

The Marsh Overseas Manager Exchange to Canada - Taituarā LGMA Manager Exchange Report July 2023

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Introduction

Thanks to Taituarā (SOLGM when I won this exchange in 2019), LGMA, Township of Langley, Gore DC CEO Steve Parry as my current employer, (and SDC former CEO Steve Ruru who supported my application in 2019) for providing the opportunity to participate in this NZ/BC Overseas Manager Exchange. As part of the many professional and personal development opportunities provided, it was a privilege to address the LGMA conference attendees over lunch.



Figure 1 Speaking at the LGMA Conference

This report will focus on key observations, learnings and takeouts from attendance at the LGMA Conference in June 2023, meetings with administrators, staff and elected members of various municipalities in BC over a period of two weeks – from 10 June to 23 June 2023. It is intended this report will inform, assist and challenge the LG sector in NZ into the future. It will have a future focus and provide insights which will challenge and foster future opportunities - if our minds are open, eyes are open, and ears are open to change and living and learning as we go.



Figure 2 In the Council Chambers at the Township of Langley

A comparative context – a summary of the local government ecosystems we operate in

	British Columbia, Canada	New Zealand
Population Density	5.4 million 5.41/km ²	5.2 million 19.1/km ²
GDP GDP per capita	\$250 billion CAD \$53,000 CAD	\$261 billion NZD \$51,000 NZD
Area	944,735 km ²	268,021 km ²
Local Government	161 municipalities 27 regional districts	67 territorial authorities (incl. 5 unitary authorities) 11 regional councils
	Greater Vancouver Regional District	Auckland Council
	Largest metro – one of 28 regional districts in BC	Largest metro – one of 78 local authorities in NZ
Population Density	2.6 million 918/km ²	1.7 million 2,400/km ²
Area	2,877 km ²	607 km ²
Local Government	23 local authorities incl. 21 Municipalities 1 electoral area 1 treaty First Nation	1 Council 21 local boards
	Township of Langley	Gore District Council
Population Density	137,000 431/km ²	13,000 10/km ²
Area	307 km ²	1,253 km ²
Local Government	Council – 1 Mayor and 8 Councillors	Council – 1 Mayor and 11 Councillors

Key Local Government BAU observations and first impressions (related to my General Manager Community Lifestyle Services role)

The manager exchange provided opportunities to observe and experience how Local Government BAU is delivered elsewhere and it was definitely appreciated and helpful to experience first hand, examples of:

Open spaces and places developments



Figure 3 Community garden incorporated into a playground setting in Vancouver



Figure 4 An all inclusive playground in Nanaimo. Inclusive playgrounds welcome people - especially children of all abilities to play, learn and grow. Inclusive playgrounds also allow adults of varying ages and abilities to engage with the children in their care. Inclusive playgrounds include physical accommodations and provide a number of different opportunities and range of equipment for children to explore. They integrate all senses. There is a little something for everyone, including those that like to climb, run, spin, slide, swing and more. An inclusive playground is a destination park for families, children, visitors and residents to get together and do what everyone wants to do: PLAY!



Figure 5 Play space and Bike park in Port Moody – built with natural and recycled materials to offer a challenging and imaginative experiences



Figure 6 With the former North Vancouver Mayor Darrell Mussatto and host Ramin Seifi getting a personal and passionate tour of the North Vancouver open space sea walk development – bringing the space alive by integrating activities and amenities for all walks of life that make up the community – this in front of a Korean sister city monument.

Arts and heritage developments



Figure 7 New cultural centre for the Township of Langley – incorporating a modern setting for arts and cultural activities, as well being the new home of the Fort Langley Library. Currently under construction it will provide indoor and outdoor community gathering spaces, a reception hall, presentation theatre, amphitheatre and garden space. A project funded by the federal government, provincial government, the local council and corporate, public and community sponsors.

Sport, recreation and aquatic facilities operations and developments

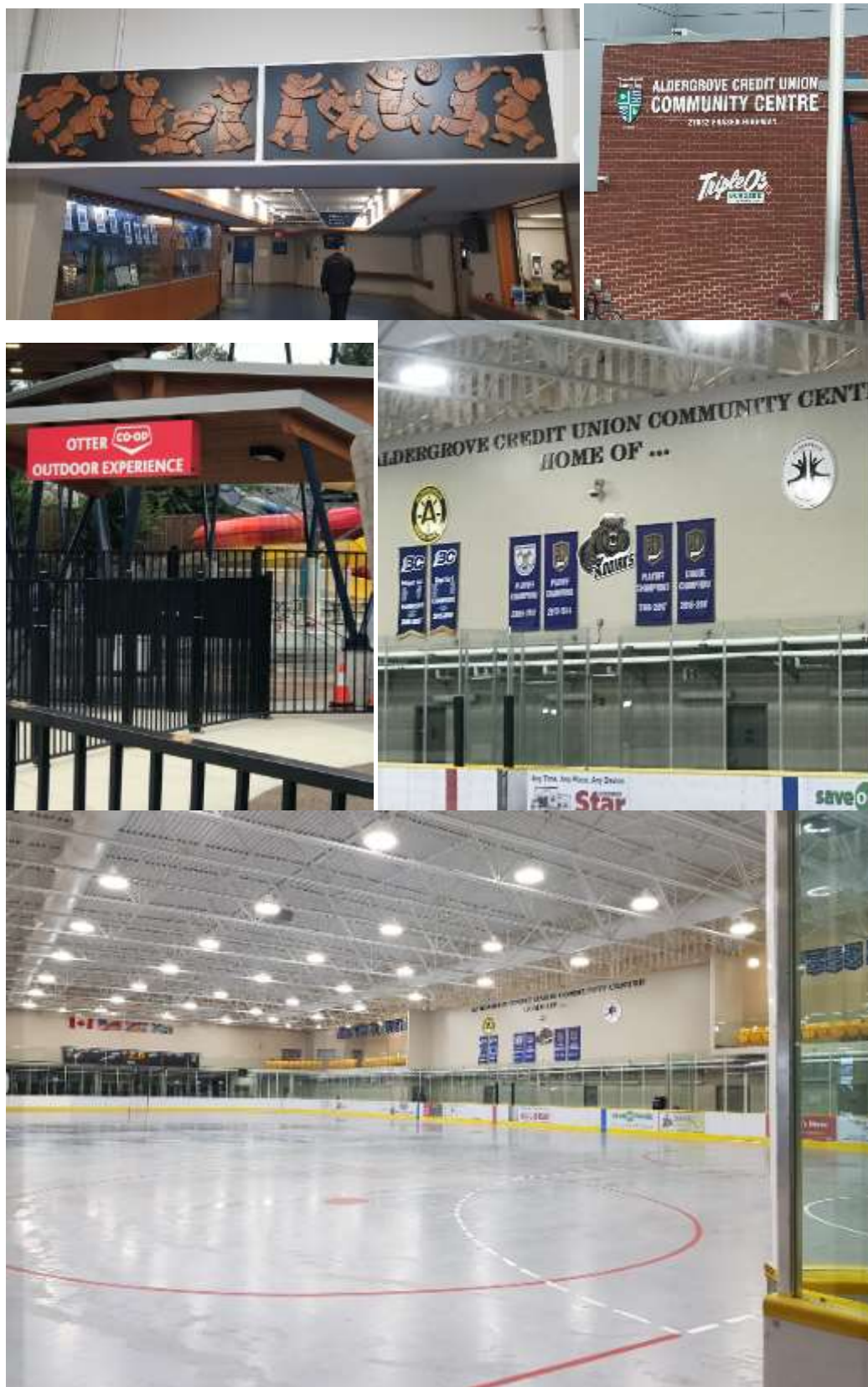


Figure 8 Various examples of council, private and public partnership sport and recreation development opportunities supporting regional, local and community based sport and recreation facilities across the municipality of the Township of Langley – including indoor and outdoor sport stadia, community centres, aquatic facilities and ice rinks.

Infrastructure and level of service challenges



Figure 9 A news headline on CTV while travelling on the ferry from Victoria to Vancouver. A common question we also are asking of ourselves here in NZ!!

Land use planning and growth challenges



Figure 10 In Vancouver views are important - with protected public views and view corridors implemented. View corridors are planning policies that limit the height of new buildings within a measured sight line. This preserves the ability to see the mountains rising above the downtown skyline as the focus of the view.

Urban amenity improvements and precinct developments



Figure 11 An example in Nanaimo of the development of an Arts District/Precinct - incorporating the library, art gallery outdoor space, heritage area, theatre and natural landscapes focussed on the waterfront. All improvements and precinct development are well signed and with consistency of design and branding.

Bringing spaces alive developments



Figure 12 Indoor and outdoor spaces utilised to attract bringing activities and people to various community spaces.

Support local initiatives

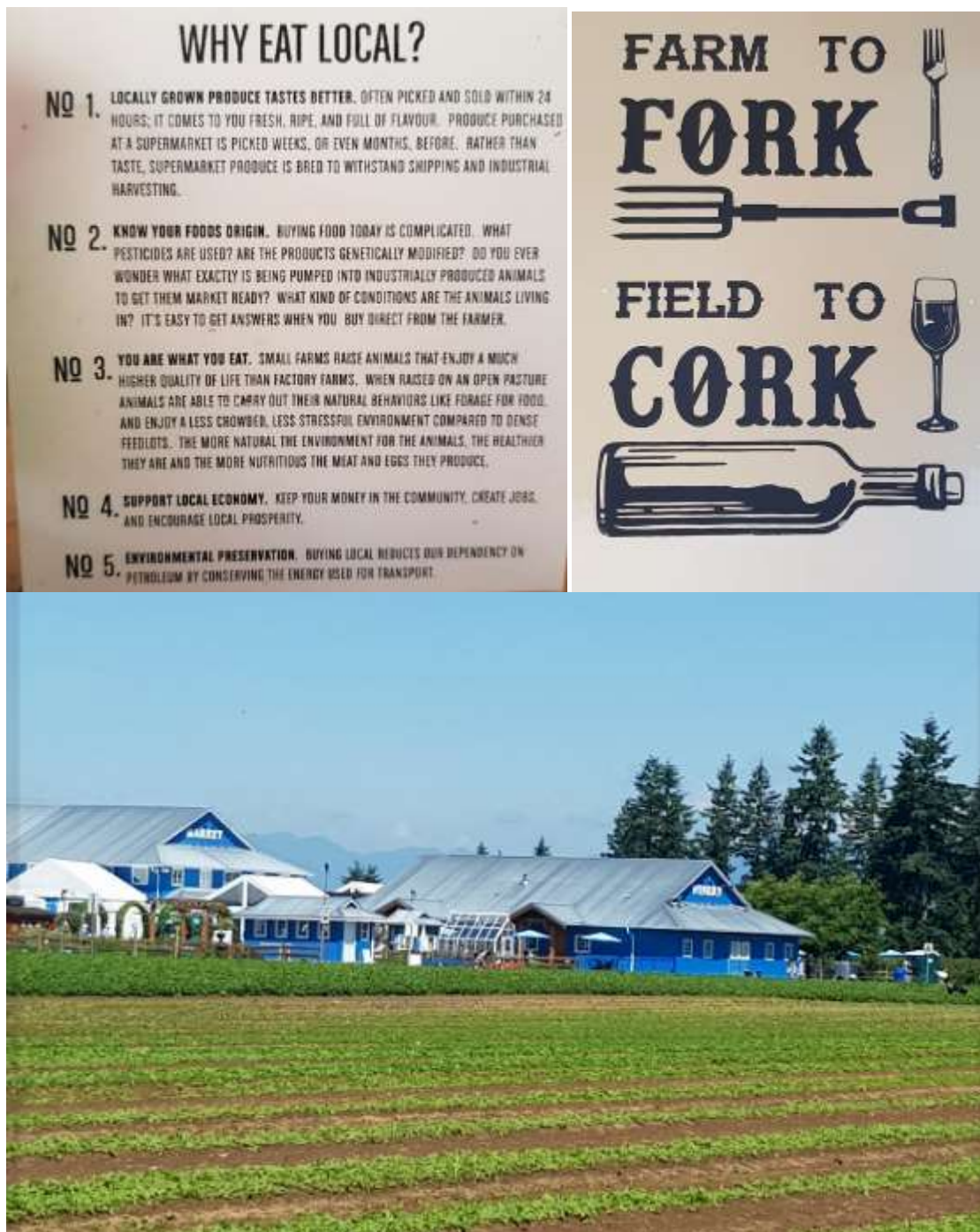


Figure 13 A real move to support local growers and enhance the areas attraction for residents and visitors alike.

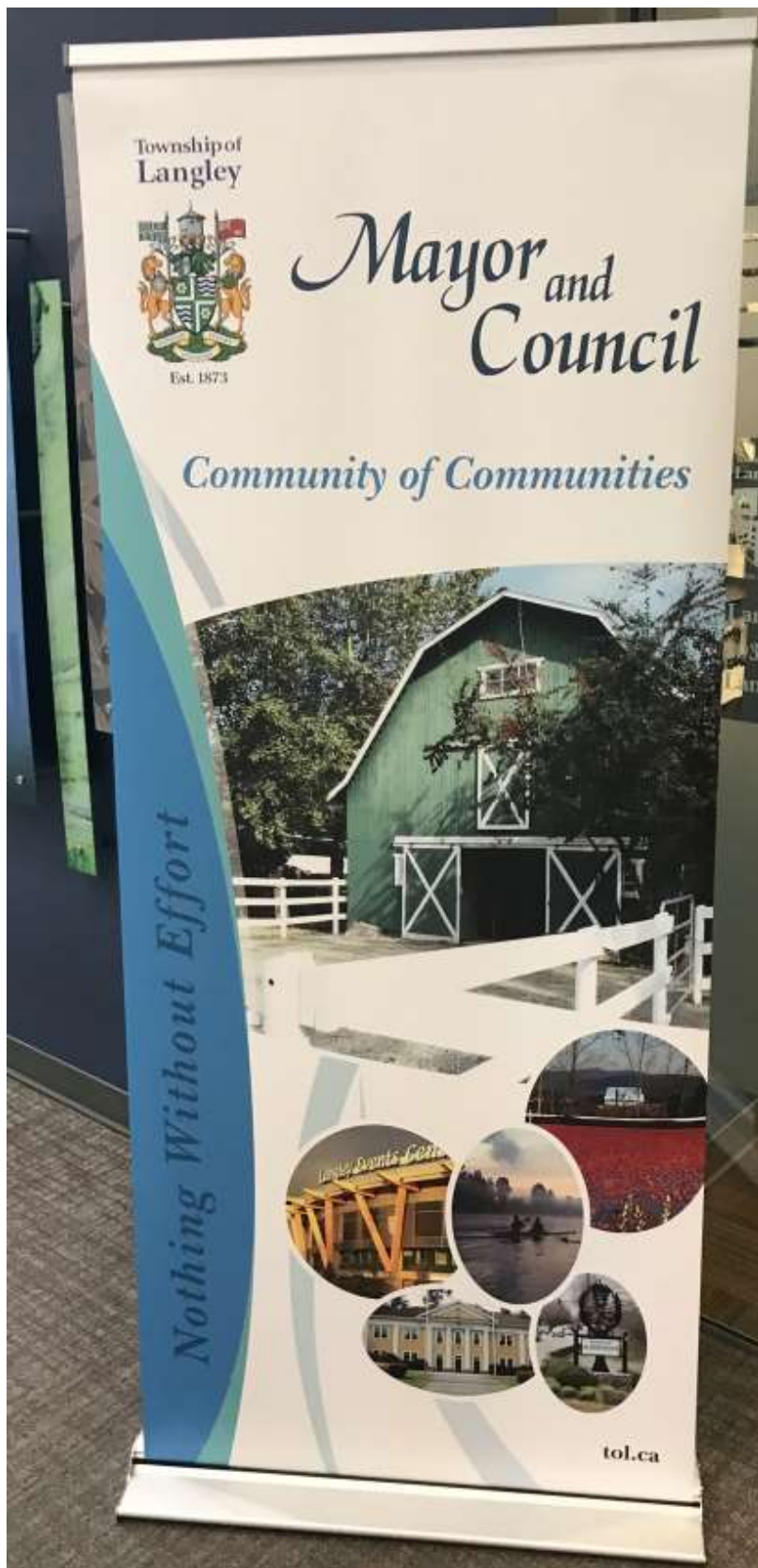


Figure 14 Consistent themes from the various municipalities visited of the challenges and pressures being experienced between elected members, the community and the administration officials – the byline at the Township of Langley - “Community of Communities” - really resonated with me as to what local government is about

Community and council connections and PPP opportunities



Figure 15 An example in Fort Langley of multiple community groups partnering with council to provide social enterprise opportunities as well as a social service – community café, community meals on wheels all provided from a council owned facility

National, regional and neighbouring authorities collaborations



Figure 16 Just one example of many of legacy type initiatives for a local community (Whistler) as a result of federal, provincial and local governments working together to align a vision and source funding in partnership to deliver on it.

Strategic and sector wide observations - *Same Same but Different the world over* (related to my Deputy CE role)

The following strategic and sector wide observations and key themes have come through from the various interactions and conversations had at conference and meeting staff, elected members and visiting various municipalities across British Columbia, and experiencing first hand the different tiers of Canadian government in practice.

LG is a team game – based on people

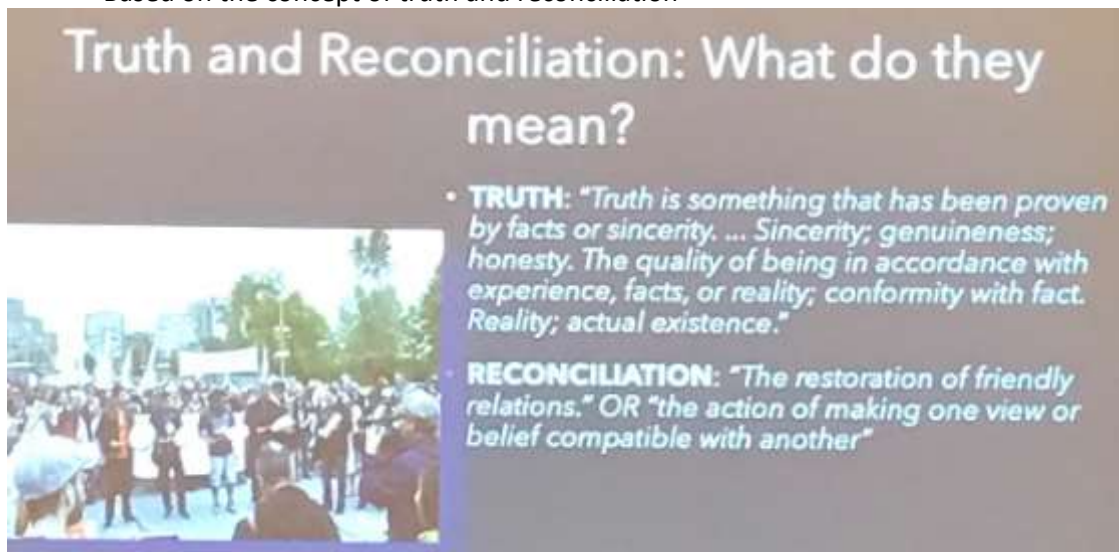
- Organisations rely on teams of people getting along to achieve a common purpose
- Local government is made up of various organisations
- These organisations are made up of people.
- People require investment.
- LG tensions continue to manifest around investment and lack of understanding of the difference between a cost and investment mindset - especially in people.
- An unintended consequence of not investing now, for the future, is significant in this period of struggle for talent acquisition, recruitment and retention – a global phenomena, if not global crisis



My many interactions with municipality staff focussed on me being asked to share my people leadership experiences, organisational development opportunities undertaken and examples of people and culture investment. It is refreshing that I have been asked to carry these conversations on with colleagues in Canada, which I intend to do, as well as work with LGMA board members to consider broader and longer term development opportunities that can be delivered to members.

First Nations conversations

- Based on the concept of truth and reconciliation



Truth and Reconciliation: What do they mean?

- **TRUTH:** "Truth is something that has been proven by facts or sincerity. ... Sincerity; genuineness; honesty. The quality of being in accordance with experience, facts, or reality; conformity with fact. Reality; actual existence."
- **RECONCILIATION:** "The restoration of friendly relations." OR "the action of making one view or belief compatible with another"

- Reconciliation – how do we get people to get along? It's a journey. It's a daily practice
- Indigenous people identify with and view their world through their language – being descriptive languages based on oratory
- Intergenerational lens – seven generation thinking – about being a good ancestor



THE TALKING STICK

The Talking Stick is a symbolic reminder of the need for respectful dialogue in the ongoing process of reconciliation.

INDIGENOUS SYMBOL

Symbols and ceremonial traditions are an important part of parliamentary practice in British Columbia, just like the rules that govern the Legislative Assembly's proceedings, parliamentary symbols can evolve and new traditions can develop.

The Talking Stick is a symbol of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, representing the traditional territory of the Lekwungen people, today known as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.

The Talking Stick is a carved wooden staff that resembles a small totem pole. Talking Sticks are a powerful symbol and communication tool used to foster an atmosphere of active listening and respect. Only the bearer of the Talking Stick has the right to speak.

British Columbia

Some history about the Talking Stick: In 1987, the British Columbia Legislative Assembly adopted the Talking Stick as its symbol. The Talking Stick is a carved wooden staff that resembles a small totem pole. Talking Sticks are a powerful symbol and communication tool used to foster an atmosphere of active listening and respect. Only the bearer of the Talking Stick has the right to speak.

Figure 17 Located in the BC Parliament Buildings in Victoria – the Talking Stick is a symbolic reminder of the need for respectful dialogue in the ongoing process of reconciliation. The Legislative Assembly of British Columbia resides on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen people, today known as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations. The Talking Stick on display in the Legislative Chamber unites First Nations' culture with parliamentary tradition and takes the form of a carved wooden staff that resembles a small totem pole. Talking Sticks are a powerful symbol and communication tool used to foster an atmosphere of active listening and respect. Only the bearer of the Talking Stick has the right to speak.

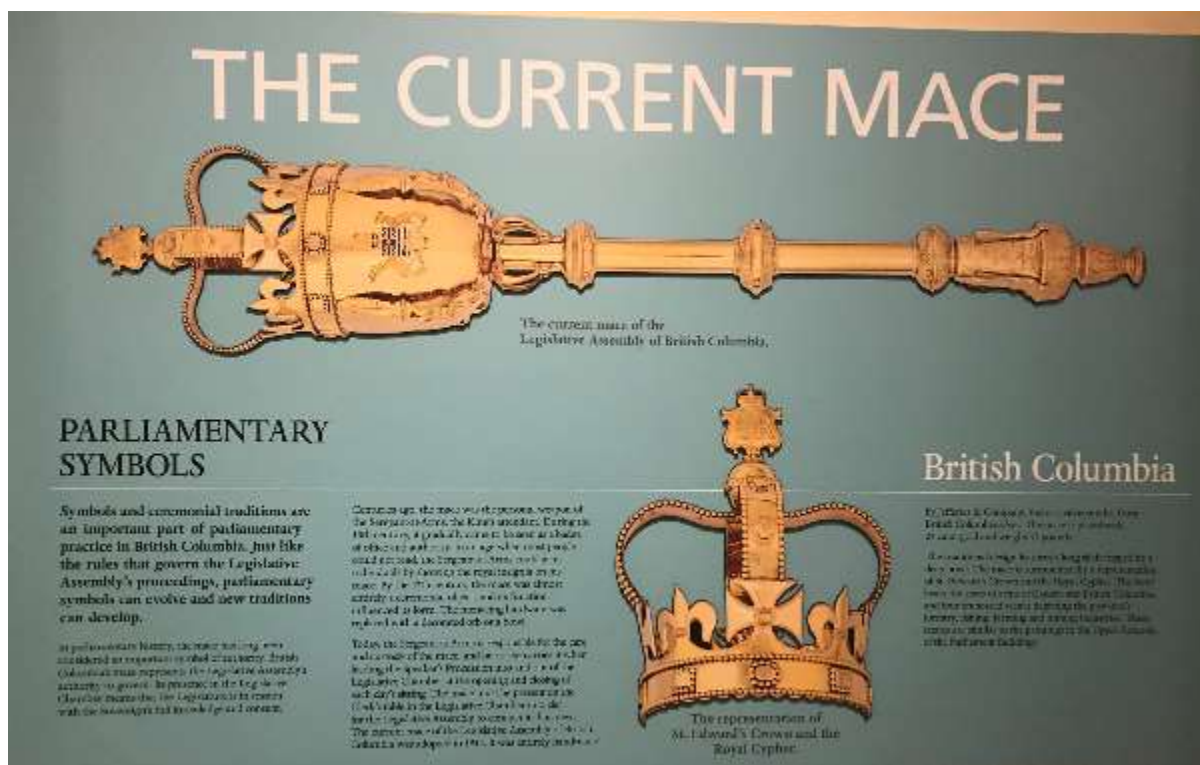


Figure 18 The current mace of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia – in parliamentary history, the mace has long been considered an important symbol of authority. British Columbia's mace represents the Legislative Assembly's authority to govern and its presence in the Legislative Chamber means that the Legislature is in session.

- Naming protocols are a topic of conversation in BC, just as they are in NZ. Below is an excerpt from an email regarding a process for the naming of a new heritage facility

As we inch closer to the construction completion of salishan Place by the River, I wanted to explain the spelling and pronunciation of the name.

There is a long "a" at the beginning and it is pronounced **SAY-lish-in**.

The **lowercase "s"** at the beginning of salishan is intentional and follows the protocol shared by the partner First Nations.

The facility is called **"salishan (pause) Place by the River."** Emphasize **"salishan"** not "salishan Place."

Last tidbit of info: The name was gifted to the Township by ḡwɑ:ḡłəḡ (Kwantlen) First Nation and reflects the facility's physical location within the collective territories of the mainland Coast Salish peoples and its proximity to the Salish Sea. The name acknowledges həḡqəmiḡəḡ and halq'eméylem, two Coast Salish language dialects spoken in the area.

Topics and issues are common and consistent – be it BC or NZ – meaning the sector talks the same language and uses many similar words

- Long term planning/intergenerational vs. election cycles
- Asset failings
- Asset management compromised
- Affordability
- Sustainability
- Levels of service compromised
- Community voice
- Seismic strengthening
- Territorial – boundaries create tensions
- Housing affordability
- Wellbeing – individual and community

*We are in the
business of wellbeing
- Let's act accordingly*

- NIMBYism

Langley Township Council took two parks to make this seating area - they wanted to use nine parking spaces - the locals were up in arms and didnt want it - so they only used two and said it will be just for the summer/ warmer weather - when the time came and they went to take it away - they locals wanted to keep it and now other shop owners want them in front of their stores



- Pot holes

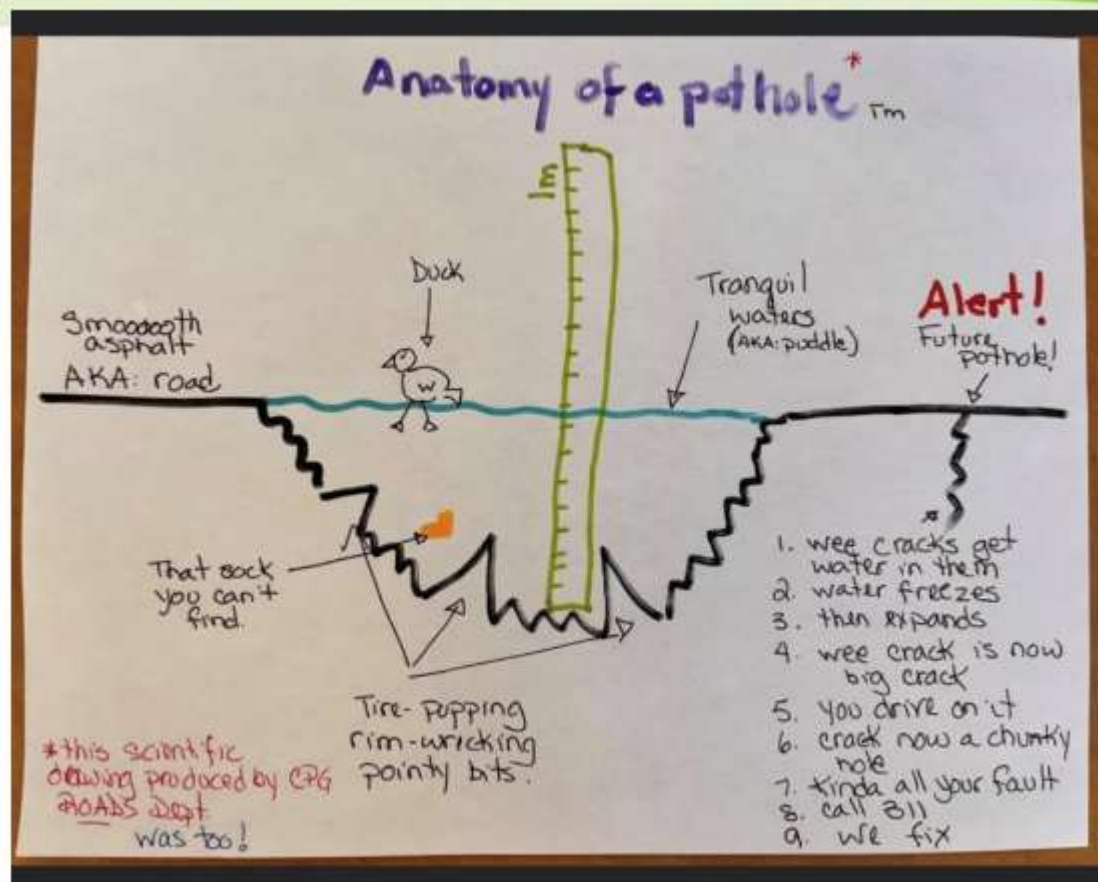


Figure 19 A very clever social media portrayal from the City of Prince George of the global pot hole problem - actually providing some simple language explanation of what, why and how this major bugbear occurs - and that is not intentional or staff incompetency that creates a natural occurrence

Governance challenges experienced across the sector – observations presented at the LGMA conference – Ian McCormack



ADMINISTRATION'S ROLE IN GOOD GOVERNANCE

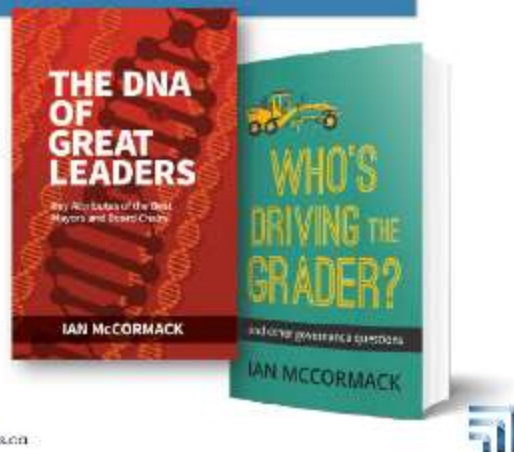
June 15, 2023



ABOUT ME

Ian McCormack, CMC

- Strategic Steps operates in the space between elected and appointed officials
- Called in to assist with topics associated with good governance
 - Orientations
 - Strategic Planning
 - Governance, Organizational and Code of Conduct Reviews
- Author and speaker
 - Governance Voice column in *Municipal Voice (SUMA)*
 - *Who's Driving the Grader* published in 2020
 - *The DNA of Great Leaders* published in 2022



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LEADERSHIP CLARITY

Governance vs. Working Boards

- This is not always understood
- Focus of Council is on governance responsibilities rather than on operational matters.
- Focus of Council is on results (outputs and outcomes)

Aspect	Working	Governance
Primary Focus	Doing: events, fundraising, managing	Guiding: vision, mission, policy
Leadership	Staff led	Council led
Planning	Staff provides strategic direction, board often does much of the work	Council provides strategic direction, Staff provide operational effort
Recruitment	Board actively involved in recruitments	Council is responsible for one employee

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WHY DO COUNCIL MEMBERS SERVE?

Continuum of Service for Elected Officials		
Public Service		Self-Service
	Attribute	
	Motivation	I know best. Others should listen.
	Vision	My way or the highway
	Role of Ego	Primary driver
	Teamwork	Zero-sum
	Consultation	No need to consult
	Results	Delivered because of strong will and focus

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LEADERSHIP BY INFLUENCE

- The best elected officials are:
 - Agents of change
 - Big picture thinkers (strategic)
 - Striving for continuous improvement
 - Catalysts for encouraging responsibility in others
 - Proponents of community well-being
 - Advocates for quality of life
 - Effective planners

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A NEW COUNCIL IS A NEW GROUP



<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/tuckman's-guide-group-development-robert-knight/>

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SUCCESSFUL TERM OF OFFICE

For Council – and for You

- Challenge council to be **visionary**: to reach for a higher plain
- **Policy**, Policy, Policy: for transparency and predictability
- Be a **team player**: know your roles, identify and build on each other's strengths
- **Communicate** internally and externally
- **Build bridges** and partnerships - repair problems
- Remember, the buck is supposed to stop with council

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STEERING VS ROWING

Governing, Managing, Delivering

- Council steers – 'what'
 - Strategic plan
 - Vision, mission, values
 - Governance policy development
- Administration rows – 'how'
 - Implement policy
 - Manage the municipality
 - Delivery programs, services, facilities, amenities

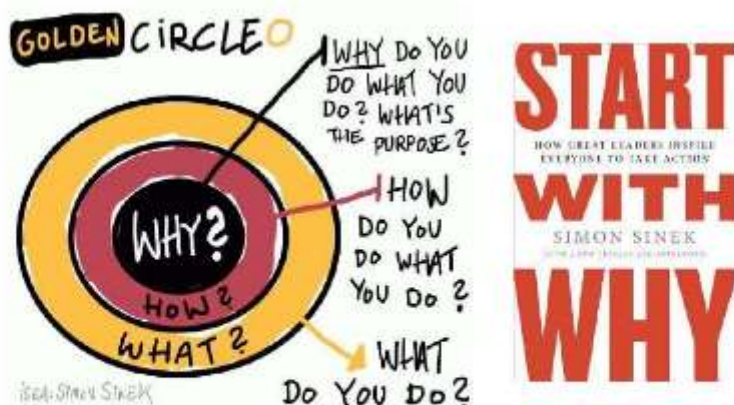


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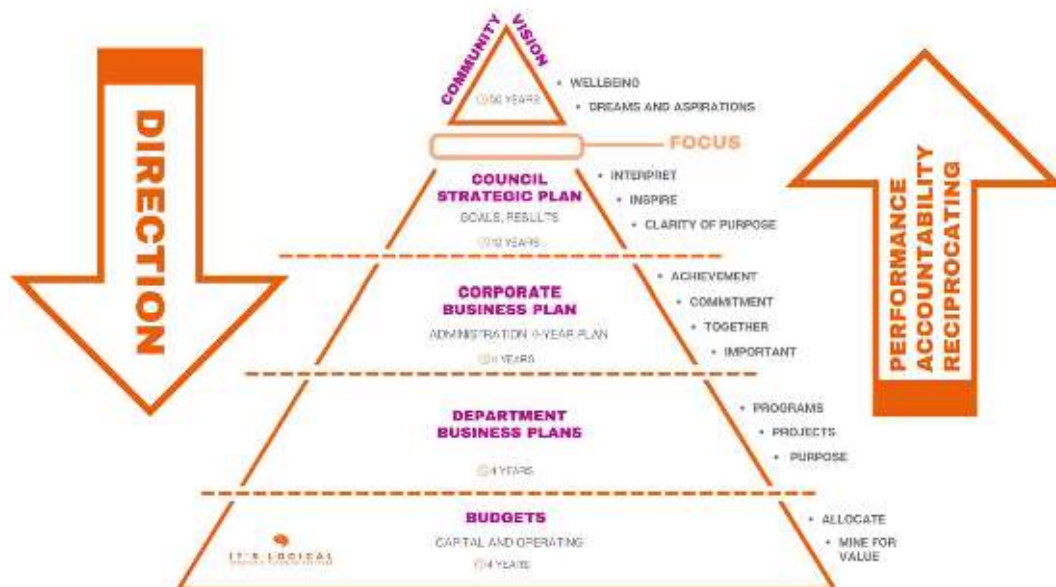
Governance and Management – what's the state of the play – observations presented at the LGMA conference – Kelly Rudyk

- It is recognised and understood that for Council's to be successful elected members must work in partnership with officials and the community
- Officials must share the vision and lead the vision once set – vision to reality takes time (10-20 years in many cases) hence why officials need to support and lead the long term delivery of vision and projects
- Stability within an organisation supports long term action and delivers the best results for the community
- This was observed across numerous capital development projects across many municipalities visited. It was the staff who drove the projects to deliver the vision.
- Successful councils are based on the principles of - partnership, relationships, respect, trust
- Political environment – globally, nationally, locally – experiencing populist politics, single issue campaigns and short termism were common observations shared with me
- Administrators, officials and staff – must navigate the changing landscape while championing the vision and delivering on the operational requirements to do so
- Community – experiencing ever 'demanding' citizens active across many platforms willing to stay informed with limited information that supports a self-fulfilling prophecy



Community Visioning

- This is our BIG WHY
 - Why does the municipality exist?
 - Wellbeing aspirations of community
- Invites bigger conversations than today, taxes and complaints
- Allows space for inspired generational thinking
 - Future wellbeing of your children or next generation
- Relationship building with community
 - Ask what their future wellbeing looks like and how can we play a role



The budget does not make decisions – it is a manifestation of decisions already made.

Greg Yeomans – former
CEO Strathcona County





- To get from no go to flow – internal comms are critical
- Language consistency and giving the same messages to the audience informs the culture of an organisation – and if language is not consistent and regular then a subculture takes over the culture, with its own language prevailing and it then becomes THE language which feeds the culture.
- Anchors exist in any organisation – need to understand the
 - o Early adopters – most influential, champions of an initiative, have the ability to persuade and active across various social groupings
 - o Adopters – usually connected to the EAs and part of majority of influencers
 - o Late adopters – usually a little more sceptical than EAs and As, tend to have less influence and not necessarily innovators, can tend to follow NAs

- Never adopters – highly averse to change and identify all reasons not to do
- Change, wellbeing and values are strong threads that need to be knitted together for organisations and communities to prosper
- In building organisational culture there is a need for a strong connection to diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging





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

Social Media: Go from Toxic & Hostile To Friendly & Useful

Julie Rogers, APR
City of Prince George

Why do we communicate?

Council's values:
Accountability
Transparency
Informed citizens
Community engagement

Why social media?

- Improved communication
- Reach more people
- Enhanced transparency
- Greater accessibility
- Cost effective
- Increased engagement
- Crisis communications



What is public relations?

The strategic management of relationships between an organization and its diverse publics, through the use of communications to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals, and serve the public interest.



Tiers of government

- There are more tiers of government in Canada – with municipal, regional, provincial and federal
- While this creates potentially greater resource quantum and allocation opportunities, and alignment opportunities, it forces the hand for a more focussed collaboration and relationship/partnership approach
- It can also be debated that it creates greater bureaucracy challenges for the community to navigate
- At the end of the day, municipal government in BC delivers similar services and functions that local government provides in NZ. As the He piki tūranga, he piki kotuku | The future for local government final report is considered in the future, there will be opportunities to further consider roles and responsibilities and how the focus and structure of the government landscape evolves in NZ. There are certainly learnings from, and constructive considerations provided by, the tiered government structure in BC. This also aligns with revenue diversification opportunities and how the tax/rate revenue is sourced and then allocated.

It's Local Government Awareness Week! To celebrate, we've created this handy Who does what graphic.

In British Columbia, there are four levels of government that provide services for residents, with the municipal (or local) government providing the services most people use every day.

Is there something on this list that surprised you?

 Who does what?			
MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT	REGIONAL DISTRICT	PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT	FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
CITY OF FORT ST. JOHN	PEACE RIVER (PRRD)	BRITISH COLUMBIA	CANADA
 Water Supply & Waste Water Management  Solid Waste Collection  Road Maintenance & Transit  Recreation Centres  Fire Department  City Hall  Municipal Property Taxes  Parks & Playgrounds  Bylaw & Business Licensing  Municipal RCMP  Community Planning & Development  Construction	 Solid Waste  Regional Parks & Recreation  Wastewater Plants  Regional Hospital  Regional Property Taxes  Rural Area Planning & Development	 Schools  Health  Social Services  Support for Employees & Employers  Justice  Post Secondary  Highways  Provincial Income Tax  Provincial Property Tax	 Income Tax  Employment Insurance  Child Benefits  Student Loans  Military  International Travel  Foreign Affairs  Banking  Criminal Law

Funding challenges and revenue diversification opportunities

- Increased costs (inflationary), levels of service, service delivery challenges are constant topics of conversation in BC
- Supply chain issues also were prevalent and has created a window of looking to promote and support local production and 'buy direct from the producer' campaigns in BC
- Cost of growth (development) is also a topic that is constant and consistent - who pays, when, how and for what?
- When discussing revenue opportunities it seems (from my very limited and subjective analysis as a consumer) in a 4 tier system of government there are endless taxes on taxes on taxes – and what makes this more obvious than in NZ is they are mostly added at the point of sale or at the transaction – so are different to the shelf price
- It seems in NZ we should be careful what we wish for – especially when considering regional disbursement for where revenue is collected – the pie won't necessarily be sliced up differently but will need to grow – which means more revenue has to be derived from the same consumer at the end of the day.
- Examples included
 - o GST - federal
 - o PST - provincial
 - o Resort experience fee – PST
 - o Resort experience fee - GST
 - o Bed tax
 - o Alcohol tax
 - o Urban fee
 - o Occupancy tax
- At the end of the day it is the same consumer who ends up paying for what any form of government delivers – it just seems in BC there is greater user pays or collection of the tax at the point of sale which supports service delivery funding outside of a general rate take approach.

Local governments are dealing with 2023 challenges with a funding model from 1849 that was never designed to handle the demands of 21st century life in Canada. It's time for a new Municipal Growth Framework—a revenue tool that grows with the economy and a redefining of the way we engage across orders of government.



Conclusion - learnings and opportunities

While I was offshore, I found I was never far from home, due to the many similarities of the BC people and the local government systems and processes I was experiencing – so therefore it was timely I was on this manager exchange when the He piki tūranga, he piki kotuku | The future for local government final report was released.

A lot of synergies and similarities that were observed and experienced at the multiple municipalities I visited across BC and at the LGMA conference in Nanaimo with the theme “Taking Stock, (Re)Shaping Together” – are best summed up as per the quotes below – and certainly resonated along the lines of this being what I observed and experienced during the exchange -

“A revitalised local government system centred on a Tiriti-based partnership with Māori, strengthened inclusive democracy and intergenerational wellbeing entrenched as the core purpose of local government”

“Councils already play a vital role in the building of strong, healthy, and prosperous communities. They are place-makers, anchor institutions, and convenors of the system.”

“With increased, sustainable funding from central government and co-investment in wellbeing outcomes, effective stewardship, and a dedicated focus on the central–local government relationship, we know that partnerships, community empowerment and wellbeing will all be improved.”

“More importantly our communities can’t afford for us to wait. The big challenges they face – responding to climate change, inequality and social inclusion – require transformative change to happen now.”

If you hadn’t worked it out already – the above are direct quotes from Taituarā Vice President elect Monique Davidson’s speech at the Future for Local Government final report launch event on 21 June 2023 at the Wharewaka Function Centre in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington.

When this speech was being delivered, I was 11,747km away, experiencing the practical examples of her words, having similar conversations and seeing in action much of what our aspirations must be as professional leaders in the local government sector in NZ – being leaders of Council organisations, leaders of community partnerships and relationships, leaders of people to people relationships amongst and between elected members, officers and communities.

Leadership requirements in the public sector are significant (and not for the faint hearted). Put simply – as public servants we are here to serve the public – and as was mentioned often at the LGMA conference – we must “Dare to Lead” and Brené Brown’s work was quoted often.



And as a local government professional leader – I regularly reference Steve Jobs quote “If you want to make everyone happy, don’t be a leader – sell ice cream”.

Food for thought!!!!

I have had the privilege, to listen, learn, observe, experience and devour the opportunities provided by my local government professional colleagues in BC, as the recipient of this Marsh Overseas Manager Exchange to Canada. An experience of a lifetime and one I will treasure forever.

I am a great believer in what I term ‘the 6 P’s of Local Government’ which I referred to in my address to the LGMA conference delegates –

- That the principles of local government are based around
 - o People
 - o Place
 - o Partnerships
 - o Purpose
 - o Process
 - o Politics
- And I added in a seventh for my BC colleagues “Patience” – as I had waited 4 years since being awarded the manager exchange opportunity in 2019 to finally attend in 2023.

This exchange has only reinforced and reinvigorated my passion and sense of belonging as a contributor to the local government sector in NZ – and now BC, Canada.

Thanks again to Taituarā, LGMA, Township of Langley, Gore DC CEO Steve Parry as my current employer, (and SDC former CEO Steve Ruru who supported my application in 2019), for providing the opportunity to participate in this Marsh Overseas Manager Exchange to Canada – which started in 2019 and was completed in 2023. Good things take time!!!

Final thoughts – opportunities I will follow up

In previous discussions with Taituarā staff, it was indicated there maybe an opportunity (if a presentation slot is available) to present to the Taituarā Conference in November 2023 – based on my recent BC, Canada manager exchange experiences and the theme of **Strategic and sector wide observations - Same Same but Different the world over**

I also have made some significant professional (and personal) connections with colleagues from BC, Canada – especially some board members of LGMA - and I will follow up on conversations started at the conference and still underway with the LGMA President and Board about how these learnings and experiences can be further shared with interested individual municipalities across the six LGMA Chapters across BC, Canada in the future.