services are ranked by priority and funding is distributed down the line, so the first priority gets most of it, and so on,” says Arslan. “While it guarantees alignment with the Council goals, ranking the services can be highly subjective and politically charged. One Council will see it this way, and the next Council will see it differently, so it has its pros and cons.”

Incremental budget:

Incremental budgets take the previous year’s budget as a baseline and adjusts it for inflation. Factors such as labour contract wage increases, service adjustments and strategic priorities can be included.

The District of Saanich uses incremental budgeting. “Each year we ask, can we fund those strategic priorities in addition to the basic services?” says Arslan. “It’s easier to predict and prepare, but on the other side, you may fail to evaluate some legacy programs and keep doing some things that may not be necessary.”

From 2008 to 2012, the district had four years of budget reductions during the global financial crisis. Each department did zero-based budgeting by looking at all of their services and reducing where they could.

“By the fourth year, there was hardly anything we could cut without severely impacting services,” Arslan adds. “Having done that, we feel that incremental budgeting works best for us.”

When planning their budget, the district factors in contractual wage increases.

“We also have to account for inflationary increases on agreements with outside parties, and goods and services for construction and maintenance,” adds Arslan. “We increase the budget every year to accommodate for those costs and then add any new services or strategic priorities that Council has asked for.”

FUNDING CHALLENGES

Still, even the most well-thought-out budget will receive a request for cuts from Council, something most local governments experience.

“Every year, Council asks for cuts, so we look at the budget and ask, ‘What’s not urgently needed at this time or where can we slow things down for now?’” shares Arslan. “For local governments, if a Council keeps asking for options to cut, eventually the only cuts available will be to service levels. We always start from the premise that maintaining existing services at the same level requires a certain budget, then we provide Council with options for reducing those services.”

Seibel adds that expenses are higher than inflation.

“Having worked in a couple of different sized municipalities, I’ve seen how inflationary pressures and provincial downloading become much more pronounced from a cost perspective for the core services that we provide,” notes Seibel.

“It becomes more expensive to do certain things, such as the goods and materials that we’re buying to support the delivery of those services. You hear the comment ‘Trying to do more with less.’ And that’s a tough thing because, on some levels, we’re not able to keep up because the cost increases have been far in excess of inflation.”

The result is more pressure on local governments to maintain core services under challenging circumstances. While other levels of governments can access other revenue sources, local governments are primarily restricted to user fees, taxation, property taxes and grants.

“We don’t have many tools beyond that,” says Seibel.

“Grants have become a very important part of our financial planning, especially for smaller communities, to help offset costs for key infrastructure renewal. I think we’ve all heard and talked about infrastructure deficits, and certainly here in Armstrong, we’re not immune to that. We’re trying to keep up with aging infrastructure that has been in place for 50, 60 and 70 years in some cases.”

Arslan adds that when the budget needs to be cut, asset replacement funding or recent project additions are often impacted.

Continued on page 13

Building Public Trust

with Kent Waugh
Managing Partner

Follow
My weekly series on
Public Trust on **LinkedIn**

Download
the White Papers
everyone's talking about

Book
a Complimentary
Discovery Call

THE GROUP

thewgroup.ca/trust

“Our staff take pride in their work, but limited time and resources can affect service quality... There’s more pressure on existing staff to do extra work, and that impacts their morale despite our efforts to mitigate those impacts.”

“Council can choose to reduce or eliminate certain services, and they have to weigh that decision with the taxpayer’s ability to pay for the project.”

In 2024, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) released the report, *Making Canada’s Growth a Success: The Case for a Municipal Growth Framework*, which urged the federal government to bring together all levels of government to develop a new and more equitable way to fund local governments.

The report called for municipal finance reform, with increased direct annual transfers and indexing the transfers to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It also asked to include operating and capital costs as eligible expenses under the federal transfers. Under the proposed framework, provinces and territories could choose to allow a portion of sales or income tax to go to municipalities or grant local governments the power to levy new taxes or user fees.

The report also called for all levels of government to work on a “comprehensive plan towards ending chronic homelessness,” an issue with a significant human and financial cost.

“In some jurisdictions, and especially in the States, they have income tax or a sales tax that goes directly to municipalities,” shares Arslan.

REVENUE GENERATION

Property tax increases are the most common tool that local governments use to cover the costs of inflation and rising goods and services prices.

“Obviously, tax increases are the norm,” says Seibel. “Up and down the valley here, we’ve seen some fairly significant, and what I would call abnormal, increases compared to the previous decade or pre-COVID. Communities are looking at eight to 10 to 12 per cent increases annually now, to keep up with budget pressures.”

The problem with not raising property taxes, notes Seibel, is that eventually it can lead to an extremely high tax increase that residents won’t accept, something that’s been seen in some municipalities in the province.

“What it highlights is the challenge of not being fiscally forward-thinking as it relates to how we fund the core services, because when the water doesn’t work, when the roads fall apart, and when the sewer lines don’t work, those are the critical pieces in our community that people will have concerns about.”

Like all local governments, property taxes remain the District of Saanich’s primary revenue source followed by recreation fees and permit fees. The District subsidizes around 40 per cent of recreation fees, while permit fees for inspections and planning cover the cost of their own program.

“Property taxes continue to go up at a faster rate than what people like, but municipalities have limited alternatives,” notes Arslan.

“We’re not allowed to have a deficit and we’re not allowed to borrow for operations and yet every expense has to be funded. As a result, we rely heavily on property tax.”

When cuts take place and property taxes aren’t increased accordingly, service levels are impacted.

“Our staff take pride in their work, but limited time and resources can affect service quality,” Arslan adds. “We’re already under-resourced in some areas, trying to keep the budgets tight, so there’s more pressure on existing staff to do extra work, and that impacts their morale despite our efforts to mitigate those impacts.”

Continued on page 14

The advertisement is for 'Book Your Council AI Training' by Daphne Thomson. It features a dark blue background with a gold border. On the right is a portrait of Daphne Thomson, a woman with dark hair, smiling. To the left of her portrait, the text reads: 'CATCH THE BEAT' with a logo, 'Catch the Beat', 'Daphne Thomson', 'Book Your Council AI Training', 'Practical AI, governance, and digital leadership for local government', and three icons representing AI Implementation, Governance Structures, and Interim CIO/CISO. At the bottom left is the email 'digital@catchthebeat.ca'. At the bottom right is a QR code and the text 'Scan to Book'.

Local governments are having to be more creative in finding non-taxation revenue sources.

“I think a lot of municipalities are looking for what traditionally are non-taxation revenue sources, so other ways to generate revenue,” adds Seibel. “Naming agreements on recreation facilities, working with telecommunication companies to allow for certain infrastructure like 5G towers and those sorts of things to try and generate additional revenues on existing infrastructure. That’s what I’m seeing out there.”

In Lake Country, a revenue-sharing agreement with BC Hydro has supported that community for years (see Case Study on page 16 to learn more).

BORROWING FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS

With all these challenges, how can local governments fund important—and necessary—infrastructure projects? One option is an MFA loan. There is no one-size-fits-all loan for local governments; the amount needed and the borrowing limit vary based on a number of factors.

“It depends on the circumstances,” Urbanc advises. “The first thing you should think about is, how affordable is that debt? Ask yourself, how sustainable will my revenues be going forward to be able to pay back that debt over time? You have to have a plan.”

Urbanc notes that in B.C., legislation places distinctions on the type of local government borrower. “If you’re a regional district that provides regional services, like water and sewer services throughout an entire region, the province does not establish a borrowing limit. But, as a regional district, you may have a policy that provides you with a maximum borrowing limit, or a targeted maximum limit. It is all about ensuring the debt is sustainable over time.”

For a regional district, that target can typically range between 15 and 30 per cent. “That’s 15 to 30 per cent of your revenues that can be used to service that debt,” Urbanc explains.

“A lot of municipalities are looking for what traditionally are non-taxation revenue sources, so other ways to generate revenue.”

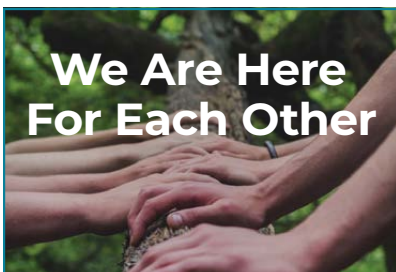
“For local governments, or municipalities that are not regional districts, there is a legislated limit, which is 25 per cent. There’s a hard limit. And that 25 per cent is from your recurring revenues, such as property tax or utility rates. If you sell a piece of property and you receive a large gain in connection with that property, that is not recurring revenue but a one-off source.”

While many local governments have no debt, that is unlikely to remain the case as current trends with inflation and restricted budgets continue. “B.C. actually has low debt in the local government system relative to any other province, or compared to local governments in Europe and in the States,” shares Urbanc. “But we’re going to see more and more debt in the system going forward, because, again, there’s going to be less help from upper layers of government on the revenue side, and there are more constant pressures.”

Arslan adds that there are additional conditions for borrowing. “Below 10 per cent, Council can make those decisions to borrow and pay for it. But if you go above 10 per cent, you need to get the residents’ permission and you can do it one of two ways. One is to hold a referendum on the project, and the other one is the alternative approval process (AAP).”

With the AAP, local governments provide a set period of time for public response. “If 10 per cent or more of the electors say they do not want the municipality to borrow, then we can’t proceed,” says Arslan.

Continued on page 15



**We Are Here
For Each Other**

BC ASSESSMENT

We build relationships based on genuine support and care. Each year, our trusted property assessments provide the foundation for over \$11 billion in revenue to support strong and vibrant communities across B.C.

We value our partners and respectfully acknowledge the Indigenous peoples on whose traditional territories we live and work.

We're here to help you:

- Access property assessment information online
- Answer any assessment related questions
- Support sustainable financial planning in your community

Contact BC Assessment Local Government & Indigenous Relations

- propertyinfo@bcassessment.ca
 - indigenous.relations@bcassessment.ca
 - 1-866-valueBC (1-866-825-8322) x 00119
- bcassessment.ca**

“But if less than 10 per cent are in opposition, the borrowing can move forward.”

While AAPs can sometimes be controversial, Arslan notes that referendums are costly. “It’s often recommended that if the borrowing is for a new service or, for example, a new recreation centre, then a referendum is appropriate. For replacement projects, such as a municipal hall, a fire hall or police station, the AAP process is more appropriate as it’s cheaper and faster.”

INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE

Financial planning is a key part of local government management, but having an investment portfolio isn’t something that every government includes in that plan.

“There are about \$25 billion of reserves managed by local governments in B.C.” says Urbanc. “We’ve used that to access a suite of investment products that local governments would not be allowed to purchase by themselves.”

For local governments with reserves that don’t need to be accessed for 10 years or longer, MFA offers products with an expectation to earn interest above inflation. “So, as opposed to keeping your money in a deposit account at a bank, you are able to access this pooled fund that is well managed, low cost, and you can earn a little bit more with your cash. And then that way, 10 to 15 years from now, when you need to spend that money for infrastructure, you haven’t fallen behind inflation, you’ve actually gained a little bit with those reserves.”

Urbanc stresses that for all municipalities, a financial plan is critical to manage reserves and resources effectively. “If you don’t have that in place, you’re probably going to be taking on more risks, and or not earning enough money with your investments.”

Local governments also need to ensure that they meet the legislative requirements around investing by having an investment policy, which the District of Saanich has in place.

“The benefit of having an investment plan is it helps optimize the returns on our cash and reserves, which can help offset the need for higher tax increases,” says Arslan.

“MFA hires expert investment professionals and firms to come up with their different funds and investment plans, whereas municipalities don’t have that level of investment knowledge. Municipalities can get better returns on long-term funds while controlling the risks that are associated with those kinds of investments. Plus, we can access high-interest savings plans for short-term use.”

Whatever the solutions, local governments are being called upon to be creative in dealing with the fiscal challenges facing all British Columbians.

For more insights and information, see the case studies starting on page 15 and Tips & Tactics on page 22.



Building trust in complex times.

Clear advice for councils and leadership teams navigating change, risk, and public scrutiny.

- Communications strategies
- Engagement frameworks
- Crisis communications
- Policy and governance (including AI)
- Spokesperson training

Practical. Plain language.

Built for local government.



JULIEROGERSCONSULTING.CA



**BC MUNICIPAL
SAFETY Association**

TRAINING | COR | FORUMS | RESOURCES

virtual | in-person | online



BCMSA & PWABC Joint Annual Conference & Trade Show

The Joint Annual Conference & Trade Show will take place in Penticton from October 5–7, 2026. Delegate and Exhibitor registration is 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.

NEW RESOURCES FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Local Governments across BC are facing increasingly complex workplace behaviour issues. To support employers, BCMSA has launched an interactive landing page with practical resources to help identify, assess, and manage challenging and aggressive workplace behaviours.

Explore program samples, checklists, and guidance that go beyond regulatory violence requirements to support safer, healthier workplaces across BC.

CASE STUDIES



PHOTO COURTESY DISTRICT OF LAKE COUNTRY

Lake Country operates a hydro-electric dam in partnership with BC Hydro, generating \$500,000 in annual revenue.

Strategies for Revenue Generation and Budget Communications

There are many different facets to the budget process and financial planning. In the first case study, the District of Lake Country shares how to look beyond taxes as the formula for sustainable growth. In the second case study, the City of New Westminster and District of Port Hardy share lessons learned during budget communications and engagement processes.

Thinking Outside the Tax Base: A Formula for Sustainable Growth

By Cynthia Lockrey

Maintaining services while dealing with rising costs without dramatically increasing taxes is a common challenge for local governments. One way to offset costs is to develop revenue generation projects or profit-sharing initiatives.

A small municipality of roughly 16,000 residents in the Okanagan is a leader in this area. For over 20 years, the District of Lake Country has operated a hydro-electric dam in partnership with BC Hydro, generating \$500,000 in annual revenue—or a two per cent tax bump to the annual budget.

While this dam was in operation before Paul Gipps took over as CAO, he's no stranger to revenue generation projects, having been involved in district energy systems at other local governments.

“By adding a new revenue stream, we can get things done without relying on the taxpayer.”



Paul Gipps

“Although we're grateful for the revenue stream, due to water restrictions, currently we can only produce electricity roughly two months of the year,” says Gipps. “However, talks are underway with BC Hydro to twin the project by installing a second-generation wheel. This would allow us to use the same water twice, hitting two turbines and doubling the amount of electricity generated.”

Gipps says if the project can bring in an additional \$400,000 net per year, it gives Lake Country the two per cent that most municipalities budget for to cover annual inflation costs. This helps relieve pressure from the tax base in a small community.

“By adding a new revenue stream, we can get things done without relying on the taxpayer,” Gipps explains.

Continued on page 17

“We’re also looking at raising the level of water in our dam; the additional storage for drought would also benefit us by widening our window of electricity generation from two to three months to six to 12 months. Each \$200,000 equals a one per cent tax increase. So, any additional revenue helps keep our taxes low without compromising services or growth.”

DISTRICT ENERGY SYSTEM

With two decades of electricity generation experience, Lake Country is now exploring the creation of a district geoechange energy system.

“We currently have two ice surfaces—a curling rink and regular ice arena,” says Gipps. “But with the popularity of ice sports, we need to build a third ice surface. So we’re looking at building a new rink with all three ice surfaces on one site.”

“Knowing that ice making produces a lot of heat, we’re looking at how we can capture the heat and then sell it as carbon neutral heating and cooling. With our community

potentially needing a third sheet of ice, now’s the perfect time to look at developing a district energy system.”

Gipps anticipates that the amount of heat generated by the arena could power a nearby school.

“The proximity of the community’s schools and arena is ideal,” says Gipps. “Schools need fields for kids to play on. We can use the field as a heat battery and the kids can use it to play.”

The energy system would capture the heat generated by ice making, which happens year-round in Lake Country. During the winter months this can be used to heat the school and provide cooling during the warmer months.

“You can imagine what it costs to heat and cool a school,” Gipps states. “A district energy system creates more efficient energy use without burning fossil fuels. For every input into a ground source heat pump, it generates four outputs versus electric heating where you have one output for every input.”

Continued on page 18



McElhanney



Platinum member

From planning and funding to design and delivery.

McElhanney delivered full-lifecycle municipal engineering, from planning and rezoning through detailed design and utility coordination.

Belmont Market Redevelopment, Langford, BC.

Scan to explore our services:



Planning | Engineering | Environmental | Geomatics | Landscape Architecture | Geospatial

“An important piece is having a political champion—someone who’s not afraid to say, ‘This project is valuable and here’s why.’”

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

In addition to helping balance rising costs, the revenue from the current hydroelectric plant is also being used to fund green infrastructure projects. In another partnership with BC Hydro, Lake Country has installed 22 new electric vehicle (EV) chargers in tourist areas throughout the community. This includes BC Hydro’s first 350-kilowatt charger, adding close to 100 kilometres of range in five minutes.

While locals and tourists benefit from quick charging of their electric vehicles, local businesses are seeing more money being spent locally as people explore the area while their vehicle charges.

GETTING IT RIGHT

When asked what challenges Lake Country has encountered in its revenue generation projects, Gipps said it can be a stretch to get a commitment to embark on a project that’s not widely understood. He noted there’s always an element of risk and you need to ensure staff and elected officials understand the technology before making the commitment.

“Local governments are great at water, sewage and roads but are often uncomfortable operating a generation plant,” says Gipps. “Breaking that mould can be challenging, it takes courage to innovate. It takes time to educate elected officials and the public. You need to put in the time, so your elected officials have the confidence to move forward without having a target on them.”

He also notes it’s important to build a team that has the expertise to run these projects. This includes having someone in finance who understands the complexities as well as hiring technical experts.

LESSONS LEARNED

“Another important piece is having a political champion—someone who’s not afraid to say, ‘This project is valuable and here’s why,’” Gipps stresses. “Staff’s role is to put forward business plans. We need to stay neutral and not own the project. For a project to move forward it needs an elected official who’s articulate, respected and a champion.”



PHOTO COURTESY DISTRICT OF LAKE COUNTRY

A hydro-electric dam partnership with BC Hydro has provided Lake Country consistent revenue for over 20 years, and spurred the District to consider other revenue-generation projects.

“It’s also about timing. You don’t want to start something in the fourth year of a term. I always remind staff that our job isn’t to get politicians elected, but it’s also not our job to get them unelected.”

Gipps believes that timing, opportunity, a willingness to step out there and having a champion are the keys for success.

And his final piece of advice is to have a good relationship with the partnering organization.

None of these projects are short-term and they involve many steps to take them from conception to implementation to ongoing operations. To help navigate the bumps along the way, and have the best outcome, it’s important to start with a solid foundation.

Gipps firmly believes the benefits of having a consistent revenue stream are worth the time and energy to make it happen.

Continued on page 19

Engaging Communities in the Budget Process

By Manjot Bains

Budgets and financial planning are critical parts of local government operations, but communicating how and why funds are used is also an integral part of governing. The challenge many struggle with is explaining complex processes and clarifying the work of local governments.



Heather Nelson-Smith

“People don’t understand what we do, and that’s the biggest barrier we have,” says Heather Nelson-Smith, CAO of District of Port Hardy.

Tackling misinformation is an ongoing challenge public servants face across government levels.

“A lot of people have no idea how the finances work,” Nelson-Smith adds. “They think that we’re a business, and we’re not. Many think that their whole tax bill goes to the municipality, so they have a different mindset about what they think that we’re doing, and I’m trying to break that narrative.”

Using clear, accessible language is one part of this strategy. “For example, when we say things like mill rates, tax rates and percentages, most people don’t understand what we’re talking about. What they understand is how much things cost, so we simplify how we explain things.”

Every year, Port Hardy, a community of 4,132 residents, releases a one-page fact sheet that outlines how assessments grew or declined, explains the tax rate and shares what the average household will pay in property taxes.

“We break it down by year, then by month and then by day. For example, your emergency services may cost you \$4 per day or 40 cents per day, depending on the tax rate.”

At the City of New Westminster, the finance and communications teams collaborate on budget communications and engagement. The city provides a tax newsletter that also explains the tax rate and where the money collected is spent, as well as a comparison of municipal property taxes per capita.

“We offer a wide variety of materials and activities, including workshops, surveys, Budget 101 webinars, website information and social media,” shares Natalie Froehlich, the Chief Financial Officer and Director of Finance & IT for the City of New Westminster.



Natalie Froehlich

Froehlich has worked in local government and health care, and recently joined the team at New Westminster, which has over 85,000 residents.

“We recognize that residents have different needs and preferences for receiving information, so a range of tactics and repeated messaging is used to maximize reach.”

Froehlich adds that city budgets are complex. “The City has focused on sharing the budget basics in plain language, ensuring images, charts and graphics are presented in an approachable manner. We are also responsive to residents who have a greater interest and provide more detail in response as appropriate.”

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

As part of their planning for next year’s budget, the City of New Westminster worked with Ipsos to deliver a budget survey to residents and businesses.

“A similar survey was completed in 2024, so the intent is to compare the results with previous findings and measure any changes over time,” Froehlich says. “The survey asks residents and business operators about the top local issues, satisfaction with various City services, perceived value for tax dollars, preferences for tax increases relative to service levels, and more.”

To increase survey participation, follow-up phone calls were made to businesses and a prize draw was offered. The survey results will inform next year’s budget priorities.

Continued on page 20

**Building Excellence in
Leadership &
Governance**

Sane Leadership in Insane Times

CB
CHRISTINA BENTY
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP SOLUTIONS INC.

1-250-344-0921
christinabenty@christinabenty.com
www.christinabenty.com



With a 21-year career working in local government, Nelson-Smith notes that local governments are getting better at explaining what they do, but there is still work to be done in describing the budget process.

CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

After experiencing low turnout at budget planning-related events, Nelson-Smith and her team began discussing new ways to reach the community and better explain what the district provides to its citizens. In addition to that process, an employee engagement survey found that many staff didn't know what people in other departments did.

"It started with an idea that someone from each department would talk about what they did. And then we thought, the public doesn't know what we do either, so why don't we do two sessions? One for staff and one for our residents."

Most staff, including the fire department and contractors like garbage disposal, harbour management and animal control, took part in both open houses.

"Each department set up a booth and we had two tables for the financial planning portion," Nelson-Smith says.

"We also had bingo cards, prizes and food."

Other elements included a large printout of the tax notice with a breakdown by dollar and an explanation of how the district collects taxes for other levels of government.

"We had almost 100 people show up, when normal participation is 25 to 40, and the feedback was phenomenal," Nelson-Smith adds. "People said, 'We had no idea how much you are doing,' and also better understood what we can and cannot do. People came up to me and said, 'We're only spending \$4 a year on this? I'll pay more.'"

Nelson-Smith plans on hosting the open house every second year. "Our staff felt really proud to be able to showcase what they do."

RESPONDING TO NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

The other side of public engagement is managing expectations and dealing with negative feedback.

"Perspectives on the City's budget are diverse and we view this as a positive," says Froehlich.

Continued on page 21



511 Royal Avenue,
New Westminister, BC
V3L 1H9

604-527-4550
revenue@newwestcity.ca
newwestcity.ca



Investing In Our Community

The City of New Westminister collects property taxes, but not all of that money stays with the City.

About **35%** of your property taxes are sent to other organizations like the Province of BC, TransLink, BC Assessment, and Metro Vancouver. This helps pay for things like schools and regional services.

The remaining **65%** stays with the City and is used to fund local services you rely on every day, including police and fire protection, parks and recreation services and programs, the public library, and ongoing maintenance and upgrades to essential City facilities and public spaces.

1% Capital Levy

Your property tax now includes a new 1% capital levy to help pay for major long-term projects in the city, such as roads, buildings, and other public infrastructure.

Over the next five years, the City of New Westminister will invest \$363.6 million in various projects, including:

Improving walking, cycling, and active transportation routes

Maintaining & upgrading roads, sidewalks, and pathways

Repairing & improving civic buildings and facilities

Supporting affordable housing projects

Building a new downtown fire hall

Upgrading a parkway and public spaces

Renovating the Mainstay Theatre

Property Taxes are Due July 2, 2026

27%

Police Services

17%

Fire & Rescue

16%

Corporate Services

13%

Parks & Recreation

11%

Engineering & Public Works

7%

Community Services

5%

Planning & Development

4%

Library

35%

65%

2024 Taxes

Impact on Single Family Residential

% Tax Rate over 2023

Municipal Tax

4.95%

Hospital Tax

1.5%

Regional Tax

2.4%

Libran Tax

25.1%

OTHER School, Police, MFA & BCAA

4.2%

% Change in Assessed value over 2023

Residential

0.75%

Light Industry

8.3%

Business

5.4%

Managed Forest

4.4%

Non Profit

27%

HOW YOUR MUNICIPAL TAXES ARE ALLOCATED AMONG DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS.

The average assessed value home in Port Hardy is \$364,500 here is how your municipal taxes are allocated through the different departments, and how much it costs per day to fund these services.

Service	Annual \$	Daily \$
Fire	\$81.98	\$0.22
Transportation	\$201.54	\$0.55
Recreation	\$475.44	\$1.30
Parks	\$149.73	\$0.41
Animal Control	\$21.37	\$0.06
Administration/Debt	\$410.40	\$1.12
Economic Development	\$14.96	\$0.04
Emergency Preparedness	\$7.70	\$0.02
Recycling	\$64.04	\$0.17
Garbage	\$157.32	\$0.43
Water	\$508.36	\$1.39
Sewer	\$419.20	\$1.15
Total	\$2,512.03	\$6.88

ALL AMOUNTS BASED ON 2024

New Westminister (left) and Port Hardy (right) use a graphic presentation to convey budget details to the public.

“Negative comments and concerns are to be expected and when respectful, are part of a healthy and robust community dialogue on important issues.”

“Negative comments and concerns are to be expected and when respectful, are part of a healthy and robust community dialogue on important issues. The City works to respond in a timely manner, provide accurate and clear information, and support an environment for respectful and informative discussion,” Froehlich adds.

At Port Hardy, the approach is similar. “We typically say thank you very much for your feedback, we’ll take it under advisement, but unfortunately, we may not be able to implement this due to constraints, whether it be capacity or financial,” says Nelson-Smith.

When someone asks for something budget-related or to add another service, Nelson-Smith advises the person to go to Council and make a presentation or write a letter to Council. “We do take feedback and we take the information and look into it.”

COMMUNICATING ON A BUDGET

For smaller local governments without a dedicated communications team, budget communications and public engagement can prove to be challenging. At Port Hardy, communications work is shared between staff in Corporate Services and outreach coordinators in the recreation department.

“We’ve switched to Canva for our graphic design and we are able to put together a social media campaign with AI,” says Nelson-Smith. “I use Microsoft Copilot for newsletter creation. I put the meeting minutes into Copilot, find all the action items and then summarize the content into a newsletter-style format. I have to obviously go through and verify the information, but I do that for all of our reports and can create the newsletter in less than six hours.”

For communities large and small, the key to effective budget communications is clarity and simplifying the message. As Nelson-Smith notes, “Finance people are typically not communications people, so it’s about figuring out ways of getting that information out there in a way that people can understand that isn’t just finance terms and details.”



**CAPILANO
UNIVERSITY**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Interested in improving your knowledge, gaining new skills and advancing your career?

Join the hundreds of local government employees in BC who have done just that and taken our courses to earn their:

- ▶ **Local Government Administration** – Certificate, Advanced Certificate and Diploma
- ▶ **Local Government Leadership Development** – Certificate

Fall 2026 Courses

Starting September:

- ▶ **PADM 200-01 Local Government Administration in BC – Online**
- ▶ **PADM 201-01 Local Government Services in BC – Online**
- ▶ **PADM 201-02 Local Government Services in BC – In Person** (Vancouver Island)
- ▶ **PADM 203-01 Municipal Law in BC – Mixed Mode** (Kelowna)
- ▶ **PADM 306-01 Project Management Skills for Local Government Professionals – Online**



FOR COURSE REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION:

www.capilanou.ca/local-govt or contact us
at localgovernment@capilanou.ca

tips & tactics

Resources for Budgeting and Financial Management

GRANTS

- Build Communities Strong Fund, formerly the Canada Community-Building Fund, supports a range of infrastructure projects: bit.ly/4wUR3uX.
- Northern Development offers capacity-building funding programs focused on economic development priorities in central and northern British Columbia. Find a program: bit.ly/4gq4k9H.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

- Municipal Finance Authority offers education and resources for local governments, including borrowing process and template documents: mfa.bc.ca/resources/processes-templates.
- The MFA client portal includes additional resources for local government members: portal.mfa.bc.ca/auth.
- Government Finance Officers Association of B.C. (GFOA) offers peer connection and professional development throughout the year, including “Budgeting Best Practices” in November 2026: gfoabc.ca/events/.
- GFOA's bootcamp for finance officers runs from August 10-14, 2026 at the University of Victoria. Learn more and register: gfoabc.ca/events/boot-camp/.

REPORTS & RESOURCES

- UBCM Local Government Financial Review Working Group shares reports and resources, including the 2024 interim report: bit.ly/4wz4m3K.
- UBCM “Local Government Fact Sheet: A Reference Guide to Local Government Planning & Operations,” including financial planning and accounting (see section 7, beginning on page 24): bit.ly/4vXU8du.
- “Making Canada’s Growth a Success: The case for a Municipal Growth Framework,” an FCM advocacy paper: fcm.ca/en/resources/making-canadas-growth-a-success.

2026 Conference Highlights



2026-2027 LGMA Board of Directors:

From left to right: Angila Bains (President), Michael Dillabaugh (Vice-President), Maggie Arruda (Treasurer), Al Radke (Director at Large), Maureen Connelly (North Central Chapter Director), Jennifer Sham (Thompson Okanagan Chapter Director), Karen Cote (Rocky Mountain Chapter Director), Sarah Winton (West Kootenay Boundary Chapter Director), Keri-Ann Austin (Past President).

Not pictured: Sheldon Tetreault (Director at Large), Milo MacDonald (Director at Large), Pete Nelson-Smith (Vancouver Island Chapter Director).

The LGMA Annual Conference brought together more than 200 local government professionals from across the province on the ancestral, unceded territory of the Syilx/Okanagan people in Penticton this June. “Empowered Communities, Cultivating Connections” created space to explore new ideas where participants nurtured collaboration, connected over shared insights, and deepened their understanding of the opportunities shaping communities today.

The event started off with a welcome by səxw'k'wínmaʔm (Councillor) Timmothy Lezard from snpink'tn Indian Band at the President's Welcome Reception. Opening keynote speaker skniřmn Anona Kampe shared a blessing, the Okanagan song, and talked about her life-long learning journey and the power of knowledge.

Special guests included our colleagues from the First Nations Public Service Secretariat, and BC Exchange Manager Linda Glenday alongside her Overseas exchange partner Jenni Cochrane from Aotearoa New Zealand.

Other highlights included the AGM and election of the new Board of Directors, LGMA's volunteer recognition lunch, and the member awards gala. The trade show provided a hub of connection with more than 30 exhibitors and the products and services they supply to support local governments across the province. Meals throughout the event highlighted the region and featured many BC local products.

We hope everyone left with fresh perspectives and new skills for their leadership toolbox. Our sincere thanks to the participants, volunteers,



**Empowered Communities,
Cultivating Connections**

PENTICTON | JUNE 9-11

presenters, special guests, on-site staff and many others who made this event a success. A special thank you to LGMA's generous event sponsors and year-round professional development partners for their continued support.

Keep an eye on social media and the LGMA website for the 2026 Annual Conference recap video coming soon.

We are already looking forward to next year's conference and hope to see you there! Save the date for LGMA2027: June 15-17 in Nanaimo.



Left: 2026 LGMA Member Award recipients. Middle: Local keynote speaker skniřmn Anona Kampe. Right: LGMA volunteers during the 2025-26 Volunteer Recognition Lunch.

ASK A MENTOR?

By Adrian Paradis



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.

GUEST MENTOR BRENT MOLNAR

Brent Molnar is the City of Victoria's Manager of Land Development and Approving Officer and has nearly 25 years of municipal experience. With a background in Civil Engineering Technology, he has held Approving Officer roles in the City of Langford, City of Colwood and City of Victoria. Brent is also a long-standing LGMA supporter and is proud of his past contributions to the Approving Officer Committee, the LGMA Approving Officer Workshop and MATI® School for Statutory Approving Officers.

What is a challenging decision you have had to make in your role and how did you navigate it?

I've been fortunate in my municipal career to work across different roles and development contexts, from greenfield to infill, and with a wide range of applicants. Because of that, it's hard to point to just one decision—but I do find the most challenging situations are when the answer has to be “no.”

Those moments are less about the decision itself and more about how it's communicated. I focus on making sure the reasoning is clear, grounded in policy and explained well. I try to create space for questions and keep the conversation open, so people understand the “why,” even if they don't agree with the outcome.

This has become more common with new housing targets and more first-time developers who may not be familiar with the process, costs (such as providing frontage works or land dedicated to the City) or constraints. It takes patience and time to work through those conversations, but I see them as opportunities to build understanding and trust.

I've also relied on strong teams and legal partners over the years, such as the amazing City of Victoria legal team and Young Anderson. Being able to ask questions, test assumptions, and draw on their experience has helped me navigate challenging decisions and continue learning.

Looking back, what lessons have you learned?

A few key things have stuck with me: communicate early and often, be consistent and approach situations with patience.

When people feel heard, it tends to lead to better outcomes—or at least a better understanding of the outcome. Consistency and clear communication also go a long way in building trust, both internally and with external stakeholders.

How do you stay grounded when your decisions can have a significant impact?

I remind myself that no matter how solid a decision is, it may still be challenged. That helps me stay balanced and thoughtful in how I approach things, making sure decisions are well-reasoned and clearly communicated.

While the Approving Officer role is independent, I don't see that as working in isolation. I value being able to seek advice and draw on others' experience. That perspective helps keep me grounded.

I work to approach conversations with respect and a bit of warmth, and I think that helps keep things constructive, even when the message is difficult.

What parts of an Approving Officer's day-to-day might surprise people?

People are often surprised by both the scope of the role and its limits: what the Approving Officer is involved in, and just as importantly, what they're not.

There's also a high volume of daily inquiries, such as “Can I subdivide” or “What can I do with my land.” I often find myself switching between roles, and it's important to clearly communicate when something does not fall within the Approving Officer's scope. That clarity helps maintain transparency and the integrity of the role.

Ask a Mentor is made possible with the generous support of the Municipal Finance Authority of BC as part of the Sustaining Education Alliance (SEA). SEA recognizes the longstanding relationship between the LGMA and the MFA in advancing the sustainability of British Columbia local governments through the provision of education and professional development opportunities for local government professionals.





Volunteer Spotlight

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

By Adrian Paradis



VOLUNTEER MICHAEL DILLABAUGH

Born and raised in Nanaimo, Michael Dillabaugh has lived on beautiful Vancouver Island his entire life. He graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration from Vancouver Island University and subsequently qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 2009.

Prior to working in local government, he worked for the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia.

What roles have you filled in local government?

I started my career in local government in 2010 as the Deputy Director of Finance with the District of Sooke, and moved into the Director of Finance/CFO role in 2012. During that time, I was also the Deputy CAO and spent the better part of a year as the Acting CAO. In 2016, I moved to the Town of View Royal as the Director of Finance. Then, in 2017 I made the decision to move to the City of Langford as the Director of Finance, where I continue to serve today.

How have you contributed as an LGMA volunteer?

In 2012, I was unexpectedly nominated from the floor to become Treasurer for the Vancouver Island LGMA Chapter (VILGMA). In 2019, I moved into the role of Chapter President for VILGMA, and then became the VILGMA Chapter Director on the LGMA Board in 2020. In 2025, I was elected as Treasurer for the LGMA Board of Directors, and as of earlier this month, I was fortunate enough to be elected as Vice President.

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

As I mentioned, I was unknowingly nominated from the floor, and I am forever grateful for that opportunity. I have been so fortunate to have worked with and been surrounded by wonderful mentors who have supported me throughout my career. I feel it's a great way to also give back to the profession that has given me so much.

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

Aside from being part of the South Island team that won the first annual cornhole championship, it's been the opportunity to meet so many fantastic people throughout the province and build a network of contacts.

What is the most fulfilling part of volunteering with LGMA?

Truly, it's the opportunity to be part of such a fantastic organization with so much history. I value being able to work with the amazing LGMA staff and the opportunity to work with and learn from my fellow Board members. It's been such an incredible honour, and I am very grateful to those who took me under their wing when I was just the new kid on the block, and I hope that I can continue that tradition moving forward.

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

Get involved in any way you can. Be curious, ask questions. Look into getting involved with LGMA and explore the local government specific training, specifically the Capilano and MATI© Programs in partnership with LGMA. They are such fantastic ways to make contacts throughout the province in this great profession we have chosen.

What are your hobbies outside of work?

I have recently taken up playing pickleball, and yes, I'm addicted! I'm a sports fan, so I will watch just about any sport live or on TV. I also enjoy playing card or board games, as well as spending as much time as possible at the lake in the summer.

What dish can you eat over and over again?

There are numerous items that I could include here but I would have to say my mom's lasagna recipe. It's also hard to beat a good burger once in a while.

MEMBERS PAGE

MEMBER MOVEMENT

Hanieh Berg, Deputy Director, Legislative Services, City of Delta. Formerly Corporate Officer, City of New Westminster.

Marlie Boven, Manager of Finance, City of Parksville. Formerly Manager of Finance, City of Colwood.

Harriet D'Costa, Executive Coordinator and Media Relations Advisor, City of Langford. Formerly Communications Advisor, City of Langford.

Jane Lumb, Director of Finance, District of Ucluelet. Formerly Manager, Accounting Services, Regional District of Nanaimo.

Allie McCormick, Deputy CAO, Municipality of Cumberland. Formerly Director of Recreation and Community Services, Municipality of Cumberland.

Peter McCracken, CAO, Municipality of Cumberland. Formerly Deputy CAO, Municipality of Cumberland.

Michelle Reid, Interim Human Resources Director, City of Vernon. Formerly Director of Human Resources, City of West Kelowna.

Wolfgang Schoenefuhs, Lands Director, Snuneymuxw First Nation. Formerly Park Planner, City of Langford.

Chris Vick, CAO, Resort Municipality of Whistler. Formerly General Manager, Hilton Whistler Resort & Spa.

RETIREMENTS

Greg Herrett, CAO, Municipality of Cumberland

Julie Coneybeer, Executive Assistant, City of Langford

2026 LGMA EVENTS & PROGRAMS

On-Demand Courses (Online)

Available until June 2027
Elections Training

Starting January 12 ongoing
Freedom of Information
Fundamentals

Starting January 12 ongoing
Records and Information
Management Fundamentals

Starting January 12 ongoing
Protection and Privacy
Fundamentals

Mid-February to November 23
Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and
Accessibility

Ongoing
Ethics in Local Government

Connect Lunch Series (Online)

September 9
Corporate Officer Connect

October 19
HR Connect

October 29
Communications Connect

November 13
CAO Connect

Events & Programs

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

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

Learn more about these and other opportunities
at lgma.ca/programs-training.

Program Highlight: LGMA North Central Chapter

The LGMA North Central Chapter helps members stay connected across distances.

"The local governments and First Nation communities within our chapter boundaries are very diverse, so we've been focusing on creative ways to stay connected," says Maureen Connelly, Chapter Director for North Central LGMA. "Virtual sessions have been a great tool, and last December we hosted an online session on AI and the 2026 BC Local Elections that brought members together from across the region."

Networking is a key part of LGMA events, and with communities spread out across a vast area, the Northern Chapter approaches networking with online opportunities for virtual connection. "We ensure that we are creating space for informal conversations so members can connect even if they can't travel," adds Connelly.

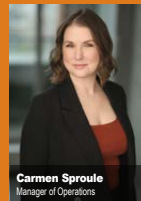
The chapter focuses on delivering relevant, practical topics through events and their annual conference, where members can reconnect, meet new people and learn from each other.

To join the North Central Chapter and to learn more about opportunities to connect, visit lgma.ca/nclgma.





Local Government Law ▪ Planning and Land Development
Procurement ▪ Construction ▪ Infrastructure ▪ Municipal
Corporations ▪ Litigation and Dispute Resolution



*Small Firm.
Big Thinking.*

www.civiclegal.ca

Main 604 639 3639 | Email info@civiclegal.ca

710 - 900 West Hastings St. Vancouver, BC, V6C 1E5

MEET OUR ELECTIONS GROUP

- > **PRE-ELECTION** ADVICE ON COMPLIANCE, CANDIDATES, PROCEDURES, DEADLINES, COMMUNICATIONS, AND UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENTS
- > **POST-ELECTION** SUPPORT, INCLUDING RECOUNTS, CONTROVERTED ELECTION APPLICATIONS, FINANCES, AND ELECTION-RELATED LITIGATION
- > **REAL-TIME** SUPPORT ON ADVANCE VOTING DAYS AND GENERAL VOTING DAY THROUGH OUR DEDICATED “ELECTION HOTLINE”, INCLUDING DIRECT MOBILE PHONE ACCESS TO OUR ELECTION TEAM

COLLEEN BURKE
burke@lidstone.ca



MICHAEL HARGRAVES
hargraves@lidstone.ca



CATHERINE LI
li@lidstone.ca



RACHEL VALLANCE
vallance@lidstone.ca



GOVERNANCE
FINANCE
TAXATION
LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

PROPERTY
FOIPOP
LAND USE
BYLAWS

ELECTIONS
LITIGATION
FINANCE
INDIGENOUS

ENVIRONMENTAL
CONFLICTS
CONSTRUCTION
PROCUREMENT

LIDSTONE & COMPANY

LEADERS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAW

www.lidstone.ca

