

40 Years: A Regional District Retrospective

Summary of Proceedings

Organized by:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT KNOWLEDGE PARTNERSHIP



University
of Victoria | School of
Public Administration

Retrospective co-sponsors:



Ministry of
Community &
Rural Development



40 Years: A Regional District Retrospective
Summary of Proceedings
by the Local Government Knowledge Partnership

2009

Local Government Knowledge Partnership

School of Public Administration, University of Victoria
Ministry of Community and Rural Development

For enquires about the Knowledge Partnership and its work, contact:

School of Public Administration

University of Victoria

PO Box 1700 STN CSC

Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2

Canada

Phone: 250.721.8055

Fax: 250.721.8849

Email: padm@uvic.ca

<http://publicadmin.uvic.ca/cpss/lgkp/index.htm>

40 YEARS: A REGIONAL DISTRICT RETROSPECTIVE

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

In 1965, British Columbia took an innovative approach to the challenge of regionalism. In BC, regional challenges included: the co-ordination of services in urban areas where many adjacent municipalities served an increasingly integrated population; the provision of local services and infrastructure to urban fringe areas or smaller communities in more remote areas of the province; and, in every region, the need to plan for growth and promote sound economic development.

Regional Districts (RDs), 28 of which would blanket much of the province by 1968, brought a system of regional governance to all of BC's diverse regions. Perhaps the two most important - and notably distinctive - elements of BC's 1965 RD legislation was that a) the legislation provided for a regional federation of autonomous partners, representing both municipal and non-municipal territory and b) the legislation allowed each RD to tailor most of its individual functions, both regionally and sub-regionally, to its own evolving needs. RD legislation was designed to promote inter-municipal co-operation, to provide services to non-municipal urban fringe or rural communities, and to stimulate consensus-based planning and co-ordination across regions.

On March 24, 2009, former and current RD administrators gathered with academics, students and Local Government Department (LGD) staff to discuss and celebrate the 40 year history of RDs. The retrospective sought to elucidate some of the *local* stories of the development of RDs, and consider some of the ongoing issues and conditions that they face from an intergenerational perspective.

RETROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Approximately 80 people attended the retrospective, the majority of which were current and former RD Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs).¹ Participants heard

¹ Appendix 2 lists the retired CAOs who participated in the retrospective, as well as all other participants.

two research papers prepared by UVic MPA students (Paul Kadota's paper looked at the historical origins of RDs, and Laura Pierce's compared RDs to other regional governance structures); heard a summary of the day's themes by Professor Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly; heard practitioner recollections of building and administering RDs in the early days; and, during informal discussions throughout the day, provided their own perspectives on their work over the past 40 years. Comments from the first generation of RD administrators were particularly well-received; as they helped others understand the diversity and challenges of early RD experiences.

The retrospective was facilitated by Jim Craven. He began the retrospective by discussing the need for RDs in a province in which less than half-a-percent of the land mass is organized in municipal boundaries. He noted that, while the RD system has faced challenges, it has also been lauded by public officials and academics worldwide. He also spoke about the importance of the Municipal Finance Authority (MFA), BC's collaborative borrowing system for RDs and municipalities, which he was involved with for many years. The MFA was crucial to the early success of RDs, he suggested, because it facilitated local government capital projects in a period when municipalities found it quite difficult to borrow money.

The day's speakers provided local perspectives on the development of the province's RDs. These perspectives, and the common themes and challenges they evoked, are presented here.¹

SESSION 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN CREATING REGIONAL DISTRICTS: TRANSITION FROM THE 1960s

STEWART FLEMING

Stewart Fleming described the beginnings of the Fraser Fort George Regional District (FFGRD), and the skills and support needed to facilitate its effectiveness and growth. The Province incorporated the FFGRD in March 1967, and Fleming was hired as its CAO in the fall of that year. Working from a small office in Prince George, Fleming and his staff worked to craft a new administrative body and serve a large and disparate area.

Fleming stressed the need to meet people and listen to their concerns. His staff and the district's board travelled throughout the region. This travel helped Fleming and the board to understand common issues and develop regional perspectives. It also enabled residents to become more familiar and comfortable with the RD concept.

¹ Appendix 1 provides a short biography of each speaker.

Fleming also discussed the need to be resourceful and inventive as he helped to build FFGRD's administrative structure and service delivery functions. He often called on people with local government-related knowledge to help meet the district's earliest requirements. A school district official in McBride, for example, acted as the electoral administrator in the region's eastern half. Later, Fleming described the district's proactive approach to adding functional responsibilities and providing services. These responsibilities, including building inspection and regional parks, were acquired through collaboration with municipal and provincial officials. As he noted, the biggest challenge was, "the newness of the whole thing. The rules were not restrictive - you just used your imagination".

Fleming and FFGRD sought to demonstrate the value of regional planning and build consensus around common goals. They achieved public support by delivering tangible public goods, and won consensus with the help of an engaged regional board and the cooperative and thoughtful approach taken by Prince George. Fleming also credits the active role played by the LGD—he noted that ministry officials were accessible, and their willingness to travel "gave Victoria a face".

Throughout his presentation, Fleming spoke about the need for flexibility and improvisation. Far from large population centers, and with little infrastructure to begin with, FFGRD nevertheless successfully established itself as an effective service-provider and regional body. And this has been an ongoing process—as Fleming concluded: "The RD system was evolving and I'm hoping that it continues to evolve".

SESSION 2: REGIONAL DISTRICTS AND THE RURAL STORY

LEE-ANN CRANE

Lee-Ann Crane began her presentation by recounting a discussion she had with the Regional District of East Kootenay's (RDEK) first CAO, Frank Bertoia. Bertoia's memories of his days at RDEK were of an innovative period where he had "no defined outline" of what the RD should or should not be doing. The LGD provided support but relied on Bertoia and his staff to determine how the RD could provide local services.

For Bertoia, the two most important tools were "education and communication." His board and staff travelled relentlessly, and he spent time with journalists explaining each resolution passed by the board. They went to communities and "asked people what they wanted for services." When directors were first elected to the board, Bertoia found that educating them on the roles and responsibilities of RDs was an important tool for improving the board's operations.

His efforts at education and communication were important because gaining public support was a challenge. Some living in unincorporated areas were hostile to the district's regulatory powers. Despite this initial hostility, Bertoia's efforts proved

successful; residents began to understand that the RD existed to provide much-needed services and “what was required of them was simply to ask the regional district to look into whatever services were required.”

After recounting Bertoia’s stories, Crane moved onto her own 30-year career with RDEK. Many of the issues Crane encounters are similar to those from Bertoia’s time. Crane still hears the comment that rural residents “moved away from town to get away from regulations,” and finds that new RD board-members often need to learn their roles from staff.

Crane suggested one of the most difficult challenges is providing services in an economical, efficient and equitable manner. Services such as water, fire protection and broadband are expensive for small communities with low property assessment bases. Equitable funding is also a challenge in areas where ranch land neighbours recreational and second-home developments. With highly divergent property values in these areas, the RD continues to seek fairer alternatives than property taxes to fund services.

Land use planning is another complex issue. The region’s inhabitants sometimes struggle to agree on the best uses of land, especially when it comes to the vast areas of Crown land in RDEK. Residents value recreational access to this land but also recognize its environmental sensitivity. This creates the need to balance access with protection. Over time, residents in the region have come to recognize RDEK as a body that adequately represents their interests to the provincial ministries and agencies who make decisions about Crown land.

To conclude, Crane reported that the RDEK has “earned the public’s trust through communication”, and made “great strides at including our residents and non-residents in processes and issues that have a direct impact on their lives and on their ability to make a living. Now more than ever before, people know who we are, what we do, and what we can and can’t do for them.”

MORAY STEWART

Moray Stewart remembered his earliest days as a time when he and his small staff made the most of challenging circumstances. As CAO for the Peace River Liard Regional District (PRLRD)¹, Stewart worked in an area that had economic and cultural links to Alberta, making it somewhat difficult to promulgate BC-oriented initiatives

¹ In 1987, PRLRD was divided into approximately two halves along the 58th parallel. Although Stewart continued to serve as the new Peace River Regional District’s CAO, all of his comments at the retrospective related to the original PRLRD.

such as Pacific Standard Time. He did all of the accounting by hand, while letters and memos were typed with carbon paper copies and land-lines served as the quickest mode of communication in the 200,000 km² region.

Stewart reported he often contacted people in Victoria for advice on legal, regulatory and other matters. The LGD served as a “fountain” of information and knowledge. When he was uncertain about a legal question, he would call Galt Wilson in Victoria. Wilson was, at the time, one of the few lawyers practicing municipal law in the province.

Before PRLRD, the Peace had few administrative bodies outside of municipalities (unlike other parts of the province, there were no improvement districts in the region). And many in the region, particularly its farmers, objected to the RD’s regulatory powers. Municipalities objected to the RD as a third level of government which forced them to borrow through the MFA. This criticism, however, faded with the “spectacular success” of the MFA.

Over time, the RD demonstrated its value by “listening” to the needs of residents. In the sub-regions, where small communities often faced challenges developing recreation centers and arenas, the RD provided revenue by designing service areas that incorporated “far-flung” oil and gas extraction sites. Many other successful service referendums followed. The RD also developed 25 local service areas after receiving community petitions.

Stewart considered this “interactive” method of service provision to be the RD’s biggest success. PRLRD’s vast territory meant the board and staff had to be “virtually nomadic” in order to understand and appreciate local issues. And when the RD travelled and listened - and remembered to seek only to “protect, maintain and enhance” the quality of life in the region - the PRLRD earned the support of those who initially expressed such opposition to it.

SESSION 3: REGIONAL DISTRICTS AND THE URBAN STORY

KEN CAMERON

Ken Cameron characterized regional districts as a “do-it-yourself” system of government whose functions are decided by their members—a situation aided by the fact that the Province plays a facilitating rather than a prescriptive role in respect to local government. These features contribute to RDs’ flexibility and innovation.

Cameron described two contradictory features of BC’s political history that have affected RDs. The first is the fact that the Crown “dominates” governance here. Before RDs, more than 90% of the area of the province had no form of local government, and residents relied on the Province for local services. The Provincial Crown continues to own more than 90% of BC’s land mass. This is different from other

provinces in Canada, where counties, townships and rural municipalities have provided local services to rural areas from the beginning, and most of the land is in private hands. The second feature is that the Province of British Columbia has a tradition of respecting local autonomy, in contrast with other provinces, which often “engineer” the structure and responsibilities of local governments and supervise their activities.

Next Cameron described two historical factors that shaped the GVRD. The first is voluntarism. As early as the 1920s, two or more municipalities would recognize the need to co-operate to provide needed services, decide to set up joint bodies and seek enabling legislation from the Province. In responding to those requests, the Province always made a provision in the legislation that additional municipalities could join on their own request. During the years prior to the creation of RDs, the Province accommodated inter-municipal co-operation by establishing a number of single-purpose joint service boards. The legislation for RDs continued this tradition of autonomous, voluntary co-operation while consolidating and rationalizing administration.

The second historical impetus for the GVRD was the 1948 Fraser River flood and the creation of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (LMRPB) in the late 1940s. According to Cameron, the flood focused attention on regional issues in three ways: it spurred the development of a regional floodplain management plan; encouraged the region’s municipalities to discuss common issues; and demonstrated the effect that geographic and environmental features have on municipalities. Unlike a voluntary joint services board, the LMRPB was imposed by the Province, and it was not until the death and rebirth of regional planning under growth strategies legislation in the early 1990s that planning at the GVRD earned its pedigree of being based on voluntary municipal co-operation. But both the joint service boards and the LMRPB served as important foundations for the establishment of the GVRD in 1965.

Cameron then turned to the “intended and unintended” outcomes of the legislation establishing RDs. As designed, it allowed joint services to be created throughout the province without special enabling legislation. Second, as intended, the legislation allowed RDs to provide local services for unincorporated rural areas. The “unintended” outcome, in Cameron’s view, was that RDs evolved towards being a government body with a number of functions served by the integration of their “political and administrative apparatus.” Cameron viewed this role as vital in a region such as the GVRD, where municipalities exist “cheek-by-jowl” with each other. While it was difficult to establish an “upward delegated” planning process in the 1980s, by the end of the decade municipalities had begun to treat the GVRD as a “federation” where planning and policy-making work by consensus.

Cameron concluded by describing the most successful and challenging issues for the GVRD. Its biggest successes are environmental. The region’s air and the quality of both its drinking and receiving waters have vastly improved. And the stunning regional parks system has fulfilled the LMRPB’s vision of the region as “cities in a sea of green,”

where cities exist alongside forests, farmland and protected areas. As for challenges, Cameron cited the struggle to respond to nagging social problems such as drugs, crime and homelessness. Cameron also thought the GVRD has difficulties establishing electoral legitimacy and struggles to maintain constructive internal and external relationships, despite achieving consensus over specific issues like planning.

KELLY DANIELS

Kelly Daniels conveyed his experiences leading the Capital Regional District (CRD), the province's second-most populous RD. Daniels has found that RDs provide an effective framework for members to tailor services to local needs. He noted that RDs provide more than 200 different services, most on a voluntary basis (meaning each member decides whether or not to participate).

RDs have been good at responding to local needs and providing quality service. In the CRD, annual surveys consistently reveal high levels of satisfaction with the RD's services. Beyond service delivery, Daniels has seen the CRD's members come together to develop consensus on other regional issues.

Despite the positive contributions of RDs, Daniels has dealt with a number of challenges. While the public is satisfied with the CRD's services, surveys also indicate dissatisfaction with the district as a political entity. On occasion, municipal politicians also voice their opposition to the district and its operation. At times, municipalities resist co-operating over questions of money (when a municipality feels they are paying more into the service than what they are receiving) or power (when the municipality wishes to have control over a service). For Daniels, such opposition has meant there are service inefficiencies that make amalgamations a fiscally appealing alternative to inter-municipal co-operation. Furthermore, disagreements can spill over into questions of regional planning, or vision. Daniels identified a particularly difficult disagreement between rural and urban municipalities in the CRD over the issue of "urban sprawl," or growth on the fringe of urban areas.

Considering his own role, Daniels has found he is most effective when he can help member municipalities find common ground and when he avoids the "small wars" that sometimes occur between municipalities. He reiterated that a major challenge is the "disconnect" in public opinion between the CRD's services and the RD itself. The CRD has spent significant resources on public awareness campaigns, and Daniels suggested that these campaigns will need to be expanded if the CRD is to become a more accepted and effective system of local government.

SESSION 4: LEARNING TO WORK TOGETHER: HOW REGIONAL DISTRICTS FORGED RELATIONSHIPS

GREG TOMA

Greg Toma is CAO of Thompson-Nicola Regional District (TNRD). Prior to his current position, he worked as a planner for the City of Kamloops and TNRD. Toma began by discussing how these experiences as an RD “insider and outsider” helped him to build relationships between the TNRD and governmental bodies. One of his early goals as CAO was to improve the “indifferent” relationships that existed between regional district employees and those working in the region’s 10 municipalities.

Toma then recounted two processes that helped foster relationships. One of his first tasks was to develop a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). Having worked for the City of Kamloops, Toma understood the city’s interests in the process, but he did not have a clear sense of what other municipalities might want for the region’s future. At first, municipal administrators were barely involved in the process, so Toma organized a meeting with municipal CAOs. As a result of this meeting, municipal partners realized they could achieve their goals and became participants in the RGS process. This meeting is now an annual event and held in a different location each time. The straightforward exercise of asking partners about their ideas and goals for the region, and then working co-operatively to achieve them, has proven to be an important tool for fostering successful working relationships.

Another valuable relationship-building process was the RD’s emergency response to wildfires that broke out in the summer of 2003. TNRD had taken on emergency management and planning in 2001, and worked during the next two years to plan and train staff for emergencies. When the fires began, they were well-prepared to help facilitate evacuations, handle communications with the public, and develop valuable geographic information. Other government bodies in the region (including the cities of Merritt and Kamloops, and provincial agencies) had a stake in coordinating the response to the fire—but rather than debate jurisdictional responsibility, the officials from the various agencies quickly merged their activities. Toma attributed this co-operation to the relationships the TNRD had established with its municipal and provincial counterparts.

Toma concluded with three “key lessons” of relationship-building in the TNRD. First, when RDs are recognized as credible service-providers it bolsters relationships with municipal partners. Secondly, TNRD’s geographical size and shape - it is physically large with one big regional centre and, separated by long distances, almost 20 smaller municipalities - has helped the board to achieve balance by making it very difficult for decisive voting blocs to emerge. It has also helped TNRD to avoid some of the urban/rural challenges that other RDs have faced. Thirdly, Toma suggested that relationship-building is an ongoing and time-consuming process—as the best

relationships come from working co-operatively over time, rather than waiting for a specific crisis to force communities to work together.

WAYNE D'EASUM

Wayne D'Easum began by recounting early memories of relationship-building. In the lead-up to the establishment of the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), the LGD organized meetings for municipal staff to introduce them to the new form of government. As well as being educational, these meetings helped to connect the municipal employees to the soon-to-be CVRD. And because there was “no one else around,” municipal workers like D'Easum were recruited to help run RDs around the province. Those preparatory meetings also helped future CVRD staff to understand the concerns and issues of their municipal counterparts, and vice-versa. D'Easum also noted the importance of talking to other RD CAOs. Early on, CAOs met annually to discuss common challenges and identify solutions. Although he tried unsuccessfully to resurrect these meetings, D'Easum stressed that ongoing communication between all local government employees in the province remains important to developing shared understandings of regional issues.

D'Easum next discussed some attributes of political and administrative leadership that he thought to be particularly effective. One chairperson from the former Comox-Strathcona Regional District phoned each director before every meeting to discuss RD issues. This regular communication contributed to the success of Comox-Strathcona during his twelve years in that position. Another successful chairperson from Kelowna usually preferred to build consensus “around the board table” than to support what he thought was the “right” option. Yet another chair showed D'Easum the importance of “bringing people into the tent.” When one director was particularly vociferous in his opposition to the RD's planning committee, the chair asked this director to head the committee. Within a year, the director had become a vocal proponent of planning for the region. RDs accomplished the most, D'Easum suggested, when their chairs and board-members sought to understand the interests and issues of their counterparts around the table.

D'Easum also described some effective skills for CAOs and RD staff. They are most effective when they are humble, well-organized, and follow the opinion of the board. Their focus should be on facilitating co-operation between municipalities, and educating representatives on their roles in order to “get the most out of them” in the short amount of time that many representatives serve on the board.

Finally, D'Easum talked about some of the challenges RDs have faced in developing relationships. He suggested that the system's roots in service-delivery, and the numerous commissions and reports that have considered the viability of regional districts, have meant that RDs often face challenges in effectively engaging with other governmental bodies. He noted that RDs have, of necessity, become “more political” over forty years, but he was unsure whether this had been positive development, and

wondered how RDs can achieve a proper balance between political influence and administrative efficiency in the future.

GARY PAGET

Gary Paget began by recounting his first experiences with RDs. While working on the development of Tumbler Ridge, Paget recalled how the town's first political leader, Pat Walsh, insisted on knitting the town into the regional fabric. Later, Paget came to realize the importance of building up RDs as municipalities were restructured in the 1970s and 1980s.

Paget then discussed the Province's approach to implementing and building the RD system. Since RDs began, the LGD has tried to find the right balance between "hard" and "soft" power. In 1965, the Province recognized that it needed new tools for delivering services in unincorporated areas, and that urban regions required better methods for inter-municipal co-operation. Regional districts were intended to accomplish both, but in order to do so the Province needed to exercise its "hard power" option by legislating the creation of RDs. But simply implementing legislative changes did not accomplish the Province's goals. The LGD found that local officials and administrators more readily accepted changes when they were treated as collaborative partners. This "soft" use of power included a variety of initiatives, such as helping local administrators design unique services, "incentivizing" good RD performance, and working closely with RDs to introduce new legislation. Over time, the use of "hard" power has declined while the Province's subtle influences have increased.

Paget next outlined some of the principles that have guided the LGD and its work. He noted that the 1934 legislation establishing the LGD required the department to be the "medium of communication" between the Province and municipalities. This has meant, on the one hand, the LGD listens to the concerns of the local governments, and represents those issues at the provincial level. On the other hand, the LGD conveys provincial interests to local governments. This principle is still valid, especially for RDs, because they are a "primary instrument for the province to achieve its objectives", including climate change initiatives and the improvement of relationships with First Nations. At the same time, the department has been guided by a "deep respect" for the concept of RDs as a federation of autonomous local governments. This means the Province rarely intervenes in the internal affairs of RDs. When provincial interests have been at stake in an RD issue, the LGD has most often sought to intervene in principled and subtle ways.

Paget concluded with some advice for those involved in administering RDs in the present and future. He again stressed the importance of the federated nature of RDs. Unlike municipalities, where administrators have a fairly direct connection with their politicians, RDs are places where autonomous municipalities and electoral areas come together as equal partners to work out common challenges. This means that

administrative leadership in an RD is as much about “inter-municipal diplomacy,” or negotiating and brokering co-operation between partners, as it is about managing people and resources. Paget acknowledged that current administrative training emphasizes management over relationship-building, but suggested that training programs are moving towards this diplomatic style of leadership.

SESSION 5: RDs TODAY – HOW HAVE THINGS CHANGED

FRED BANHAM

Fred Banham first discussed the “diversity” of needs, facilities and services that people have traditionally expected from RDs. What has changed in RD service delivery is the “scale and size” of RD projects. In the past, RDs built small facilities such as a “ball park behind the school.” Nowadays, RDs are involved in funding and building large “event centers” that hold thousands of spectators and attract people from a wide area.

The financial issues involved in the development of RDs’ services and activities have also evolved. In rural RDs, such as Peace River Regional District, it has been difficult to establish equitable taxation policies for populations with diverse settlement patterns. Residents living in municipalities have different service needs than the rural resident who lives “at the end of the road,” and is more self-sufficient. While there have been financial challenges, Banham also noted that the province’s machinery for local government borrowing has been of tremendous benefit. The cohesion and mutual support of the 27 RDs through the MFA has meant that more projects have been taken on, are completed more quickly, and at a lower cost.

Banham also discussed how the flexibility of RDs has made each one a unique, locally-responsive service provider. Regional districts provide an array of diverse services, designed according to local needs and conditions. Their ability to adapt to the needs of various communities - big or small, municipal or unincorporated - has made RDs the principle administrative body for dealing with local and regional issues in many areas of BC.

RDs have also evolved in response to social and economic changes of the past 40 years. Advances in transportation have increased people’s mobility and reshaped regions. “Big events” in large centers are now more attractive to people than those held in the small community halls of villages and towns. People’s expectations for rapid communications have also increased, and this has created demands to improve the technological infrastructure in BC’s rural communities. The world economy has also influenced RDs. The fortunes of Tumbler Ridge, for example, go up and down as the price of coal fluctuates on the world market. RDs have needed to help communities cope with these sorts of global fluctuations. Banham concluded by urging

CAOs to educate their political leaders about the accomplishments of RDs, and noted that the creativity of the past will be a necessary component of RDs' future successes.

KEY THEMES, ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Over the course of the day, it became clear that each RD has its own story. Each evolved and developed to meet the needs of its communities and of the region as a whole. Despite each RD's unique story, however, a number of common themes, accomplishments and challenges became clear.

THEMES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Speakers from the first generation of RD CAOs (including Fleming, Stewart and D'Easum) recounted similar experiences of having to build their RDs, from the ground up, under challenging circumstances. They had small budgets, faced public disinterest or opposition, and at best a sketchy outline of what RDs were supposed to do. Despite difficulties, these pioneers remember the early period as a fertile environment for planting the seeds of regional service delivery and inter-municipal co-operation. Fleming described his first years as a time when "anything was possible," as long as imagination and resourcefulness were brought to the task of developing services. The Province, through the LGD, was supportive of this early inventiveness. D'Easum recalled a senior LGD staff-member writing an amendment to his RD's letters patent while he waited in the staff-member's office.

Another common theme was the importance of communication in building successful RDs. Effective RD leaders: listen closely to the diverse public and political voices in their RDs; provide education for board members and the public about what RDs can do; and actively respond to public demand by fostering service and planning relationships among the RD's partners. In the large rural RDs, in an era before electronic communications technology, communicating usually meant substantial amounts of travel time. Communication has also been vital for next-generation RD administrators. Greg Toma noted how important it was for him to facilitate conversations between municipal partners as his RD developed its regional growth strategy. And from the ministry's perspective, Gary Paget highlighted the importance of effective provincial-local government interactions.

All speakers agreed RDs provide an effective structure for delivering made-in-the region rural, inter-municipal and regional services. Revealing unmatched capacity to respond to scale, BC's RDs are able to deliver some of the province's largest and most complex regional drinking water systems while still being effective in the provision of small ball-parks in remote communities. A critical factor in this successful versatility is the voluntary nature of most services. For Ken Cameron, this spirit of "do-it-yourself" regional governance has deep roots in BC's political culture of respect

for local autonomy, which has allowed RDs to succeed while forms of regional governance elsewhere have struggled to maintain stability.

CHALLENGES

While RDs have succeeded at delivering effective services, a number of speakers discussed the challenge of developing a regional voice and vision. As a federation of autonomous partners, RDs have not been able to *direct* municipal co-operation. Kelly Daniels, for example, noted that this has sometimes meant municipalities continue to deliver services inefficiently, while others discussed land use disagreements that defy simple regional planning and zoning solutions.

Although RDs have found it difficult to *direct* solutions to regional problems, a subtler form of leadership has emerged. Cameron described the tangible, regional successes that the GVRD has accomplished when it emphasized consensus-building over the weighted, majority rule voting system. And Lee-Ann Crane noted that because the EKRD has become such an effective voice in provincial arenas, residents in EKRD have come to recognize the RD as the level of government most able to represent their interests and adapt to their needs.

LOOKING FORWARD

RDs face a number of challenges today. Changing demographic, economic and social patterns mean regional governance will need to adapt if it is continue to serve BC's diverse regions and communities. But if there is one overriding theme that emerged from the retrospective, it is that RDs themselves have been remarkably adaptive over forty years—a fact recognized by academics and practitioners in many corners of the world. The theme of adaptability was strongly reinforced by the personal, on-the-ground stories heard during the symposium of resourcefulness and relationship-building, of winning over a wary public by facilitating much needed services, and of steps taken toward regional leadership and vision. Much is owed to the leaders and professionals who took office in the 1960s with little but an idea—and proceeded to build the regional district system that today, in countless different ways, serves British Columbians everywhere.

Throughout the world, there are difficult barriers to joined-up governance, or regional co-ordination and cooperation between various orders of government. In BC, these barriers will not be overcome by simply celebrating the history of BC's unique form of regional government. But as Fred Banham concluded, the story of RDs needs to serve as an instructional tool for politicians, administrators and the general public who are seeking a better way forward. By sharing the experiences of the people who built BC's regional system from the ground up, and by understanding the structural flexibility and adaptive capacity of that system, those who are now involved in directing the affairs of RDs will be more equipped to help the system meet the challenges that lie ahead.

APPENDIX 1: SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Jim Craven served for 17 years as Executive Director of the Municipal Finance Authority. He also helped to create the First Nations Finance Authority and served as a mentor for the MATI program. In 1999, he was awarded the Lieutenant-Governor's award for excellence in public service.

Stewart Fleming served as the first CAO of the Regional District of Fraser Fort George between 1967 and 1971, having previously worked for the cities of Prince Rupert and Dawson Creek. After leaving RDEK, he was CAO of Delta, Oak Bay and Kelowna. In between his time as a CAO, Fleming also served as Assistant Deputy Minister in Alberta's Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

Lee-Ann Crane has worked for the Regional District of East Kootenay for more than 30 years. While working for RDEK, she has worked as a receptionist, secretary, accounting clerk, Deputy Treasurer and Deputy Administrator. She has been the CAO since 1998. As part of her presentation, Lee-Ann recounted a recent discussion she had with Frank Bertoia, RDEK's first CAO.

Moray Stewart worked for the Peace River Regional District for 32 years. For 28 years, he was the RD's CAO. Stewart is a Distinguished Member of the LGMA and, in 1999 Stewart received the association's Professional Award for Innovative Management. He continues to consult with local governments on a restricted basis.

Ken Cameron has 26 years of experience in senior planning and management positions in local government in the Greater Vancouver area, most recently as Manager of Policy and Planning with the Greater Vancouver Regional District. Since 2004, he has been CEO of the Homeowner Protection Office, a provincial crown corporation that licenses residential builders, oversees the operation of the privately-provided home warranty insurance system and provides financial assistance to owners subject to premature building envelope failure.

Kelly Daniels began his career in local government working for the City of St. Albert, Alberta, shortly after graduating from university with a BA in Recreation Administration. He worked in Fort Saskatchewan and Grande Prairie where he rose to City Manager before moving to Vancouver and the Regional District of Nanaimo where he was the CAO for 12 years. In 2005, Kelly was appointed CAO of the Capital Regional District.

Greg Toma has been the Chief Administrative Officer for the Thompson-Nicola Regional District for the past three years. Previously, he was the Director of Development Services with the TNRD from 1999 to 2006. He first came to the regional district from the City of Kamloops, after serving 10 years as Kamloops' Community Planning Manager and another 12 years in other planning positions.

Wayne D'Easum has had a long and diverse career in local government spanning over 42 years. Since his career commenced in 1966, Wayne has worked as: Deputy Assessor, Assistant Building Inspector, City Clerk, Treasurer and Administrator. Of the 42 plus years, 6 of those have been in a municipality while the remainder was for various RDs. He has also served in a number of positions with the LGMA.

Gary Paget is currently Senior Executive Director, Local Government Programs, Ministry of Community and Rural Development. In his 32 years in the Ministry, he has been involved with all key program areas. His major contributions to the development of the local government system in British Columbia include: regional district legislation, growth management legislation, the *Local Government Act* and *Community Charter*.

Fred Banham is the CAO for the Peace River Regional District and was the CAO for the District of Tumbler Ridge from 1996-2003. Prior to that, Fred worked in a number of Alberta rural and urban local governments.

APPENDIX 2: RETROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

REGIONAL DISTRICT 'BUILDERS' (RETIRED RD CAOS)

Name	Organization Retired From
Al Harrison	Central Okanagan Regional District
Ben Marr	Greater Vancouver Regional District
Jim Craven	Municipal Finance Authority
Larry Robinson	Kootenay Boundary Regional District
Moray Stewart	Peace River Regional District
Peter Mackiewich	North Okanagan Regional District
Stewart Fleming	Fraser Fort George Regional District
Wayne D'Easum	Central Okanagan Regional District

OTHER RETROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Name	Current Organization	Position
Current Practitioners		
Al Huddleston	Regional District of Mount Waddington	Elected Official
Bill Newell	Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen	CAO
Bob Long	District of Tofino	CAO
Bob Marcellin	Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine	CAO
Brian Reardon	Strathcona Regional District	CAO
Charles Hamilton	Columbia Shuswap Regional District	CAO
Dave Morris	District of Coldstream	CAO
Debra Oakman	Comox Valley Regional District	CAO
Fred Banham	Peace River Regional District	CAO
Gail Chapman	Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako	CAO
Garry Nohr	Sunshine Coast Regional District	Electoral Area Director
Gerald Kingston	Fraser Valley Regional District	CAO
Greg Betts	North Okanagan Regional District	CAO
Greg Fletcher	Regional District of Mount Waddington	CAO
Greg Toma	Thompson-Nicola Regional District	CAO
Janis Bell	Cariboo Regional District	CAO
Jay Simons	Columbia-Shuswap Regional District	Planning Director
Jim Gustafson	Regional District of Central Kootenay	CAO
Jim Martin	Regional District of Fraser Fort George	CAO
John France	Sunshine Coast Regional District	CAO
John Maclean	Regional District of Kootenay Boundary	CAO
Joy Mackay	Central Coast Regional District	CAO
Kelly Daniels	Capital Regional District	CAO
Ken Cameron	Homeowner Protection Office	CEO
Lee-Ann Crane	Regional District of East Kootenay	CAO
Robert Sabine	Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District	CAO

Name	Current Organization	Position
Shannon Anderson	Peace River Regional District	Deputy CAO
Warren Jones	Cowichan Valley Regional District	CAO
Academics and Students		
Alison McNeil	Capilano University	Director
Bruce Dayman	University of Victoria	Student
Emma Sharkey	University of Victoria	Student
Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly	University of Victoria	Professor
Jim McDavid	University of Victoria	Professor
Mahinder Purewal	University of Victoria	Student
Maurice Rachwalski	University of Victoria	Student
Paul Thorkelsson	University of Victoria	Student
Sean O'Melinn	University of Victoria	Student
Silas White	University of Victoria	Student
Tamar Checkley	University of Victoria	Student
Provincial Employees and Retirees		
Brad Cox	Ministry of Community and Rural Development (MCRD)	Senior Policy Analyst
Brian Walisser	MCRD	Strategic Policy Advisor
Carey Doberstein	MCRD	Policy Analyst
Cathy Watson	MCRD	Director
Derek Trimmer	MCRD	Director
Drew MacTaggart	Retired from Local Government Department	Former Director
Gary Paget	MCRD	Senior Executive Director
Jill Symonds	MCRD	Senior Policy Analyst
Kate Berniaz	MCRD	Policy Analyst
Lois-Leah Goodwin	MCRD	Director
Lydia Zucconi	MCRD	Policy Analyst
Marijke Edmonson	MCRD	A/Director
Michelle Dann	MCRD	Policy Project Manager
Narissa Chadwick	MCRD	Senior Planner
Nathan Elliot	MCRD	Research & Information Asst
Rena Bindra	MCRD	Senior Policy Analyst
Ross Coupé	MCRD	Co-op Policy Analyst
Stephen Russo	MCRD	Research & Information Asst
Consultants and Participants from Other Organizations		
Doug Allan	Consultant	Consultant to MCRD
Elizabeth Brennan	Local Government Management Association	Program Coordinator
Ken Vance	Union of British Columbia Municipalities	Senior Policy Advisor
Peter Scales	Consultant	Consulting Historian to MCD
Tom MacDonald	Local Government Management Association	Executive Director