

# 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](http://lgma.ca).

Spring 2023

- P7 CASE OF INTEREST
- P8 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
- P19 CASE STUDIES



## Rethinking Your Recruitment Strategies

P10



# YOUNG ANDERSON

BARRISTERS & SOLICITORS



**Sharing information and expertise helps  
build strong, sustainable communities.  
Young Anderson is proud to support  
professional development opportunities for  
municipalities and regional districts.**

---

## **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](http://www.younganderson.ca)

## Update

In this Issue	4
President's Report	5
Executive Director's Report	6
Case of Interest	7
Members Page	26

## Professional Development

LGMA 2023 Annual Conference	8
Tips & Tactics: Labour Market Resources for Local Government	25
Programs and Events	26

# 7

## Case of Interest

Learn about B.C. case law related to the requirements for accommodating staff childcare obligations and what employers may want to consider as part of their recruitment strategies.



## EXCHANGE

*Exchange* is the magazine for members of the Local Government Management Association of British Columbia. *Exchange* is distributed quarterly to about 1,000 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](mailto:office@lgma.ca)  
Web: [lgma.ca](http://lgma.ca)

Contact the Editor:  
Email: [editor@lgma.ca](mailto:editor@lgma.ca)

Cover Illustration:  
[zhuweiyi49/Getty Images](https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/illustration/zhuweiyi49)



# 10

## Rethinking Your Recruitment Strategies

Rapid changes to the labour market require a fresh outlook for hiring and retention. Gain insights into how to update your approach from recruitment experts and experienced local government leaders.

# 8

## 2023 Annual Conference and Trade Show

Join us in Nanaimo June 13-15 for **Taking Stock (Re)Shaping Together**. Connect with peers, hear from experts and explore promising ideas and solutions for helping local government professionals excel and adapt.



# 19

## Case Studies: Labour Market Strategies

Learn about some of the different strategies B.C. local governments are pursuing to find solutions for their local labour market challenges.



Before I sign off, I would like to thank the LGMA team (past and present), the many amazing people who volunteered their time to provide interviews and share their insights and experience, and the local government managers who serve our communities with dedication and professionalism.

**A**lthough it wasn't planned, it's somewhat kismet that this edition of *Exchange* is focused on addressing the challenges stemming from retirements and other labour market impacts as this is also my "farewell" edition. I'm one of those aging members of the workforce, and while I have found it tremendously rewarding to be part of the *Exchange* team for the past 13 years, I decided that it was time to pass the baton and try to reduce my workload.

It's hard to believe that I've been working on *Exchange* for more than a decade. I had the pleasure of working with Herrainco Brand Strategy + Design back in 2009 when we were awarded the contract to review the LGMA's existing newsletter and develop recommendations for the organization's member publication. After surveys with members, a review of other publications and discussions with the LGMA team, we came back with a recommendation to create a quarterly magazine that would focus on professional development, member priorities and networking (*which is code for staying in the loop about moves and changes, which was members' favourite feature in the newsletter*). We recommended the name *Exchange*, developed an editorial plan and created the design for the magazine. We launched the first edition of *Exchange* in March 2010, and I have continued to help produce the magazine since then.

With all this history, stepping back was a difficult decision, but I also believe the magazine will benefit from fresh perspectives. It's also an ideal time to consider how the design can be updated to reflect the new, full-colour production of the magazine that you may have noticed in this edition. With the improvements in digital printing, we were able to both shift to full-colour printing and reduce printing costs for each edition.

I sincerely hope that LGMA members have found this magazine useful over the years, and I'm confident that the new editorial team will bring fresh ideas and great content in the years ahead. Fortunately, Karin Mark, who has been contributing both as the writer and graphic designer for the past several years, will be continuing to provide graphic design services, so the LGMA will benefit from her in-depth knowledge of local government along with her extensive experience and design skills going forward.

In many ways, the changes on the *Exchange* team mimic what we are seeing across the province. An older member of the team is "retiring" but we have a great succession plan in place to support continuity, and the LGMA is recruiting a new writer/editor who will bring new experiences and ideas. Likewise, as we learn in *Rethinking Your Recruitment Strategies*, it's clear that retirements and other workforce impacts are driving the need for new approaches to attract and retain employees, develop and implement succession planning, incorporate training and explore creative solutions to workforce shortages.

The case studies shared in this edition provide excellent examples of how innovative approaches are being applied in different local governments across the province. Whether it's gathering and applying data, ensuring you have the human resources expertise needed or finding ways to leverage untapped labour markets, there are new and emerging strategies to address workforce challenges. I hope that these examples stimulate new ideas and trigger more discussions and information-sharing so that local governments across B.C. find viable solutions to their labour market challenges. The labour shortage is definitely not going away any time soon, so practical and prompt actions are needed.

Before I sign off, I would like to thank the LGMA team (past and present), the many amazing people who volunteered their time to provide interviews and share their insights and advice, and the local government managers who serve our communities with dedication and professional excellence. It has been a pleasure serving you through *Exchange*.

*Therese Mickelson, ABC*  
Editor



As I reflect on the work ahead, I know the LGMA and its members will continue to find innovative, creative solutions for shared priorities and challenges.

Greetings from the traditional and unceded *trix'wúla?xw* (land) of the Syilx and Nlaka'pamux nations, both of which are Interior Salish cultures. It is an honour to write my last President's Report for *Exchange*, although it feels like time has flown by far too quickly for my term to be nearing an end.

While I prepare for my presidential term to come to an end, I understand that Therese Mickelson, LGMA *Exchange* editor is also preparing to pass along a torch of her own. I am honoured to express appreciation on behalf of the LGMA Board of Directors and the membership to both Therese, as editor, and Karin Mark, as writer. Producing a quarterly professional development publication for 13 years that captures both the tenacious resilience and complex nature of the world of local government is no easy feat; however, you have both achieved this with a grace and ease that I know our members have come to admire. Thank you both.

I write this shortly after attending the Welcome Reception at the 2023 CAO Forum, the first in-person forum to take place since February of 2020. I greatly enjoyed seeing CAOs from around the province reunite and was again reminded of the incredible value of peer support.

During my term as your humble President, the LGMA hosted the CAO Breakfast, provided peer support to prepare for the 2022 local elections, hosted top-of-mind town halls on emerging priorities like the *Accessible BC Act* changes, delivered the first in-person Corporate Officers Forum in nearly three years, and released the updated FOI Toolkit.

The LGMA participated in key activities alongside our partners in the Working Group on Responsible Conduct to the launch the Responsible Conduct Every Day Online Course, and we initiated a resource page for local governments seeking resources to enact the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA). Additionally, I am very happy to say that we, in partnership with Capilano University, relaunched the Municipal Administration Training Institute® (MATI®) programs.

In December of 2022, the LGMA staff and Board of Directors met with a consultant to engage in a mid-point Strategic Plan review to ensure we are on track with our priorities given all that has changed over the last few years. You won't be surprised to hear that financial sustainability, peer connectivity and mentorship, Indigenous relations and the labour market crisis are among the top priorities for future activities.

As you'll see in this issue of *Exchange*, and as you have likely experienced in your own day-to-day work, the labour market shortage and climbing economic pressures have had a profound impact on how local governments do business. We are navigating rapid change and are forced to try out new tools and strategies with far less time than ever before. I hope that some of the recommendations, case studies and resources highlighted in this edition are helpful.

With the ever-changing workforce and its challenges, peer connection and mentorship are more important than ever, but it can be a struggle to find the time or have the capacity to build those connections. Time and attention are also needed for Indigenous relations as they are dependent upon finding ways to build community, holding space for truth and healing, and engaging in ongoing learning and unlearning. I look forward to contributing in various ways so that I can support capacity building on these shared priorities, both as a member of the Board of Directors and as a local government leader.

As I reflect on the work ahead, I know the LGMA and its members will continue to find innovative, creative solutions for shared priorities and challenges. I encourage you to continue to share your wisdom and capacity with your peers as this work belongs to all of us.

*Corie Griffiths*  
President





With the BC Labour Market report noting roughly 19,000 job openings within local and Indigenous public administration, it's evident that it's increasingly important to build capacity and enhance mentorship, and we need to rethink how we approach recruitment and retention.

Hello! Greetings from myself and the rest of the LGMA team here on the unceded, traditional territories of the ɫəkʷəŋən (Lekwungen) Peoples, also known as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations. I hope everyone has had a lovely start to spring and are able to enjoy the longer days that are upon us now (thankfully). Here in Victoria, we have recently been rewarded for enduring months of rain with the cherry blossoms that mark the start of spring.

Before I note my typical report, I would like to acknowledge the incredible work of Therese Mickelson who is passing the torch as Editor for *Exchange* magazine, a post she has led with great skill for the past 13 years. Though Karin Mark will still be around to support LGMA activities, I know the members will join me in acknowledging the combined efforts of Therese and Karin for not only bringing the *Exchange* magazine to life, but for bringing relevant, informative stories about local government, to local government.

Not long ago, I returned from the Municipal Administration Training Institute® (MATI®) The Successful CAO course, delivered in partnership with our friends at Capilano University, and the 2023 CAO Forum. I was honoured to observe and learn from the subject matter experts and participants in both of these incredible programs.

Between the program faculty, mentors and participants in the MATI® Successful CAO course and the volunteer speakers, ambassadors and participants at the CAO Forum, my brain (and notebook) was packed with inspiration, empathy, new ideas and admiration. Thank you to the volunteers, the participants, the faculty and our valued partners for their incredible efforts in these programs.

The LGMA office has been very busy lately as staff gear up for the LGMA's 2023 Annual Conference, Taking Stock, (Re) Shaping Together, which takes place June 13-15 in Nanaimo B.C. on the traditional territories of the Snuneymuxw First Nations. LGMA staff have been hard at work coordinating educational sessions to explore best practices, innovative solutions and future trends in the field of local government while also exploring innovative, engaging ways to connect with our peers and sector partners.

With three exciting pre-conference workshops to choose from, 24 expert-led educational sessions, and two engaging, thought-provoking keynote speakers, you are bound to build your network and add to the tools in your toolbox. For more details about how to register for the conference, please see page 8. I look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming Annual Conference, and please do say hello!

In planning this upcoming edition, we discussed how interesting it was to compare the recruitment-focused *Exchange* edition in 2019 to the present-day labour market challenges experienced across all sectors. In one of the 2019 articles, Dr. Raeleen Manjak was quoted as noting “we are just on the beginning of the wave and are in for a decade-long bumpy road!” and we know this has proven to be all too accurate.

With the BC Labour Market report noting roughly 19,000 job openings within local and Indigenous public administration, it's evident that it's increasingly important to build capacity and enhance mentorship, and we need to rethink how we approach recruitment and retention.

Our thanks go to the subject matter experts who shared their perspectives and insights in this edition of *Exchange*. I hope you find value in this edition's focus on some of the various ways in which local governments are using creative and innovative strategies to navigate the labour market challenges.

Candace Witkowskyj  
Executive Director



By Carolyn MacEachern  
Young, Anderson Barristers & Solicitors

## CASE of INTEREST

# Accommodating Childcare Obligations in B.C.

Local government employers have been approaching the challenges of recruiting for and maintaining their workforce in various ways, including providing support for employees with family obligations. These employees face work/life balance pressures, particularly when their children are young or where there is a lack of childcare options. In these circumstances, employees may request an accommodation to deal with childcare challenges.

The case law on family status discrimination under section 13 of the *Human Rights Code* (Code) due to childcare obligations continues to evolve in B.C.

In 2019, the BC Court of Appeal in *Envirocon Environmental Services, ULC v. Suen*, 2019 BCCA 46 confirmed that general childcare obligations will not fall within the scope of “family status” under the Code. This means that employers in B.C. are not required to accommodate employees who have regular childcare obligations.

In 2020, the BC Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) issued a decision involving a complaint of family status discrimination in relation to childcare (*Harvey v. Gibraltar Mines Ltd. (No. 2)*, 2020 BCHRT 193). In this case, two employees, who were new parents, worked the same 12-hour shift at their employer, which was located in a small community. This made finding childcare difficult and they requested an accommodation, but the parties were not able to come to an agreement.

The employee filed a complaint to the Tribunal, and the employer filed an application to dismiss this complaint. The Tribunal accepted that a parent must establish they experienced a substantial interference with a parental or family duty or obligation to make a successful claim of discrimination under the Code. However, the Tribunal determined that the facts in this case, if proven, may establish a substantial interference with a parental obligation and denied the employer’s application to dismiss this complaint. The Tribunal also found that there does not need to be a change in a term or condition of employment to make a claim of family status discrimination due to childcare.

The employer appealed the Tribunal’s decision in *Harvey* to the BC Supreme Court (*Gibraltar Mines Ltd. v. Harvey*, 2022 BCSC 385). The sole issue before the Court was whether the Tribunal erred in its interpretation of the applicable legal test for proving a prima facie case of discrimination based on family status under section 13 of the Code.

(The legal term “prima facie” is used to denote that, upon initial examination, a legal claim has sufficient evidence to proceed to trial or judgment.)

The employer argued that in order to have a claim of family status discrimination, there must be a change in the terms of employment. If there is no change in the terms of employment, then an employee would have no claim. This interpretation would severely limit the scope of family status discrimination based on childcare challenges and the requirement of employers to accommodate on this basis.

The BC Supreme Court agreed with the employer because of previous case law that had been decided by the BC Court of Appeal (BCCA). In a 2004 decision, the BCCA set out the following two-part test to establish prima facie discrimination (*Health Sciences Assoc. of B.C. v. Campbell River and North Island Transition Society*, 2004 BCCA 260):

1. There was a change in a term or condition of employment; and
2. That change resulted in a serious interference with a substantial parental or other family duty or obligation of the employee.

However, the BC Supreme Court in *Gibraltar Mines* noted that without this previous case law, it “...may well have shared the Tribunal’s view that *Campbell River* does not stand for the proposition that a change in a term or condition of employment is necessary to establish prima facie family status discrimination” (at para. 105).

The *Gibraltar Mines* case has been appealed to the BCCA but no decision has been issued yet. Given the comments of the BC Supreme Court in *Gibraltar Mines*, the test for family status discrimination on the basis of childcare obligations may be changed by the BCCA and become less restrictive.

In any event, local government employers may wish to consider accommodations for employees with families as part of its recruitment and retention strategies. This could include remote working/hybrid options, flexible hours of work, part-time working arrangements, and providing family care leave.

# Join us in June

## Registration is now open for the 2023 LGMA Conference and Trade Show, taking place June 13-15 in Nanaimo

Social and demographic shifts, emerging technologies, extreme weather, the pandemic and the rapid pace of change are forcing leaders and teams to adapt at warp speed. Where are we now, what have we learned, and what can we take with us to help shape the future?

**Taking Stock, (Re)Shaping Together** provides an opportunity for local government leaders, experts and partners to showcase ingenuity, share transferable tools and collectively address emerging issues impacting communities, citizens and local governments.



## Taking Stock, (Re)Shaping Together 2023 LGMA CONFERENCE JUNE 13-15 | NANAIMO

### Enjoy stimulating keynote speakers:

#### Waneek Horn-Miller, Indigenous and Reconciliation Activist and Olympian



At age 14, Waneek Horn-Miller was stabbed in the chest by a Canadian soldier while protesting a condo development on traditional Mohawk lands. A photo of the event made her a public symbol of Indigenous struggle, but trauma and PTSD followed. On stage, she traces the path from the pain depicted in that picture to the strength depicted in her iconic TIME cover, an image of power, poise and dignity as the first Canadian Mohawk woman to compete in the Olympic games.

#### Jesse Hirsh, Futurist and Digital Strategist



Jesse Hirsh consults around new media business models, big data, and the strategic use of social media. He is also a co-founder of the Academy of the Impossible, a peer-to-peer lifelong learning facility. Because of the impact technology has on our relationship with the world, Jesse believes that it should be used in responsible and creative ways. He encourages audiences to use technology as the catalyst for collaboration, education and growing thriving organizations.

### Dive into expert-led sessions on a range of topics:

#### Coming early? Attend pre-conference sessions on June 13:

- Local Government Communications Professionals Forum
- Responding to Climate Disasters: How Communities Can Improve Resilience and Reduce Risk
- Strengthening our Communities: Capital Program Challenges and Opportunities

#### Choose from more than 20 concurrent sessions June 14-15 on a wide range of topics, including:

- Technology solutions, cybersecurity and social media
- Local government and indigenous partnerships
- Managing a hybrid workplace
- Corporate culture, teambuilding and health and safety
- Strategic planning framework
- Development approvals and affordable housing
- Legal, governance and finance issues
- Diversity, equity and inclusion
- Climate change and crisis management

### Don't miss these other conference activities:

- **Networking opportunities:** Including the First-Time Attendee Meet and Greet, the President's Welcome Reception and Trade Show Kickoff, and new Connection Corners at the Trade Show.
- **Professional Headshots:** Register at [office@lgma.ca](mailto:office@lgma.ca) by May 30.
- **Early Riser's Club:** Start things off right with a guided walk or run led by City of Nanaimo recreation staff.
- **Pension Consulting:** Sign up for a 45-minute session with Jerry Woytack, on site or in advance at [office@lgma.ca](mailto:office@lgma.ca).
- **Dinner Gala and Awards:** Enjoy a reception, dinner and LGMA awards, then dance the night away to live music.

**REGISTER TODAY**

Visit [lgma.ca/annual-conference](https://lgma.ca/annual-conference) for the full conference program, registration and other details.



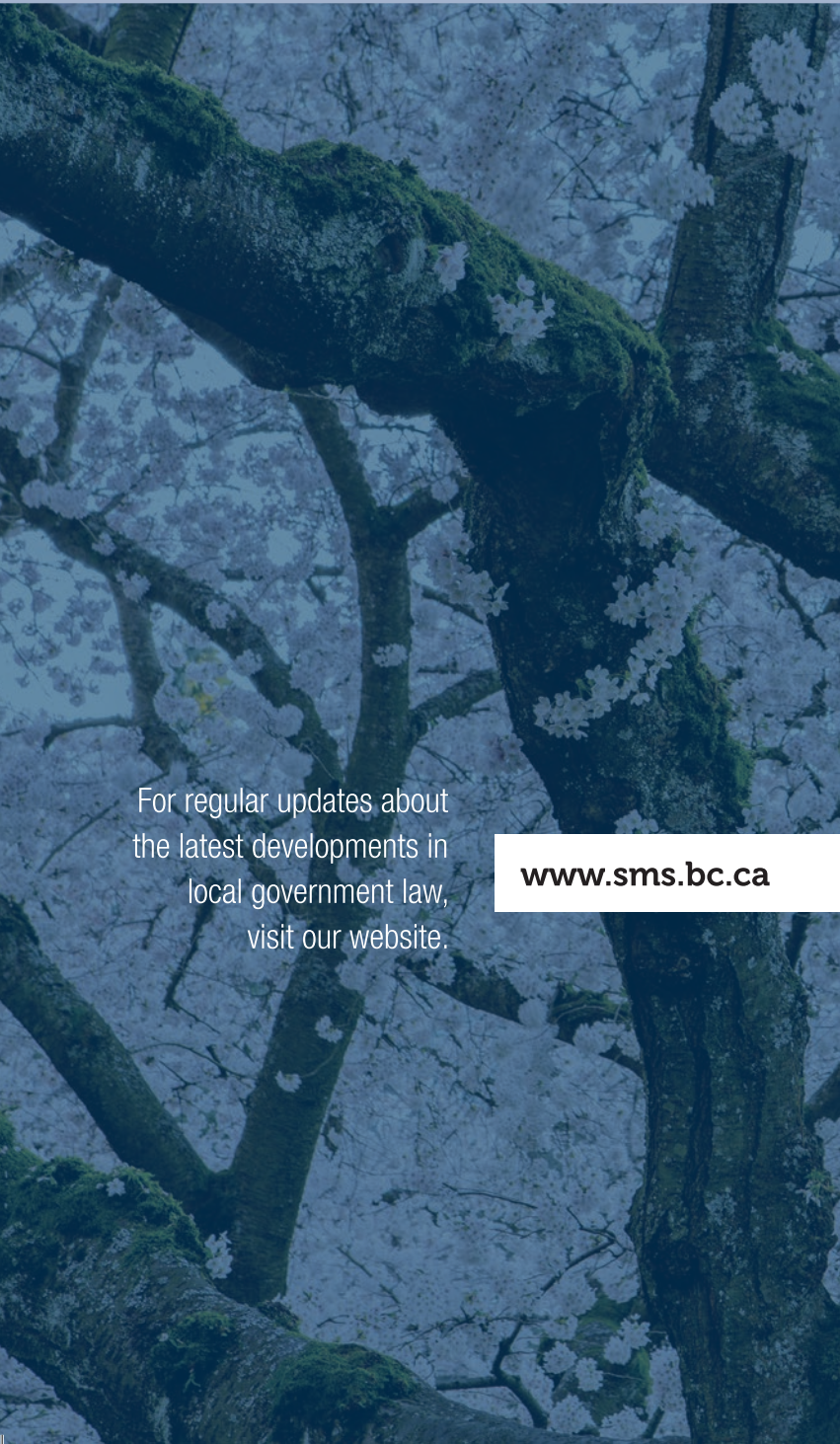
# Advice and Advocacy for Local Government

Providing legal services to  
local government throughout  
British Columbia since 1988



## STEWART McDANNOLD STUART

Barristers & Solicitors



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

[www.sms.bc.ca](http://www.sms.bc.ca)

Telephone: 250-380-7744

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



**LGMA**

2023 Professional  
Development  
Partner



By Karin Mark

# Rethinking *YOUR* Recruitment Strategies



# Perusing B.C.'s labour market statistics can be a disheartening exercise.

The provincial government's *Labour Market Outlook: 2022-2023 Forecast* anticipates more than a million job openings in the next decade – more than 60 per cent of them vacated by retirees. More than 630,000 workers will leave the workforce in that time period, while only 474,000 young people will take their place. Even with immigration, B.C. anticipates a shortfall of 82,000 workers.

Unlike private sector businesses, local governments can't simply close up shop if staff are not available. As they struggle to fill positions, they are being forced to rethink how they attract, hire and retain staff simply to provide essential services, let alone any enhancements residents have come to expect.

New strategies may involve overhauling recruitment materials, gathering research to guide new approaches, seeking the advice of experts, or developing solutions for succession planning. One thing for certain: the traditional approaches are no longer working.

"The local government job market is very, very different now," says Gary Nason, who spent more than 21 years as Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for B.C. local governments and is now Senior Advisor with the local government consulting firm JB Consultants.

"I'm of the demographic that started in local government in the early '80s. You'd be competing with this big demographic bubble going through your career progression. You don't see that volume of good applicants now. It's a pretty stark difference."

The shifting recruitment landscape has been caused by a wide variety of factors. These include the long-predicted mass retirement of the Baby Boom generation coupled with the growing attraction of self-employment and consulting work.

The economy is also playing a role. Compensation levels developed pre-pandemic may not be keeping pace with skyrocketing costs for housing, daycare and other necessities.

"The number one mistake employers make today is assuming they'll be able to find someone quickly for vacant positions."



Christina Stewart

This is particularly true in smaller communities, where a widespread lack of housing also deters new hires.

As well, many today are looking for more work-life balance and flexibility than the typical local government workplace offers. This is making it more difficult to both recruit and retain employees as they are more comfortable leaving a job that doesn't meet their needs, given the plethora of opportunities available.

The result is a lot of movement and a lot of vacancies in local government – sometimes for long periods of time.

"There's always been a lot of shuffling in local government, and there's a lot more of it now," observes Christina Stewart, co-founder and recruiter with Praxis Recruitment, which works with B.C. local governments, First Nations and non-profits.

"The number one mistake employers make today is assuming they'll be able to find someone quickly for vacant positions. I've been in recruitment for 25 years, and this is the most difficult recruitment market I've seen."

Continued on page 12

Compounding the problem is a widespread lack of succession planning in local government, says Paul Murray, a Past President of the LGMA who worked in B.C. local government for 30-plus years in Chief Financial Officer and CAO roles.

Murray, who now advises local governments as Principal Consultant at Brentwood Advisory Group, notes that local governments face competing priorities: the demands of Councils and Boards today and the needs of the organization in future. Today often wins out.

“For about 20 years, there was not a lot of movement or progression through the ranks. People who were CAOs and directors stayed as CAOs and directors,” says Murray. “Now we’re seeing a generational gap. And all of a sudden, you see retirements starting to happen, and they’re all the same age group.”

As an added challenge, while retirements are opening up leadership opportunities, not everyone wants them.

The traditional leadership track would see people rise through the ranks to department head, followed by a CAO position. But today, many department heads are thinking twice about taking that next step, says Jerry Berry, who worked at the City of Nanaimo for 28 years, including 22 years as its CAO, and is now President of JB Consultants.

“What you’re seeing now is a lot of people who are completely capable and well trained are seeing the reality of the job, and deciding they would rather focus on work-life balance,” says Berry.

### MODERNIZING RECRUITMENT APPROACHES

When considering how to rethink recruitment approaches, a natural place to start is with job postings – typically the first piece of communication between employer and candidates. Too often, these posts are missing the mark so this critical connection opportunity is missed.

In her recruiting work, Stewart often comes across postings that are essentially job descriptions – loaded with minutiae that could be on a website, or featuring long lists of required local government skills, certifications and experience that exclude many promising candidates.

“There is a big difference between a posting and a job description,” she says. “A posting should be a piece of marketing. It should draw someone in and get them excited. If it’s a long, dry posting, what are you enticing people with?”

Postings should be placed in a variety of job boards accessed by people from all industries, she says, and they need to be actively monitored.



Paul Murray



Jerry Berry

---

**“A key thing for local governments to promote is servant leadership – serving your community. That’s a great selling point for the younger generation. But you have to walk the talk.”**

---

“It used to be that we’d post for a month and then set aside two to three days at the end for interviews,” says Stewart. “That doesn’t work anymore – you can lose people while you wait. If a good strong application comes in, you need to reach out to them right away.”

When developing their postings and other recruitment materials, employers need a clear vision of their brand and what they have to offer, she says. It’s worth speaking to existing staff who are in the same demographic as potential new hires.

“If you’re the CAO or in HR and can’t answer what your brand is, you need to put pen to paper,” says Stewart. “What is it that draws people to the organization? It’s the same stuff that keeps them there.”

She recommends local governments play up the meaningful nature of their work, any remote work or schedule flexibility they offer, and income and benefits that can help people achieve the lifestyle they want.

Murray agrees, noting that his 23-year-old son and his generation want employers who share their values. “A key thing for local governments to promote is servant leadership – serving your community. That’s a great selling point for the younger generations. But you have to walk the talk.”

Candidates can afford to be choosy and dedicate time to researching prospective employers, looking for values that align as well as any red flags. An organization’s reputation, whether positive or not, becomes part of their public face.

“If you have a Council or Board that historically is not as functional, stable or civil as they could be, or have not treated staff well, people will know,” says Murray. “More and more, CAOs are being strategic about where they go because it’s their career, their family and their wellbeing at stake. I always say to elected officials, ‘Don’t forget, you’re being interviewed too.’”

Berry and Nason also underscore this point with the local governments they support, particularly with Council and Board members involved in selection committees.

“Elected officials are often incredulous when we tell them good candidates check these things out and depending on what they find, might not apply,” Berry says.

Continued on page 13

One way to bolster a local government's reputation is for the Council or Board to adopt a code of conduct, signaling a commitment to a respectful workplace.

"It is desirable and I would argue essential to have a code of conduct," Berry says. "But the worst thing you can do is have a code of conduct and not follow it."

Employers can also sweeten the pot with strong job security and severance provisions – particularly for CAOs, whose jobs are at risk each election cycle – and by ensuring their compensation reflects today's economic reality.

"It's more critical than ever to stay on top of what the current market is in terms of termination, compensation in lieu of overtime, work-life balance provisions, vacation and salaries," Nason says.

"With inflation and union settlements, I would speculate that prospective CAOs will be more and more sensitive to these issues and start thinking about an annual market analysis for comparable salaries."



Gary Nason

Success in today's recruitment market requires a thoughtful, strategic approach, Murray says.

Deeply consider what your organization needs from that role to move forward, he says. Prepare tough interview questions that force candidates to think, reveal their character and demonstrate desired competencies.

Above all, don't settle for a mediocre candidate just to wrap up the process quickly, he advises.

"If you rush this and get the wrong person, you'll have 10 years of problems. Have a bit of fortitude and discipline. Don't just hire out of desperation," says Murray. "Talk to your Council or Board and tell them it's going to take a little bit of effort to get there, but they and the community deserve the best for the position."

Nason agrees. "It's really important to get it right the first time. The risk is, if it doesn't work out, gone are the days when you're going to find someone in three months. That's probably not going to happen because you're not seeing the quality of applicants. You may have to go back to the pile or repost."

Continued on page 14

# The right questions lead to clear insights.

The W Group has designed and deployed thousands of surveys & forms capturing the data needed to make informed decisions.



Municipal Survey Research Experts | [thewgroup.ca](http://thewgroup.ca)





Accommodating flexible work options is another opportunity. However, Murray notes that managing the shift to remote or hybrid work is not as simple as just providing equipment and perhaps shared workspaces.

Some civic jobs require an in-person presence, but for others, there has to be equity and fairness in deciding who is eligible to work from home, says Murray.

**We're Hiring!**

**Grow Your Career**

**Work-Life Balance**

**Great People**

**Join Our Team!**

[coquitlam.ca/careers](https://coquitlam.ca/careers)

**2023**  
BC's Top Employers

**Coquitlam**

He added that some local governments have reported a decrease in productivity related to remote work – but in some cases, this is because managers don't know how to manage a remote workplace effectively.

Murray expects new resources and training will emerge to support local governments in this area.

“There is a great opportunity for the HR side to help out with this,” he says. “I’m curious to see which local governments are going to do a nice job of making that transition. I think it will show them as progressive and help them in recruitment.”

### EXPANDING THE POOL

Considering a broader pool of candidates is essential to recruiting today. This includes incorporating the growing understanding of equity, diversity, inclusion and reconciliation in staff recruitment, retention and all human resources work.

“Especially in local government, your workforce needs to match the community and include a wide variety of people,” says Stewart. “Look at your recruitment practices. Is anyone being excluded?”

Employers that focus only on Canadian experience and skills miss out on the opportunity of hiring skilled new Canadians – a growing cohort. Canada continues to welcome record numbers of permanent residents, targeting 400,000 to 500,000 per year in 2023 and 2024 in a recent Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada Department Plan.

“We’re seeing new Canadians who were, for example, a wastewater technician or supervisor before. They’re underemployed and they’re hungry for work,” says Stewart. “That’s a huge labour market if employers are open and receptive to it.”

She also points to a large untapped Indigenous labour market, noting that local governments could build relationships with local First Nations communities to make use of the training funding and resources they have available to them. (See page 23 for more on the Cowichan Valley Regional District’s work encouraging a diverse workforce.)

“Employers need to meet people where they are – whether they’re Indigenous, use a wheelchair or have pink hair – to show they are a receptive employer that reflects their community,” she says.

Expanding the candidate pool also means considering people from other industries or from within local government but with different educational or employment backgrounds than the norm.

Murray says he likes to include a “wild card candidate” when assisting a local government’s search for a CAO or other senior management position.

He references *Hiring for Attitude*, Mark Murphy’s book that says attitude should be the primary focus of the hiring process.

Continued on page 15

“Consider going beyond traditional candidates. For me, that may be people that don’t have direct CAO experience, for example, but there’s something about the way they present themselves that shows they have potential,” he says. “It’s not being as focused on experience, although you want some basics and fundamentals. You want to assess competencies, attitude, values and if they are a fit for the organization.”

Organizations must also understand there are many paths to leadership.

“You see some folks who have become very senior and have modest education,” says Murray. “I think a lot of municipalities will want at least a degree if not more. The folks who got there without it will have demonstrated excellence in other areas to offset that. The norm is education, but there are other ways to get there.”

Berry and Nason are also broadening their search parameters, particularly for CAOs.

“Twenty or 30 years ago, you would have had to have five years’ experience in the role,” says Nason. “Oftentimes now in our postings we will indicate this is a CAO position that is ideal for somebody at a director or department head level and doesn’t demand a previous CAO track record.”

The leadership journey is more varied today than it was in the past, notes Berry.

“When I first started, the path to CAO would have been many, many engineers. At one point it was lots of planners and there was a path through Corporate Services. I think now we’re seeing a larger net than before, and behaviour and attitude are certainly far more important than in the past,” he says.

## FOCUSING ON RETENTION AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

Stewart recommends a strong focus on staff development for both retention and succession planning purposes.

“People have to be mindful about how incredibly difficult it is to find someone,” says Stewart. “Organizations, and local governments especially, need to be looking at what they have in-house and doing succession planning. Recruitment should be a last resort right now.”

Local governments should start developing people now for a position they will need to fill in five years, she says, while creating an environment where people feel valued and have opportunities to grow and advance.

“There’s a cultural shift afoot in the workplace. It’s up to the organization to create an environment where they want to stay,” she says.

And if your organization is experiencing ongoing staff movement, she notes, it may be time for a closer look at why. Exit interviews can help.

“They say people don’t leave organizations – they leave crummy managers,” says Stewart. “One retention strategy is to train supervisors and managers to be leaders, not dictators.”

---

**Local governments should start developing people now for a position they will need to fill in five years, while creating an environment where people feel valued and have opportunities to grow and advance.**

---

A stronger focus on onboarding also helps set up new employees for success, she says.

Mail new hires the training manual in advance and make sure their paperwork, equipment and work space is ready for them, she suggests. Properly introduce them to coworkers and assign them a buddy to show them around the workplace – how to use their key card, where to eat lunch and how to use the photocopier, for example. The buddy doesn’t have to be someone in the same job.

Continued on page 16



Advertisement for BC Municipal Safety Association. The image shows a group of diverse professionals smiling. In the top left corner, there are social media icons for Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram, along with the website address [bcmsa.ca](http://bcmsa.ca). A white banner with a brushstroke effect contains the text: **NEW! Supervisors Safety Certificate Program - E-Learning**. At the bottom, the BC Municipal Safety Association logo is displayed, consisting of a stylized 'M' inside a square. To the right of the logo, the text reads: **BC MUNICIPAL SAFETY Association**. Below this, the tagline "Share the Knowledge." is written. At the very bottom, the text "TRAINING | COR | FORUMS | RESOURCES" is listed, with "virtual | in-person | online" written underneath.

“We need to take the time to really welcome someone to the organization,” says Stewart. “We spend all this time and energy recruiting someone that the last thing we want is to have them fail.”

Murray would like to see all local governments look more closely at existing employees to spot potential and provide support in gaining skills and competencies to move up.

Importantly, he says, this includes providing resources to navigate the often-difficult transition from coworker to leader, and then continuing to provide access to executive coaching and mentorship once they are in that role.

Murray points out that while organizations often look to their department heads to fill the role of CAO, they may not always be the best choice.

“We always talk about CAOs being the conductor of the orchestra. The music won’t sound good if everyone’s not playing together. Going from being the lead violinist to being the conductor – those are two different roles. A conductor requires a broader view,” says Murray.

“There are some people who were fabulous directors but not great CAOs, and the same is true conversely.”

Succession planning is significantly more difficult in smaller organizations, however.

Nason, who has worked in local governments of various sizes, notes: “In small municipalities, you don’t have the depth and the number of people and departments. What’s your succession plan? Well it’s often the next job posting on CivicInfoBC.”

However, increasing the focus on professional development can help in this regard. People today have more options to move up the ladder more quickly – but they need the skills to do so. Supporting staff with coaching, mentoring or academic training is not only attractive to employees but key for succession planning.

“You know the saying: the worse thing than training someone and having them go is not training them and having them stay,” Berry quipped, but added that it’s not always easy to get Council or Board buy-in.

Continued on page 17



## WE VALUE OUR PARTNERS

By sharing information and working together, BC Assessment and Local and Indigenous Governments can ensure fair and equitable property assessments, optimize property tax revenue collected, and increase citizen awareness of assessment and taxation. Get involved by using our many services, and working with your local assessment office.

## BC ASSESSMENT

Contact BC Assessment  
Local Government & Indigenous  
Relations Department:

---

Local Government  
1-866-valueBC or 1-866-825-8322 x 23229  
localgovernment@bcassessment.ca

---

Indigenous Communities  
1-866-valueBC or 1-866-825-8322 x 04251  
indigenouscommunities@bcassessment.ca

### **bcassessment.ca**

Browse our services and products  
for government





“Many elected officials, especially historically in resource communities, don’t have a personal culture of education. Good Councils and Boards understand training is important. With difficult ones, training budgets are often the first to go.”

Berry, who has taught a number of the LGMA’s Municipal Administration Training Institute® (MATI®) course sessions, also underscored the importance of networking for support and staff development. “That’s where the LGMA is fantastic. Particularly for senior staff, and especially in small places where CAOs have no one they can talk to safely. The network among CAOs is really important.”

Michael Boronowski, CAO for the City of Fernie, has relied heavily on the LGMA while leading his organization through a significant renewal, with a heightened focus on human resources and professional development (see page 20).

Boronowski recently completed the MATI® The Successful CAO program, and Fernie’s management personnel is also taking MATI® and Public Administration courses.

“The LGMA has been invaluable, for me starting as a new CAO and for our directors and young leaders who are growing up into the organization – the mentorship, the network, the coursework,” he notes.

## APPROACHES FOR SMALLER COMMUNITIES

Local governments in smaller communities face additional challenges in attracting out-of-town candidates.

Stewart notes that smaller employers in particular need to recognize they are hiring not just an individual but a family, and should seek to understand what the employee needs to stay and what may force them to leave.

A common example is when a new hire’s spouse also needs to find work.

“Sometimes you lose people if the spouse never lands,” notes Stewart. “The recruitment team should be working with the local community to say, ‘We just hired a new Director of Planning and her husband is an accountant, so let’s get him a job.’”

Employees with families may have additional considerations: a child may require a specific type of therapy, competitive sport opportunity or academic setting.

By learning about employees’ lives beyond the workplace, employers can provide the support they need to settle into a new community.

This could involve linking them with resources for their family, assisting with temporary housing or allowing them to work remotely for a period of time as they set themselves up in their new community.

Nason notes that, like it or not, employers who are recruiting can no longer ignore housing challenges. At the very least, they may need to consider sponsoring house-hunting trips or short-term housing.

---

## By learning about employees’ lives beyond the workplace, employers can provide the support they need to settle into a new community.

---

“Housing is top of mind for people – it’s not just about salary,” says Nason. “You want to hire someone but know this person is not going to find a home any time soon. You have to have an answer when they say they can’t find a place.”

During his recruiting work, Murray has seen quality candidates withdraw from a competition after researching the housing market. “Particularly for people moving from rural to urban communities, the dollars aren’t significantly different so you’re paying proportionately more of your income for housing.”

As a possible solution, Murray points to the practice in some U.S. towns or counties to provide housing or an ongoing housing allowance for senior management. That might be a harder sell in Canada, but it’s the kind of idea some remote communities may need to explore to attract the right talent.

It’s also worth looking at different approaches to help fill gaps in staff or service-delivery.

For example, Stewart has seen some creative solutions in smaller communities that are having difficulty filling roles with specific expertise, such as building inspectors. Some have started sharing inspectors between local governments or conducting some inspections via online video chat to free up staff time.

“Local governments compete with each other for talent, but maybe there are ways they can share resources,” says Stewart. “Look at your neighbour down the road and think about how you can work together.”

Communities may also consider an evidence-based approach to the problem, such as the grant-funded labour market partnership project now underway in the City of Campbell River, Regional District of Mount Waddington and Strathcona Regional District (see page 19 to learn more).

For communities without dedicated HR staff, it might be time to invest in that function – whether in-house or on a consultant basis – to provide the expertise and strategy needed for recruitment and retention today. (Read about Fernie’s experience with its first HR staff, page 20.)

As well, if there is a silver lining to the growing gig economy, it’s that local governments now have access to a growing supply of experienced consultants to pitch in when positions are vacant or they are short on in-house expertise.

Continued on page 18

## As more people enter local government from different industries and pathways, it's critical for recruiters to keep public service values in mind when hiring.



**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 2023 Courses

**Starting September:**

- ▶ PADM 200 Local Government Administration
- ▶ PADM 202 Local Government Finance
- ▶ PADM 203 Municipal Law in BC
- ▶ PADM 305 Problem Solving & Policy Writing Skills for Local Government Professionals
- ▶ PADM 307 Ethics & the Responsible Local Government Professional

**Upcoming 2023 MATI® PADM Courses**

- MATI® Advanced Communication Skills
- MATI® Managing People
- MATI® Leadership
- MATI® Community Planning

**Register today!**

**FOR COURSE REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION:**  
[www.capilanou.ca/local-govt](http://www.capilanou.ca/local-govt)  
or email Anna Delaney at [adelaney@capilanou.ca](mailto:adelaney@capilanou.ca)

“There’s quite a bit of demand for interim CAOs and directors to fill in for a short time,” notes Murray, adding that being able to provide services remotely has cut down on these costs.

“Remote work helps small communities be more cost-effective and access resources more easily.”

### CONTRIBUTING TO A STRONG SECTOR

The strength of local government in B.C. relies on individuals who believe in public service and understand the need to collaborate and support each other for the good of the sector.

As more people enter local government from different industries and pathways, including those with more private sector experience, Berry notes that it’s critical for recruiters to keep public service values in mind when hiring – respect for elected officials, for staff, for the public and for transparency.

“It would be ideal to have someone with a business background and a public service background to bring both those elements to the table,” says Berry. “But if you just have a business background and you have no understanding of public service values, you can see what happened to the south of us.”

Boronowski gives the LGMA credit for promoting the viewpoint that building strong organizations and investing in people are essential both for individual local governments and the entire sector. It’s a perspective his organization works to instill in staff at all levels and looks for in new candidates.

“The City of Fernie and every local government are part of a context in B.C. It is our duty to serve that context as well as our citizens. So doing a better job of developing people supports every city and community in the province,” says Boronowski. “As we get more engaged with communities of practice and as people engage in professional development and meet colleagues, the knowledge transfer between all of us constantly advances the state of practice. That’s critical to our sector.”

*See page 19 for case studies on strategies to tackle recruitment challenges and page 25 for tips and resources.*





# CASE STUDIES: Labour Market Strategies



By Karin Mark

Local governments are being forced to rethink recruitment practices as they experience continually increasing challenges related to filling vacant positions, supporting their local labour market and delivering services with fewer employees.

Here are examples of three different approaches being taken in British Columbia that tackle the problem, including a collaboration between the City of Campbell River, Regional District of Mount Waddington and Strathcona Regional District to collect and leverage data, the introduction of a new human resources position at the City of Fernie, and an increased focus on untapped labour markets in Cowichan Valley Regional District.

## TURNING DATA INTO SOLUTIONS ON VANCOUVER ISLAND

Three B.C. local governments are collaborating on an evidence-based approach to address the widespread labour challenges that are affecting multiple sectors and the local economy in Campbell River and northern Vancouver Island.

With funding support from a \$250,000 provincial and federal grant, the City of Campbell River, Regional District of Mount Waddington (RDMW) and Strathcona Regional District (SRD) have launched a labour market partnership project that is collecting data to understand the issues and trends affecting employment in the region, identify opportunities and support the development of action plans.

The ultimate objective is to provide data and recommendations that enable governments, businesses and other employers in the area to respond effectively to existing and future recruitment and retention problems.

“In many smaller communities, access to data is a big challenge,” says Rose Klukas, Economic Development Manager for the City of Campbell River and President of the Vancouver Island Coast Economic Developers Association. “We’re taking it into our own hands to collect that information and make it available for the different sectors as well as for us, to inform economic development and strategic planning.”

Focusing on the forestry, aquaculture, tourism and health sectors as these impact the bulk of the local economy, the project is a first step in what is expected to be a long-term labour market collaboration between three local governments whose economies are intertwined, with Campbell River being the SRD’s largest community and RDMW to the north.

The data analysis will explore a broad range of factors that affect the labour force.

“Without people to do the work, services have to be cut back. As a result of not having lifeguards, you’re having to reduce programs. You see restaurants reducing the days or hours they’re open.”

As an example, housing, daycare and healthcare – essential for both new and current employees and their families – are key challenges throughout the study area, which has a population of about 59,000 and covers about 29,000 square kilometres on Vancouver Island as well as the Discovery Islands and inlets on the mainland.



David Leitch

Evidence of challenges can be found in all sectors, including local government. David Leitch, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for the SRD, says all local employers are struggling to attract people and offer comparable salaries, benefits and remote-work opportunities.

“Without people to do the work, services have to be cut back,” says Leitch. “As a result of not having lifeguards, you’re having to reduce programs. You see restaurants reducing the days or hours they’re open. A coffee shop we regularly go to, we walked up there one Saturday and it was closed because one person was sick.”

Service reductions have a spiraling effect, potentially causing locals to move away while also deterring potential new employees or business owners from moving to the area.

“Our communities need to offer amenities that attract people. We know people want to go out to restaurants, they want to shop,” says Klukas. “As I always say, if I’m shopping at 2 o’clock, I probably won’t have a job for very long, so where can I shop in the evenings? But that’s often when businesses scale back their hours because they don’t have the staff.”

The City of Campbell River learned about WorkBC’s Community and Employer Partnerships fund in early 2022 through its ongoing relationship with the provincial government. The SRD and RDMW quickly embraced the notion of a grant-funded labour market partnership project. The three partners are covering about \$30,000 in costs not covered by the grant, as well as in-kind support such as staffing.

“We saw it as a tool that could hopefully provide employment projections and assistance to attract and retain in all sectors,” Leitch says. “It will be helpful for the SRD as well, to tell us where we may have to change our line of sight, where the challenges are and how can we adjust and pivot. That kind of information will be useful to employers in the region.”

Local industry and other key partners were also immediately on board with the project.

“We had a meeting early on to test the waters, and I was really pleased with the response,” Klukas recalls. “It shows how important this project is because every person, business and sector we contacted said, ‘Yes, do it.’”

To guide the project, a steering committee was formed with representatives from across the study area, including local, regional and First Nations governments, the four study sectors and other businesses, economic development organizations, and education and training institutions.

The steering committee worked together to narrow down the target sectors (forestry, aquaculture, tourism and health care), assisted the lead agencies in developing the funding application and conducted a competitive process to hire a consultant to carry out the work. The committee will continue to meet regularly over 2023 to oversee the work of the selected contractor, Human Capital Strategies.

The project work includes extensive public engagement on labour challenges and potential solutions, updating and collecting statistics including demographics, assessing the existing labour market including workforce shortages and skills gaps, and forecasting to identify future jobs, opportunities and training needs.

“The geographic area for the project is large and it’s not a highly dense population, so that’s a bit of a challenge for our consultant,” says Klukas. “But it’s also an opportunity for us. We’re very keen on a lot of engagement; our consultant knows that is a huge part of the project. I’m looking forward to getting out and meeting people from neighbouring communities as we tackle the workforce challenge together.”

The project deliverables, due in early 2024, will include usable insights for the four sectors and a toolkit with specific recommendations for the health care sector.

“Our project pays a higher level of attention to the health sector – it undergirds our whole project – recognizing you need doctors and nurses to attract people into forestry, into aquaculture, into tourism and other big parts of our economy,” Klukas explains. “We know these four sectors cover the bulk of the economy but not the whole economy. Mining and other sectors are important parts of the economy, and there may be opportunities to investigate other sectors down the road.”



Rose Klukas

Key to the project is not just collecting data, but providing insights and recommendations that can be translated into actions and solutions that benefit the targeted sectors as well as other employers in the region, including the local governments leading the project.

“We really want to make it a usable product, for communities to use the information to inform their plans moving forward, and for our businesses. The number one call we get in economic development, at least weekly, is, ‘How do I get people to work?’” she says.

“A lot of the challenges we’re addressing here are universal, especially in British Columbia, and we hope the information we uncover could also be useful for other areas.”

For other B.C. local governments considering a similar project, Klukas encourages them to work collaboratively with other communities and partners, and to take advantage of the support provided by the provincial government to complete the application. She suggests about a six-month timeframe to complete the application, if time permits.

“Think of it as the foundation of future work,” Klukas recommends. “It definitely is a great foundation to continue to address this challenge that is going to be with us for a long time.”

## MANAGING A CHANGING WORKPLACE IN FERNIE

Faced with workplace challenges ranging from staff shortages and knowledge loss to missed recruitment opportunities, the City of Fernie has experienced substantial improvement in multiple areas thanks in large part to the introduction of a dedicated human resources (HR) position. In addition to its success filling vacant positions, the City is managing rapid changes in its workplace and transforming into an employer of choice.

The last two years have been a period of renewal for the East Kootenays local government, including a revamped organizational structure, staff movement across departments, dozens of updated positions, policy changes and new programs to support internal training and development – a major feat for a workplace of about 150 with roughly 70 full-time employees.

“Over the past two years, we’ve significantly restructured the organization and you can’t do that without a dedicated HR person,” notes Michael Boronowski, CAO for the City of Fernie.

“Departments were reorganized, positions were rescoped top to bottom, job descriptions were rewritten. It was a wholesale redevelopment of the organization, and I think it has been really, really successful. Bumpy of course, because it’s people and change is hard, but overall really successful for us.”

Continued on page 21

Fernie created its first HR position based on a consultant-led organizational review in 2021, which included several recommendations to address the City's workplace challenges, as well as an audit conducted by B.C.'s former Auditor General for Local Governments in 2017 as part of its series of human resources audits taking place around B.C.



Michael Boronowski

“Local government being what it is, those external reviews helped create the rationale for adding the capacity and creating a long-term plan for transforming our existence as an employer,” notes Boronowski.

Previously, the City's senior managers handled all HR matters with the help of administrative support, but that practice became unsustainable over time as the organization grew and workloads increased – not to mention the ever-tightening job market and ongoing recruitment barriers in Fernie such as a lack of childcare, housing and the high cost of living in a ski destination and remote community.

Before the HR role was created, it wasn't uncommon for jobs to be posted multiple times, particularly for positions requiring specific technical expertise. The organization had also experienced ongoing staff turnover at all levels for a number of years.

“It's hard to overstate how impactful it is to have a really skilled, effective HR manager or resource,” Boronowski says. “We are filling positions as we post them with amazing people, onboarding them effectively and then supporting them in development and growth at a success rate that I think is really impressive. We still have difficulties in pockets, but overall, we're in a much better place.”

Fernie conducted a competitive internal and external hiring process for the HR position, interviewed a number of candidates, and ultimately filled the post internally. Camille Neal had worked with the City for several years in various roles, including Bylaw Enforcement Officer and Municipal Clerk, while waiting for the opportunity to use her degree and past experience in human resources and labour relations.

Continued on page 22

Fulton & Company LLP

Our objective is simple:  
exceed your expectations.

Local Government Law, since 1885.

**Fulton.**

in f @ 250.372.5542 | fultonco.com



Neal started her new role in January 2022 and immediately set to work helping to implement the recommendations in the organizational review.

“When Camille moved into the Human Resources Manager position, the department heads were just chomping at the bit for help,” Boronowski recalls. “And now they say they don’t know how they survived before.”

Neal’s busy first year included filling 52 job postings, developing a recruitment manual and selection guidelines, renewing performance evaluations for exempt staff, ratifying a collective agreement with the International Association of Fire Fighters, initiating cross-over training for critical role coverage, developing in-house training programs and working with the Occupational Health and Safety Manager to transform orientation and onboarding processes.

In many cases, policy and practices had to be rebuilt or created from the ground up.

“I had been with the organization for three years prior, so I knew what I was walking into,” says Neal. “I already had good rapport and relationships with a lot of senior leadership members. In the first year, I worked with each of the departments to do an in-depth analysis to identify their HR needs. Some were staffing, some were policy work and some were coaching and performance management. It was quite varied, but I had a sense of that going in.”



Camille Neal

Given the vast organizational change at Fernie, Neal also focused on renewing the corporate culture and supporting staff through the transition, including team building and an all-staff celebration. “We’ve been putting professional development and training at the forefront and really building our internal staff as well. It’s been very encouraging,” she says.

“Very few municipalities our size or smaller have money to fund backfilled positions. But internal cross-training and critical task coverage is a low cost to maintain a base service level despite absences and gaps.”

With Neal’s guidance, the organization has been tackling challenges such as lack of coverage for essential tasks and the knowledge loss that occurs during retirements and staff movement, while at the same time providing growth opportunities for Fernie’s young staff. The average age of the City’s staff in 2022 was 46.1 years old, down from 53.4 in 2019.

One example is a new Administrative Development program that provides cross-training on critical tasks for continuity when people are on holidays or positions are temporarily vacant.

It’s based on Fernie’s successful Operator in Training programs for hard-to-fill technical positions in the water, wastewater and building areas. These programs allow interested workers from other jobs to shadow existing staff, gain experience and gradually complete the requisite certifications, with pay bumps as they advance.

“These programs not only promote internal learning but also reduce the risk to the organization,” Neal notes.

Boronowski agrees. “Before, we would see service reductions. Someone would go on vacation and their service area would suffer,” he says. “Very few municipalities our size or smaller have money to fund backfilled positions. But internal cross-training and critical task coverage is a low cost to maintain a base service level despite absences and gaps.”

Recognizing the importance of work-life balance for employees today, the organization is also working to offer more flexibility to staff while meeting operational needs.

For existing employees, this could mean schedule accommodations or a blend of remote and onsite work. As well, as part of its recruitment work, the City is piloting a phased onboarding and relocation program that allows new out-of-town hires to visit Fernie for initial on-site training and then return home to work remotely for a set period of time before they are required to move to the community.

Based on employee comments and Neal’s hiring success rate, the organizational changes and various human resources initiatives are helping Fernie become an employer of choice.

Continued on page 23

Planning, Development & Environmental Law

**Practical advice, creative options,  
value for local government**



**CARVELLO LAW**

Lui Carvello, RPP, MCIP  
Lawyer & Registered Professional Planner  
203-1005 Broad St. Victoria, BC V8W 2A1  
250-686-9918 | lui@carvellolaw.ca  
carvellolaw.ca

Welcoming Michael Hargraves to the team May 1, 2023

“I think it’s improved people’s trust in the organization as a place to work,” Boronowski says. “When human resources and labour relations are distributed across a number of people who have to balance leadership and technical roles, details fall through the cracks. And every one of those inconsistencies, big or small, erodes a little bit of trust. Resourcing this function to be consistent, effective and bounded in integrity and passion helps to build trust and investment with the whole workforce.”

Creating a positive workplace experience with learning opportunities is not only important for retention, but also for attracting new talent – sometimes from other industries, Boronowski notes.

“Being a smaller municipality in close proximity to Calgary and really huge private sector mining companies, growth and opportunity are critical to retention and to referrals when we’re recruiting,” he says. “So the more we build a really awesome experience working here, when people grow and go, the more they are willing to send really good people back our way.”

Neal also gives the community itself credit in helping to fill City roles with engaged, dynamic employees.

“Fernie is really special. I came for a ski season, and now I’ve been here 14 years,” Neal says with a laugh. “It is just really a special town. We have a lot of people who enjoy Fernie and the lifestyle and the sense of community it brings, so there are a lot of skilled and educated individuals here, especially after the pandemic, who choose this lifestyle.”

## LEVERAGING UNTAPPED LABOUR MARKETS IN THE COWICHAN VALLEY

Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) has been looking beyond the typical labour pool for solutions to labour market challenges affecting both its own organization and employers throughout the region.

Serving a population of about 90,000 on Vancouver Island, the CVRD has been promoting the hiring of under-represented workers in recent years as a means to both fill vacant positions and to ensure workplaces across the Cowichan Valley reflect the diversity of the community.

The untapped supply of workers may include people from equity-deserving groups such as people from diverse racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds, women for historically male-dominated roles, Indigenous peoples, members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, people with a mental or physical disability, workers from younger demographics, or even workers from other industries who require more on-the-job training.

“Within our own organization, diversity and inclusion is key,” notes Ian Paydli, Human Resources Manager at the CVRD. “I do believe it’s important that employers – not only to do the right thing, but to make sure their organizations are sustainable – research and implement representative workforce programs, to make sure the workforce we have is representative of the population we serve, especially in places like local government, education and the like.”

Like many local governments, the CVRD is experiencing a significant amount of workforce movement, predicated in part by a rise in early retirements. Paydli noted it has become common for the CVRD to run concurrent recruitment campaigns for jobs ranging from entry level to management.

The picture is similar throughout the Cowichan Valley, where businesses of all types – and particularly in the hospitality industry – struggle to find and keep employees.

“We did a number of surveys and business walks in the past year and everyone’s facing the same challenges with the labour force,” says Barry O’Riordan, Manager of Economic Development Cowichan (EDC), a CVRD service. “It’s important that we understand that the demographics are really shifting. We’re moving towards an aging population, and it’s not going to be resolved easily.”

Increasing diversity and inclusion in the workforce has become a common thread in the resources the EDC has developed in recent years to support businesses, including its Employer Resource Guide and companion article series, and State of the Economy reports that interpret trends, Census and other data.

“Increasing the participation rate within the labour force is a big opportunity,” O’Riordan says. “That may mean more students or being more inclusive of seniors in the workplace, people with disabilities and people who have been traditionally marginalized from employment, and enacting policies and procedures to make it easier for those folks to get into the workforce.”

Being open to a broader candidate pool is now a necessity for small communities without a large population centre nearby, notes O’Riordan. This includes looking to nearby Indigenous communities.



Ian Paydli

Continued on page 24

## COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTING AND TRAINING

Help your new Council or Board speak on behalf of your local gov – when they agree, and when they don’t!

- ✓ Jan’s media & social media training
- ✓ Online or in-person
- ✓ One-on-one coaching

Jan enns  
communications Inc.  
CONSULTING • TRAINING



janenns.com





Based on Census data, not only did the percentage of CVRD residents identifying as Indigenous more than double (from 6.3 per cent to 13.7 per cent) between 2016 and 2021, but the Indigenous population is both younger and has a higher proportion of people of working age (ages 15 to 64) than the non-Indigenous population.

“In terms of demographics, the interesting thing is the Indigenous population is much younger and is growing much faster than the overall population,” he says. “There’s a big potential opportunity there to introduce more supportive and inclusionary policies regarding Indigenous employees, and I think there’s a big opportunity there within the broader economy, both for Indigenous populations and on the employer side.”

Developing a source of younger workers will become even more critical over time, O’Riordan notes, and not just in places like the CVRD, where many newcomers tend to be older. He pointed to recent provincial labour market statistics projecting job demand outstripping population growth by about 0.2 per cent per year.

As a strategy to address this gap, the EDC’s winter 2023 *State of the Economy* report recommends a growing focus on ensuring local First Nations have access to education and support to be successful in the workforce.

In an effort to help address labour shortages in the region, the EDC is working to attract younger people to Cowichan with marketing campaigns showcasing the region’s lifestyle. It is also developing a Workforce Housing Strategy this year to address the scope of the housing problem as it relates to employment.

In the shorter term, the EDC’s resources for local businesses emphasize the benefits of hiring under-represented workers and provide research and contacts to help local employers apply strategies to tap into these labour markets.

Within its organization, the CVRD has been applying its own strategies to attract and retain a younger and more diverse workforce by giving its employees more flexibility in when and where they work, including hybrid and part-time schedules.

“As a relative newcomer to the organization I was reflecting on how supportive we are of working parents, who are essential for the sustainability of our workforce,” notes Danielle Myles Wilson, CAO for the CVRD. “The flexible options we offer are a huge selling feature for people with families and the diverse workforce we are trying to attract.”

The CVRD has also completed a review of its human resources and programs and is now on track to develop a formal diversity, equity and inclusion program over the next 36 months.

As with any change in workplace culture, an educational component will be a necessary part of this work.



Barry O’Riordan

---

**“An effective diversity, equity and inclusion program will eliminate barriers to employment – many organizations simply have to do a better job of opening the door to more diverse groups of people.”**

---

“There is a significant amount of training necessary for the creation of an effective workplace diversity, equity and inclusion program – educating employees to create diversity, inclusion and cultural competencies, to understand where the organization and its employees sit in the diversity, equity and inclusion continuum, and to determine and understand the benchmarks essential for tracking progress toward becoming a more inclusive environment for all individuals,” Paydli says.

“An effective diversity, equity, and inclusion program will eliminate barriers to employment – many organizations simply have to do a better job of opening the door to more diverse groups of people. And one way of doing it is by making sure that we are eliminating inadvertent or systemic barriers that are preventing all prospective and current employees from feeling comfortable in the workplace.”

There are many ways to start building a more inclusive and welcoming workplace, Paydli notes, such as raising staff awareness and training managers about inclusion and how to recognize their own unconscious bias, rethinking policies to remove systemic barriers and create safer spaces, increasing technology use to assist people with various needs, celebrating differences, and adding competency-based hiring practices to mitigate bias, remove barriers and ensure the organization is welcoming to all.

“At the end of the day, it comes down to short-term pain, long-term gain,” says Paydli. “Creating diversity and inclusion programs can be challenging and time-consuming, but it is the right thing to do, and if done with genuine intent, it will provide strong returns in the way of a robust workforce and positive work culture. I do believe it will create greater capacity to hire, retain and eliminate barriers to employment in the future.”

From an economic development standpoint, O’Riordan notes that more inclusive workplaces throughout the CVRD will ultimately build local capacity because it will lead to more employment for existing residents.

One of the key challenges ahead for local governments will be making an institutional environment truly feel welcoming and inclusive to Indigenous people and others from diverse backgrounds, he says.

“It’s probably a defining challenge in terms of how you successfully embed welcome and openness within a government institution,” he says. “Local government will be a lot richer the more we can make that happen.”



# tips & tactics

## Labour Market Resources for Local Governments

### Organizational and Professional Development

- Capilano University-LGMA Municipal Administration Training Institute® (MATI®) programs: [lgma.ca/mati-programs](http://lgma.ca/mati-programs)
- LGMA publications include the Executive Compensation Toolkit ([lgma.ca/toolkits](http://lgma.ca/toolkits)), Human Resource Toolkit ([lgma.ca/manuals1](http://lgma.ca/manuals1)) and Forging the Path to Responsible Conduct in Your Organization ([lgma.ca/responsible-conduct-of-local-government-elect](http://lgma.ca/responsible-conduct-of-local-government-elect))
- LGMA professional development and supports include programs and training ([lgma.ca/programs-training](http://lgma.ca/programs-training)), CAO Forum ([lgma.ca/cao-forum](http://lgma.ca/cao-forum)), Corporate Officers Forum ([lgma.ca/corporate-officers-forum](http://lgma.ca/corporate-officers-forum)), executive coaching ([lgma.ca/icma-coaching-program](http://lgma.ca/icma-coaching-program)) and informal mentoring and networking opportunities. Visit [lgma.ca](http://lgma.ca) or call 250-383-7032 for information.

### Labour Market Data and Resources

- Christian Saint Cyr (BC Labour Market Report) 2022 presentation to UBCM: Labour Market Outlook in Municipal Government: [ubcm.ca/sites/default/files/2022-09/6%20Tues%20845-1145%20-%20Harmony%20-%20Christain%20St%20Cyr%20-%20UBCM%20Presentation%20Small%20and%20Medium%20Size%20Communities%20Sep%2013%202022.pdf](http://ubcm.ca/sites/default/files/2022-09/6%20Tues%20845-1145%20-%20Harmony%20-%20Christain%20St%20Cyr%20-%20UBCM%20Presentation%20Small%20and%20Medium%20Size%20Communities%20Sep%2013%202022.pdf)
- WorkBC 2022 Labour Market Outlook: [workbc.ca/sites/default/files/2023-02/LMO-2022-Report.pdf](http://workbc.ca/sites/default/files/2023-02/LMO-2022-Report.pdf)
- WorkBC Community and Employer Partnerships program – Labour Market Partnerships information, grant application and resources: [workbc.ca/CEP](http://workbc.ca/CEP)
- Labour market partnership project in Campbell River and North Vancouver Island regional districts: [ecdev.campbellriver.ca/articles/labour-market-partnership](http://ecdev.campbellriver.ca/articles/labour-market-partnership)

### Recruitment Strategies and Resources

- CivicInfoBC local government job posting service: [civicinfo.bc.ca/careers-post](http://civicinfo.bc.ca/careers-post)
- Economic Development Cowichan's Cowichan Employer Resource Guide: [ecdevcowichan.com/wp-content/uploads/Cowichan-Employer-Resource-Guide.pdf](http://ecdevcowichan.com/wp-content/uploads/Cowichan-Employer-Resource-Guide.pdf)
- Praxis Recruitment videos and playlists with tips for recruiters and job seekers at <https://www.youtube.com/@praxisrecruitment1886>

### Hiring for Inclusion and Diversity

- Economic Development Cowichan blog post – A diverse and inclusive workforce to address the labour shortage – with a spotlight on accessibility: [ecdevcowichan.com/a-diverse-and-inclusive-workforce-to-address-the-labour-shortage-with-a-spotlight-on-accessibility/](http://ecdevcowichan.com/a-diverse-and-inclusive-workforce-to-address-the-labour-shortage-with-a-spotlight-on-accessibility/)
- McKinsey & Company report *Diversity wins: How inclusion matters*: [mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters](http://mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters)
- WorkBC – Create an Inclusive Workplace: [workbc.ca/access-employer-resources/hire-employees/create-inclusive-workplace](http://workbc.ca/access-employer-resources/hire-employees/create-inclusive-workplace)
- ECO Canada's Indigenous Recruitment Guide: [eco.ca/new-reports/indigenous-recruitment-guide/](http://eco.ca/new-reports/indigenous-recruitment-guide/)
- Government of Canada Job Bank – Hire a diverse workforce: [jobbank.gc.ca/hiring/resources/diversity](http://jobbank.gc.ca/hiring/resources/diversity)
- Indigenous Relations Academy and Corporate Training:
  - Indigenous Employment Recruitment and Retention – live-guided and self-guided training: See the Training section at [indigenousrelationsacademy.com](http://indigenousrelationsacademy.com)
  - Community Engagement for Indigenous Recruitment blog post: [ictinc.ca/blog/community-engagement-for-indigenous-recruitment](http://ictinc.ca/blog/community-engagement-for-indigenous-recruitment)
  - 11 Community Outreach Tips for Indigenous Recruitment blog post: [ictinc.ca/blog/topic/indigenous-recruitment-and-retention](http://ictinc.ca/blog/topic/indigenous-recruitment-and-retention)

### Further Learning

- *Encouraging the Heart: A Leader's Guide to Rewarding and Recognizing Others*, a book by James Kouzes and Barry Posner.
- *The Leadership Pipeline: How to Build the Leadership Powered Company*, a book by Stephen Drotter, Ram Charan and James Noel.
- *Welcome to the Hall: A practical guide for municipal leaders* by B.C.-based local government veteran and consultant James Ridge: [jamesridgeconsultinginc.com/my-book](http://jamesridgeconsultinginc.com/my-book)
- Books and resources on local government leadership and governance by Canadian local government veteran and consultant George Cuff: [georgecuff.com/books-videos/buy-books](http://georgecuff.com/books-videos/buy-books)

## MEMBER MOVEMENT

**Jessica Bagnall**, Deputy Director of Corporate Services, District of Oak Bay (formerly Deputy Corporate Officer, Regional District of Nanaimo)

**Jim Bauer**, Chief Administrative Officer, Westbank First Nations (formerly Chief Financial Officer/General Manager, City of Penticton)

**Elle Brovold**, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Campbell River (formerly Economic Development Manager, City of Campbell River)

**Michael Fox**, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Port Alberni (formerly General Manager of Community Services, City of Lethbridge)

**Kevin Henderson**, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Dawson Creek (formerly General Manager of Development Services, City of Dawson Creek)

**Steve McLain**, Chief Administrative Officer, District of Chetwynd (formerly Director of Recreation/Manager of Leisure and Facility Services, District of Chetwynd)

**Evan Parliament**, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Revelstoke (formerly Chief Administrative Officer, District of Sicamous)

**Brent Reems**, Chief Administrative Officer, District of Saanich (formerly Director of Building, Bylaw, Licensing and Legal Services, District of Saanich)

**Sky Snelgrove**, Assistant Manager/Deputy Corporate Officer, Legislative Services, Regional District of Nanaimo (formerly Deputy Corporate Officer, City of Nanaimo)

## RETIREMENTS

**Dawn Boothe**, Building Inspector, District of Summerland

**Tom DeSorcy**, Fire Chief, District of Hope

**Peter Jmaeff**, Manager, Sechelt Indian Government District

**Blair Lekstrom**, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Dawson Creek

**Raeleen Manjak**, Director of Human Resources, City of Vernon

**Madeline McDonald**, Chief Administrative Officer, Village of Harrison Hot Springs

**Tim Pley**, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Port Alberni

**Ramin Seifi**, Director of Community Development, Township of Langley

**Dean Spry**, Director of Fire Services - Fire Chief, District of Sparwood

**Peter Steblin**, City Manager, City of Coquitlam

## 2023 LGMA PROGRAMS & EVENTS

May 2, 9, 16  
Advanced Supervisor Essentials  
Online Course

May 7-12  
MATI® Managing People  
Harbour House, Salt Spring Island

May 12, November 17  
CAO Connect Lunch Series  
Online

May 19, June 2, September 15  
Indigenous Awareness Training  
Online Course

May 24, September 20  
Corporate Officer Connect  
Lunch Series  
Online

June 8-9  
Approving Officers Workshop  
Online

June 13  
Communications Forum  
Vancouver Island Convention Centre,  
Nanaimo

June 13-14  
LGMA Trade Show  
Vancouver Island Convention Centre,  
Nanaimo

June 13-15  
LGMA Annual Conference  
Vancouver Island Convention Centre,  
Nanaimo

September-December  
Foundations in Local Government  
Learning Series  
Online Course

September 21  
CAO Breakfast  
TBC, Vancouver

September 22  
Indigenous Relations Training  
Online Course

October 4-6  
Corporate Officer Forum  
Vancouver Island Convention Centre,  
Nanaimo

October 6, 13, 20, 27,  
November 3, 10  
Project Management Fundamentals  
Online Course

October 15-20  
MATI® Leadership in Local  
Government  
The Bayside Resort, Parksville

October 22-27  
MATI® School for Statutory  
Approving Officers  
Bayside Resort, Parksville

October 23, 24, 31, November 7  
Effective Report Writing  
Online Course

October 25-27  
Admin Professionals Conference  
Westin Wall Centre, Richmond

November 14, 21, 28  
Minute Taking Online Course

November 16, 23, 30  
Change Management Online Course

November 26 - December 1  
MATI® Community Planning  
Harbour House, Salt Spring Island

## 2023 PARTNER PROGRAMS & EVENTS

May 14 - May 17  
International Institute of Municipal  
Clerks Annual Conference  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

May 25-28  
Federation of Canadian  
Municipalities Annual Conference  
Toronto

May 28-31  
Canadian Association of Municipal  
Administrators Annual Conference  
Deerhurst Resort, Ontario

May 31-June 2  
Government Finance Officers  
Association of BC Annual Conference  
Whistler

June 12-15  
Association of Municipal Managers,  
Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario  
Annual Conference  
Niagara Hilton Fallsview Resort &  
Casino, Niagara Falls, Ontario

September 26-27  
BC Municipal Safety Association &  
Public Works Association of BC Joint  
Annual Conference  
Penticton

September 30-October 4  
International City/County  
Management Association  
Austin/Travis County, Texas

Program dates are subject  
to change. Confirm at  
[lgma.ca/programs-training](http://lgma.ca/programs-training).

## COLOUR ADS AT NO EXTRA COST!

LGMA is proud to now offer full-colour advertising in *Exchange* at no extra cost. There's no better time to start raising your profile and sharing your message with about 1,000 local government professionals and affiliates across B.C.

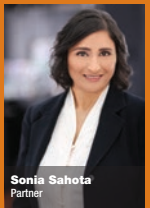


Booking and discount options: 250.383.7032 or [office@lgma.ca](mailto:office@lgma.ca)





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



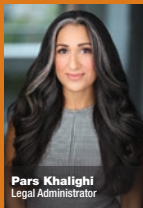
Sonia Sahota  
Partner



Pam Jefcoat  
Partner



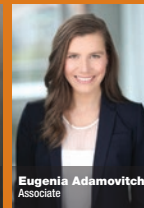
Michael Moll  
Partner



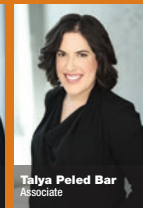
Pars Khalighi  
Legal Administrator



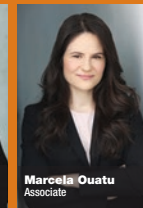
Sara Gray  
Associate



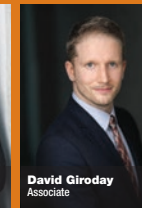
Eugenia Adamovitch  
Associate



Talya Peled Bar  
Associate



Marcela Ouatu  
Associate



David Giroday  
Associate



Kai Hsieh  
Associate

*Small Firm.  
Big Thinking.*

[www.civiclegal.ca](http://www.civiclegal.ca)

Main 604 639 3639 | Email [info@civiclegal.ca](mailto:info@civiclegal.ca)  
710 - 900 West Hastings St. Vancouver, BC, V6C 1E5



Follow us @CivicLegal

# MEET OUR EMPLOYMENT LAWYERS

LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT, TERMINATION, WRONGFUL & CONSTRUCTIVE DISMISSAL,  
COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS, GRIEVANCES, DISPUTE RESOLUTION, HUMAN RIGHTS,  
INVESTIGATIONS, BULLYING & HARASSMENT, PRIVACY



MARISA CRUICKSHANK  
cruickshank@lidstone.ca



DEBRA RUSNAK  
rusnak@lidstone.ca



ANDREW CARRICATO  
carricato@lidstone.ca



PAUL HILDEBRAND  
hildebrand@lidstone.ca

GOVERNANCE  
FINANCE  
TAXATION  
LAND USE

PROPERTY  
FOIPOP  
**LABOUR &  
EMPLOYMENT**

BYLAWS  
ELECTIONS  
LITIGATION  
INSURANCE

INDIGENOUS  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
CONFLICTS  
CONSTRUCTION

## LIDSTONE & COMPANY

LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAWYERS

[www.lidstone.ca](http://www.lidstone.ca)

