



the partnership
for water sustainability in bc

Waterbucket eNews on February 9, 2021
<https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

Living Water Smart in British Columbia: Better Communities. Better Lives.

We are one of the 5 area associations of the UNION OF BC MUNICIPALITIES (UBCM) representing 33 local governments (from Pemberton to Hope) and 3 regional districts.

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Note to Reader:

Waterbucket eNews¹ celebrates the leadership of individuals and organizations who are guided by the vision for [Living Water Smart in British Columbia](#)². The edition published on February 9 2021 shone the spotlight on the Lower Mainland Local Government Association (LGA) in the southwest corner of British Columbia.

Laura Dupont, Lower Mainland LGA President, provided a window into the thinking that motivates her Board to strive for “Better Communities, Better Lives”.

The umbrella for Partnership initiatives and programs is the [Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia](#)³. In turn, the Action Plan is nested within [Living Water Smart, British Columbia's Water Plan](#).



¹ <https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

² https://waterbucket.ca/wcp/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/11/livingwatersmart_book.pdf

³ <https://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/sites/wbccfa/documents/media/81.pdf>

Editor's Perspective

I met Councillor Laura Dupont when she attended the [Parksville 2019 Symposium on Water Stewardship in a Changing Climate](#). A guiding theme for the symposia series is the power of local government collaboration with the stewardship sector, in particular streamkeeper groups.

Laura Dupont bridges the two worlds: she is a streamkeeper who was elected to municipal council. Now, she heads the local government group that represents about 60% of British Columbia's 5.1 million population. It is quite the journey!

For collaboration to be effective, it makes such a difference when community expectations align with the job realities of local government staff and the timeline realities for local government decision processes.

Transformational outcomes are possible once both sectors realize how supporting each other is a foundation piece for moving from awareness to action on the ground, and within a reasonable timeframe – for example, stewardship groups can help staff by being the ones to bring forward ideas and approaches that staff would like to place before elected representatives, but otherwise could not.

In sharing the story of her journey, Laura Dupont highlights that the Board of the Lower Mainland LGA views **“nature as an asset as opposed to a liability”**. This realization reflects a growing understanding within local government that natural and constructed assets are both systems, and both require similar maintenance and management (M&M) strategies within a local government's Asset Management Plan.

Otherwise, the interaction of drainage infrastructure with a stream system typically results in an “unfunded infrastructure liability”. And this grows over time.



*Kim A. Stephens, MEng, PEng,
Executive Director*

*Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC
June 2021*



Better Communities, Better Lives

Water Stewardship in a Changing Climate

The over-arching message for the Vancouver Island symposia series is applicable to any region. Simply put, it is to focus on improving where people live through implementation of good strategies. These will provide communities with a path to success.

There are two guiding principles. First, reconnect hydrology and ecology – because what happens on the landscape matters to streams! Second, shrink our destructive footprint while growing the restorative footprint – because sustainable is attainable.

The Symposia Series is a building blocks process. Each event builds on the last and points the way to the next. Before COVID, the symposium format provided a neutral forum for local elected representatives, local government staff, stewardship groups and others to ‘convene for action’ to improve where people live.

Because of COVID, the 2020 symposium was reconfigured as the Watershed Moments video trilogy. The series is a legacy educational resource. Delivered via YouTube, and later re-broadcast on Shaw Cable, each video is a documentary that combines elements of a TED Talk.

Improve Where We Live – Good Strategies are Our Path to Success:

- Reconnect hydrology and ecology – what happens on the land in creeksheds matters to streams!
- Decrease our destructive footprint while at the same time increasing our restorative footprint – sustainable is attainable!



A Call to Action: “The Vancouver Island symposium in 2019 on water stewardship was so inspiring and informative. It was a wonderful experience. I left Parksville feeling hopeful,” stated Laura Dupont, a Councillor with the City of Port Coquitlam, and President of the [Lower Mainland Local Government Association](#) (LGA),

“How has the water symposium series inspired me? In SO many ways. There is so much good work being done to support and restore ecosystem services on the island, I am hopeful to see some of that happen here, in a much more urbanized Metro Vancouver.”

“Rivers and streams truly are the lifeblood of communities. In this context, an example of Lower Mainland LGA work is Resolution ER8 in 2018 (Upgrade Flood Infrastructure to consider fish and access to fish habitat). It was supported by our membership, then UBCM, and finally the province!! This was my proudest moment since getting elected.”

“If we are going to tackle the huge challenge that is the climate emergency, then we are absolutely going to need to work with nature and put aside the idea that we can dominate it.”

Laura Dupont
President, Lower Mainland
Local Government Association



Journey from Streamkeeper to Elected Representative

“Coffee on a train brought me from Alberta to BC in 1996. Two things that immediately caught my interest were the incredible colours in the spring and wild salmon spawning in local creeks in the fall,” recalled Laura Dupont.

“Noisy, smelly, splashing about, silver and red, they taught me to take notice. Salmon pulled me into appreciating nature on a whole other level. I could not learn enough about them. They are the most fascinating and resilient creatures. One cannot underestimate their importance to Indigenous communities and coastal ecosystems.”

Supernatural BC: “Next step was to join a watershed group and become a streamkeeper, and then a river protector. Salmon led me to learn more about, and fall in love with, the flora and fauna of the BC Coast. I will always be eternally grateful to live here.”

“Salmon brought me a strong sense of community, something I had never really felt before. That came as an unexpected surprise.”

“I felt protective of what we share, and that the next generation deserves it as much as we do. I got political and ran for city council because every year I could see it eroding away a little bit more and it felt like a dangerous, slippery slope.”

Shared Values, Common Purpose: “I talked to everyone who would speak with me and found out that a lot of people shared those values. It was rare to come across someone who didn’t care about the parks and trails and nature we are so fortunate to have right outside our door.”

“I started feeling more concerned about the changes I saw, things that felt like red flags to me. The declining health and loss of too many trees, the impacts of urbanization on local creeks and rivers, declining numbers of salmon returning to spawn, rivers being put in pipes for private energy. There is such a sense of urgency that comes with these things and I felt like I needed to do more.”

“The Lower Mainland Local Government Association offered me more.”

“Covering the region from Pemberton to Hope, the Lower Mainland Local Government Association is a diverse membership with diverse needs. It advocates for members on various Provincial and Federal issues and works to inform and advance local government interests. The group also holds a seat on the UBCM executive and some of the committees within,” explained Laura Dupont.

“Priorities of the current board are to advance resolutions related to climate resiliency, food security and inequality. The group is open minded and exceedingly progressive on these important issues.”

Reconnect People, Land and Water to Adapt to a Changing Climate

“There is also a general understanding of the value of natural assets and green infrastructure within this group. Nature is viewed as an asset as opposed to a liability. It is so encouraging to know that current municipal accounting practices are giving serious consideration to quantifying the significant services they provide to our communities.”

“Thank you to Emmanuel Machado, Chief Administrative and Resiliency Officer for the Town of Gibsons for his impressive leadership on this issue.”

“Resolutions are formed by the board and the membership and are then pushed forward to UBCM. If supported by that membership, they move onto the Province who prioritizes and funds the ones they choose. Its immensely rewarding work and a great opportunity to understand the process of shaping comprehensive policy.

Better Communities, Better Lives: “If we are going to tackle the huge challenge that is the climate emergency, then we are absolutely going to need to work with nature and put aside the idea that we can dominate it.”

“The Lower Mainland Local Government Association does exactly that while working towards a goal of ‘better communities, better lives’ through collaboration and a shared vision of a truly sustainable future,” concluded Laura Dupont.

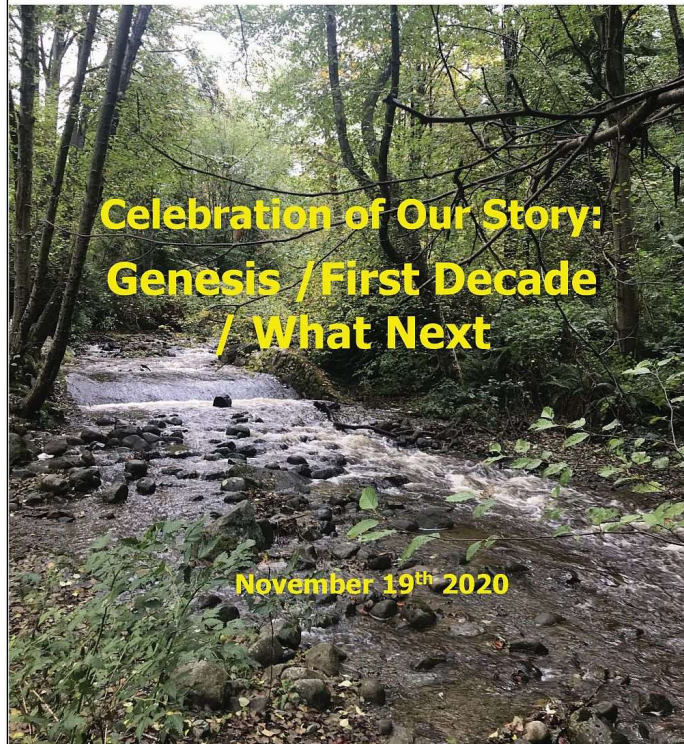
Lower Mainland Local Government Association

The LGA represents 33 municipalities from Hope to Pemberton plus three regional districts – Fraser Valley, Metro Vancouver and Squamish Lilloet – in the southwest corner of British Columbia.

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Celebration of Our Story: Genesis / First Decade / What Next

November 19th 2020

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT:

<https://waterbucket.ca/about-us/>

About the Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia

Incorporation of the Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia as a not-for-profit society on November 19, 2010 was a milestone moment. Incorporation signified a bold leap forward.

Over two decades, the Partnership had evolved from a technical committee in the 1990s, to a “water roundtable” in the first decade of the 2000s, and then to a legal entity. The Partnership has its roots in government – local, provincial, federal.

The Partnership has a primary goal, to **build bridges of understanding** and pass the baton from the past to the present and future. To achieve the goal, the Partnership is growing a network in the local government setting. This network embraces collaborative leadership and **inter-generational collaboration**.

The Partnership believes that when each generation is receptive to accepting the inter-generational baton and embracing the wisdom that goes with it, the decisions of successive generations will benefit from and build upon the experience of those who went before them.



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