



**the partnership
for water sustainability in bc**

Waterbucket eNews on January 28, 2025
<https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

Living Water Smart in British Columbia:

**Remembering Barry Janyk,
political champion for
Smart Development**

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 January 28, 2025 celebrated the contributions of the late Barry Janyk (1952-2024), former 4-term mayor of the Town of Gibsons. He was outspoken, funny and fearless in following his passions and advocating for the causes he believed in. One of those causes was “Smart Development”. Because he believed in doing the right thing, he played a leadership role in setting the green infrastructure movement in motion a generation ago. He was an influencer in a profound and public way.

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**.



Cover Image Credit: Barry Janyk's family

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>

One-Minute Takeaway

REMEMBERING BARRY JANYK (1952-2024), former 4-term mayor of Gibsons

“Barry Janyk could take up a lot of space in a room. He was a really fierce advocate for his town. I don't know many mayors that care so visibly about their town,” stated Bruce Milne, former mayor of Sechelt



“Technical people have to demonstrate *cost-effectiveness* in order to transform political acceptability into *political will* to implement change and spend money.”

Gibsons Mayor Barry Janyk
Moderator, SmartStorm Forum Series
(1999-2001)

From the archives

Included as an appendix is a “flashback to 2023”.

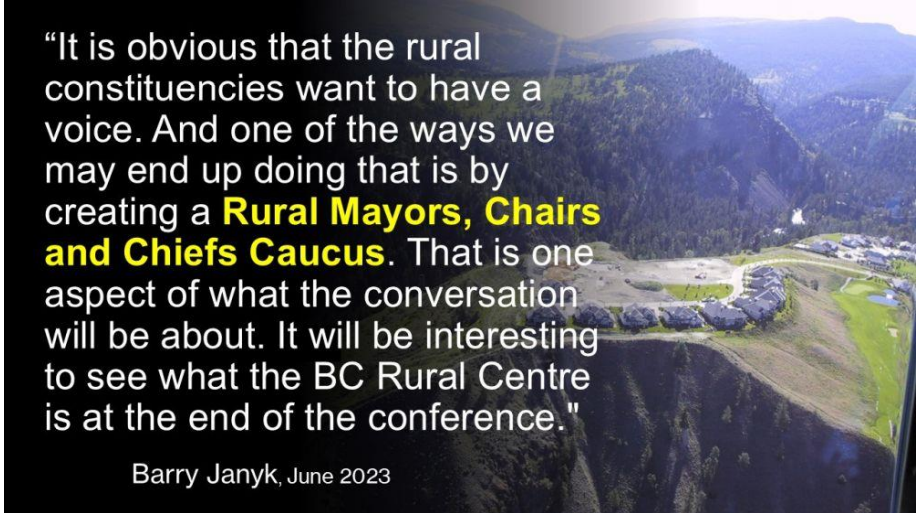
Titled ***Rural Constituencies Want a Voice***, it presents Barry Janyk’s vision for the BC Rural Centre. The springboard event was to be the *Keeping It Rural Conference* in June 2023. Not long after, Barry Janyk was diagnosed with brain cancer. Did his vision for rural BC die with him?

No shrinking violet, Barry Janyk brought a larger-than-life personality to preserving Gibsons' small-town charm during his 12 years as mayor of the Sunshine Coast community. He had a witty and irreverent sense of humour and believed politics should be fun.

Under Barry Janyk's leadership through four terms, Gibsons was one of the first communities in B.C. to consider the implications of sea-level rise and recognize water as a crucial resource. He was thrilled when the town was awarded "Best Municipal Drinking Water in the World" and deemed "most liveable community in the world" in international competitions.

Rural constituencies want a voice

Barry Janyk died of a rare form of brain cancer, just days before his 72nd birthday. A celebration of his life was held in Gibsons on January 18th. The finale moment in his public service was organizing the Keeping It Rural Conference in June 2023. His untimely death cut short his vision for creating a **Rural Mayors, Chairs and Chiefs Caucus**.



“It is obvious that the rural constituencies want to have a voice. And one of the ways we may end up doing that is by creating a **Rural Mayors, Chairs and Chiefs Caucus**. That is one aspect of what the conversation will be about. It will be interesting to see what the BC Rural Centre is at the end of the conference.”

Barry Janyk, June 2023

Barry Janyk was an early political champion for Smart Development in urban BC

In 1999, Barry Janyk had a vision which morphed into the SmartStorm Forum Series. The genesis for the series was a focus group workshop convened by UBCM in October 1997. Barry Janyk coined the term **Smart Development** to clearly differentiate the BC approach from the Low Impact Development terminology which was then being used in the United States.

Barry Janyk chaired the inter-governmental committee which initiated the series. He added political profile in his moderator role for the series. His tone-setting presentation to kickoff each event was titled **The Political Consequences of Doing the Wrong Thing: Why Elected Officials Must Consider Smart Development**.

In 2007, when he was Vice-President of the *Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities*, Barry Janyk was the political champion who helped the Partnership for Water Sustainability bring to fruition the vision for the inter-regional **Green Infrastructure Leadership Forum**.



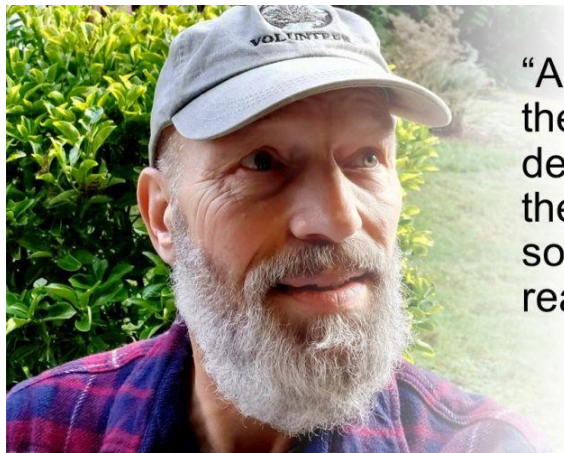
The Green Infrastructure Leadership Forum was a catalyst event for the *CAVI-Convening for Action on Vancouver Island initiative* which was the proof-of-concept for the **Georgia Basin Inter-Regional Education Initiative**

Editor's Perspective by Kim A Stephens

Zooming out to view the past three decades as a whole, the period 1997 through 2005 was the crucible for the *golden period* that followed from 2006 through 2011. This is our context for remembering Barry Janyk, a true political champion for "smart development".

The crucible era is bracketed by the passage of the [Fish Protection Act](#) in 1997 and the [Green Infrastructure Consultation Workshop](#) held in May 2005. These were literally watershed moments.

A large cast of characters was involved. We were venturing into uncharted territory, and that meant taking leaps of faith and calculated risks that we were heading in the right direction. We pushed the boundaries of knowledge and experience. We learned together.

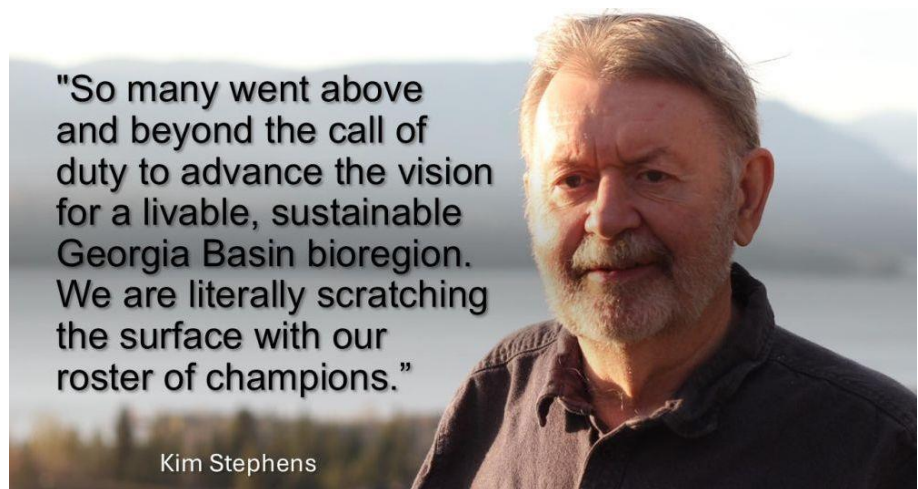


"A lot of this was off the sides of people's desks originally. And then we turned it into something real...and real valuable."

Ed von Euw, former Senior Engineer at Metro Vancouver

Smart Development founded on an ecosystem-based approach was a movement

The cast of players during the period 1997 through 2005 was large indeed. There was passion, there was commitment, and most of all there was a can-do attitude. It was a movement.



"So many went above and beyond the call of duty to advance the vision for a livable, sustainable Georgia Basin bioregion. We are literally scratching the surface with our roster of champions."

Kim Stephens

Drawing on my firsthand knowledge and experience in working closely with so many during this period, I view the roster of players in term of three tiers of champions. Keep in mind that my perspective is the “convening for action” lens.

Tier	Description of Role Played
One	Influencers in a profound and public way
Two	Quiet leaders in ongoing roles behind the scenes
Three	Timely contributors at key moments along the way

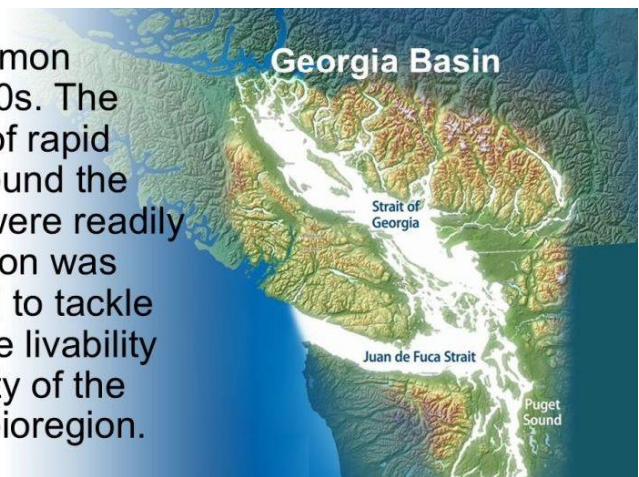
Who are the Tier One champions?

Tier One Champions

To learn more about those who were influencers in a profound and public way, download a copy of [Tier One Champions for implementing an Ecosystem-based Approach in British Columbia](#). This is an extract from the *Chronicle of Green Infrastructure Innovation in Metro Vancouver from 1994 through 2024*.

Many individuals have played important roles in the green infrastructure movement. But whose efforts were make or break during the crucible period? Seven individuals stand out as Tier One champions because of their ability to change the game. And Barry Janyk is one of the seven!

There was a salmon crisis in the 1990s. The consequences of rapid urbanization around the Georgia Basin were readily observable. Action was urgently needed to tackle the threats to the livability and sustainability of the Georgia Basin bioregion.



The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. That expression captures the collective contribution of the group of seven. Their individual orbits intersected, overlapped and aligned in ways that powered a movement that was inspired by the greater good.

Each individual in the group of Tier One champions rose to the moment in ways that were complementary. They provided leadership within their individual spheres of influence. When the smoke cleared, the collective impact of their contributions was transformational.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY:

Remembering Barry Janyk, political champion for Smart Development

The context for the Partnership for Water Sustainability celebrating the life of Barry Janyk is the Smartstorm Forum Series. This transformational series fueled a movement and galvanized an ecosystem-based approach to rainwater management and green infrastructure.

Barry Janyk, who was then mayor of Gibsons, infused the SmartStorm Forum Series with his passion. He was the political champion who carried the green infrastructure torch to the Metro Vancouver Regional Board and then to UBCM.

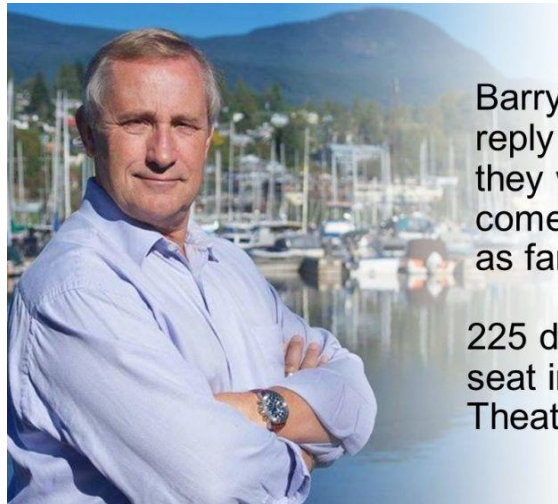


Barry Janyk and Al Hogarth, former mayor of Maple Ridge, were rookie mayors when they met at a UBCM orientation session. They had instant chemistry and teamed up to build political support at the Metro Vancouver board for the *SmartStorm Forum Series*.

Overcoming Institutional Barriers to Smart Development and Stormwater Management: From Planning to Implementation

Co-hosted by the City of Nanaimo and the provincial and federal governments in January 1999, the wildly successful first event in the **SmartStorm Forum Series** might well have been a one-off, footnote in history. And then, Gibsons Councillor Barry Janyk stepped forward.

He called me out of the blue and said, “we would like to host a similar event on the Sunshine Coast.” Because we had to turn people away when attendance reached the 250-person capacity of the Coast Bastion, I asked Barry how could his community build on that kind of success and who would travel to the Sunshine Coast.



Barry Janyk’s confident reply was, “trust me, Kim, they will come.” And come they did, and from as far away as Ontario.

225 delegates filled every seat in the Ravens Cry Theatre in Sechelt.

It was simply amazing. Barry Janyk mobilized his community. Our first interagency planning meeting was hosted by the Sechelt Nation. Barry brought everyone to the table. After that there was no looking back.

A political champion for smart development

Barry Janyk emerged as a political champion for what he called smart development. He ran for mayor, was elected, and then brought other mayors into the fold to host forums in the Fraser Valley. In total, Barry Janyk was the moderator for three of four forums in the series.

When	Region	Host Local Governments
Jan 1999	Vancouver Island	City of Nanaimo
Sep 1999	Sunshine Coast	Town of Gibsons District of Sechelt Sunshine Coast Regional District
Mar 2001	Fraser Valley	City of Abbotsford Fraser Valley Regional District
Mar 2001	Metro Vancouver	Pitt Meadows Maple Ridge Metro Vancouver

He infused the series with his energy and enthusiasm. He coined the term **Smart Development** to clearly differentiate the BC approach from the Low Impact Development terminology used in the United States.

The legacy of Barry Janyk is that his efforts elevated our profile and credibility with local government elected representatives. He got us onto their radar screen and that enhanced our ability to influence them.

APPENDIX:

Flashback to May 2023 / from the archives

Rural Constituencies Want a Voice

The readership of Waterbucket eNews encompasses local government elected representatives in every part of British Columbia. The edition published on May 23, 2023 was dedicated to those in “smalltown BC”. Barry Janyk provided a window into their world, their issues, their concerns.

Digital nomads, amenity migrants, and retirees

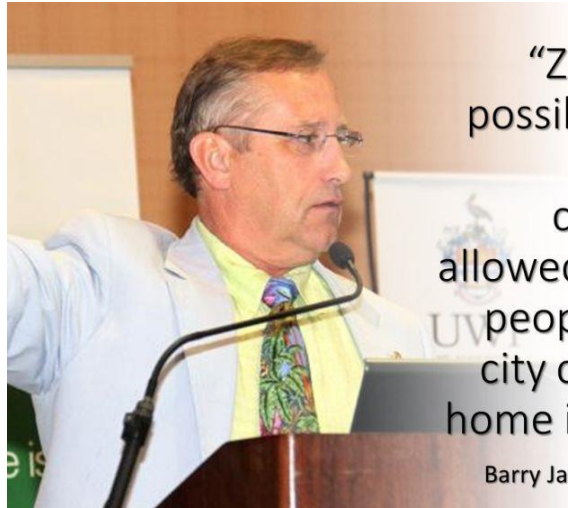
When Barry Janyk approached me about publicizing the *Keeping It Rural Conference*, he made an observation that stuck with me. He described three main groups moving to the really small communities in BC. He characterized them as digital nomads, amenity migrants, and retirees. Barry talked about the unforeseen consequences.

That conversation is the context for the two-part “story behind the story” that follows. Part One is about the *Keeping It Rural Conference* that is bringing together community leaders in Kelowna.

Part Two is a short essay by Barry Janyk. He wrote it because I asked if he would reconstruct what he told me about the influx of digital nomads, amenity migrants, and retirees into smalltown BC. Barry’s essay is short but compelling.

Kim Stephens, May 2023

One-Minute Takeaway



“Zoom towns made possible by high-speed internet in rural communities have allowed vast numbers of people to vacate their city condo for a family home in a rural setting.”

Barry Janyk, Executive Director, BC Rural Centre

“The Keeping It Rural Conference is bringing together 90 community leaders from all parts of the province to map a path forward for the rurals.” – Barry Janyk

Two decades ago, the devastation caused by the pine beetle resulted in the Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition. In 2018, SIBAC evolved into the BC Rural Centre, with a mission to act as a catalyst organization that sustains and advances rural wellbeing and development in British Columbia.

In 2021, the board of the re-formed BC Rural Centre commissioned Barry Janyk, a former 4-term mayor of the Town of Gibsons, to go on the road and have conversations around the province. A set of research questions provided the framework for his conversations.

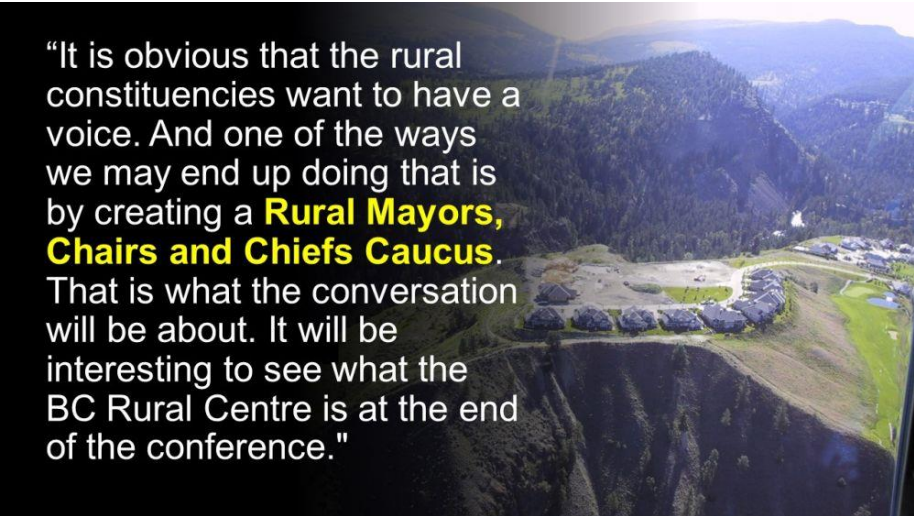
Barry met with senior coastal and interior business and industry representatives, elected representatives, and dozens of ‘average folks’ along the way. “All shared valid perspectives and clear opinions on why they choose to live rural and what they perceive the issues to be,” he stated in his report to the board.

An idea for conference attendees to consider is a Rural Mayors, Chairs and Chiefs Caucus

“I prepared a report that reflected what I learned from this travelling roadshow. The report lists 18 issues of concern to rural and remote communities,” explains Barry Janyk. “The board said this is great. Now, as Executive Director, what could you do to solve these 18 problems? I was gob smacked.”

“We had a strategic planning session in June 2022 to decide what the BC Rural Centre could realistically accomplish as an advocacy organization for rural constituencies. This is the genesis for holding the Keeping It Rural Conference a year later in early June 2023.”

“The conference is bringing together 90 community leaders from all parts of the province to Kelowna to map a path forward for the rurals. Two keynote speakers, Chief Clarence Louie of the Osoyoos Indian Band and Sean Markey of Simon Fraser University, will inform the conversation about areas of critical need for action in rural areas.”



“It is obvious that the rural constituencies want to have a voice. And one of the ways we may end up doing that is by creating a **Rural Mayors, Chairs and Chiefs Caucus**. That is what the conversation will be about. It will be interesting to see what the BC Rural Centre is at the end of the conference.”

STORY BEHIND THE STORY:

Rural Constituencies Want a Voice

- a conversation with Barry Janyk

“The rurals have always been my passion. That is why I moved from Vancouver to the Sunshine Coast. And I have worked in or travelled to every corner of the province. And I love BC. It is a particularly nice place to call home.”

“Because I know a lot of people, the board of the BC Rural Centre asked me to go out and ask some questions. So, I came up with a list, had the conversations, and produced a laundry list of issues.”

“An observation is that rural issues tend not to be the issues that capture attention. In large part, that is the reason we are undertaking the Keeping It Rural Conference on June 1-2. To pull the shawl back on the issues that are the elephants in the room.”



“Rural areas are known for understanding the fundamentals of life. They get those things. The conference has generated huge interest. It is remarkable how many people want to know about it. This year we want to feel people out, find out where the interest is, and then build on that.”

“The simple way to explain the present situation is that we have done the work to identify the issues. Now we are trying to prioritize them. And we are also trying to get the ear of the provincial government to help us collaborate and address these key issues.”

“We will re-group as staff and board after the conference and have our 2023 strategic planning session. That will determine our steps forward. A large part of it will be predicated on the results of the conference because that will be a good gauge of where the priorities lie.”

PART ONE: What organization serves only rural local governments, community leaders and First Nations?

“There is NO organization out there that is actually undertaking the work that the BC Rural Centre is doing. None,” Barry Janyk states emphatically.

“What organization serves only local governments, community leaders and First Nations? We see the role being created. And it has to be inclusive of everybody that considers themselves a rural or remote community!”

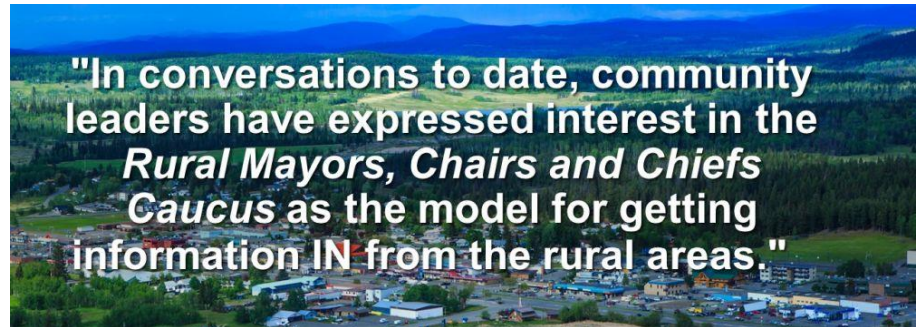
“It is important to listen and become educated in the issues. That really is crucial. Rural areas want to be heard and the BC Rural Centre is an organization that listens. And that is important. We really do. How we can enact their issues and concerns into good provincial policy is a good question. That is a work-in-progress. We’re on it!”



“We have been kicking around the idea of a Rural Mayors, Chairs and Chiefs Caucus. An organization should be what an organization wants to be. If the board believes that creation of the rural caucus is a good idea, then we will find a way to get that done.”

“Rural communities are not going away. They have made that very clear. They say, ‘*we will thrive and survive*’. I hope the BC Rural Centre can be as resilient as the rurals that we serve because somebody has got to take care of them. Somebody has to help them. Somebody has to speak for them.”

“And I don’t see any other organization out there that has the same mandate. We will be careful not to step on toes. And at the same time we want to be that organization that can provide the back and forth between government in a timely way.”



PART TWO: Ripple effects when there is population outflow from the larger centres to rural communities – a short essay by Barry Janyk

“For the past decade rural communities had been devising clever population attraction strategies and finding occasional success in achieving incremental growth,” writes Barry Janyk.

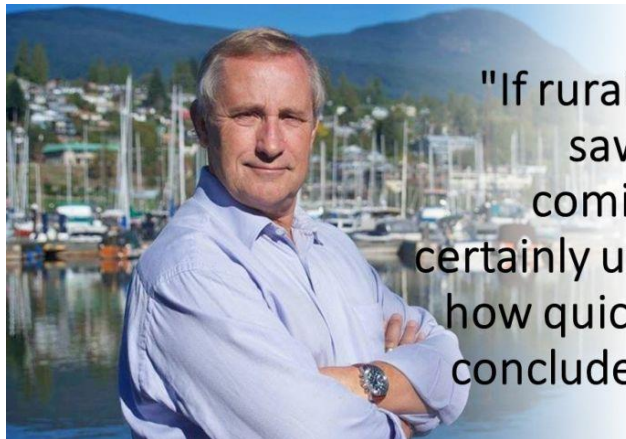
“Coincidental with the expansion of broadband communications, the global COVID pandemic and the predicted demographic upheaval, living in urban areas became less attractive. Many folks who had been considering leaving urban centres quickly did – to a rural region – often without undertaking significant research.”

“Many individuals who were in – or approaching – the retirement demographic chose to pull the proverbial pin rather than face COVID implications, choosing a less expensive rural lifestyle while selling their urban properties – often with healthy sums banked and no mortgage payments. It became a glorious retirement solution at just the right time!”

“The impact of this human tidal wave hit communities by surprise, many experiencing housing and labour shortages, skyrocketing real estate prices, and an influx of newcomers with new demands. This rapid growth brought with it numerous challenges – workforce shortages, infrastructure and social services capacity issues – rocking community wellbeing and affecting quality of life.”

“Zoom towns made possible by high-speed internet in rural communities have allowed vast numbers of people to vacate their city condo for a family home in a rural setting. While this may appear fortuitous for some, when existing rental homes are sold and new residents fail to contribute to the labour market as they brought their own jobs with them, they can quickly become a burden on local infrastructure.”

“New attainable housing must be built to support the local workforce that fill the jobs in the grocery stores, restaurants, the gas stations – basically the service sector positions. This creates a very protracted process. With nowhere to live, priced out of market, and available rental units being turned into short-term vacation rentals – members of the community that provide those services are forced to move away! We’re the BC Rural Centre. We want to understand. We want to help.”

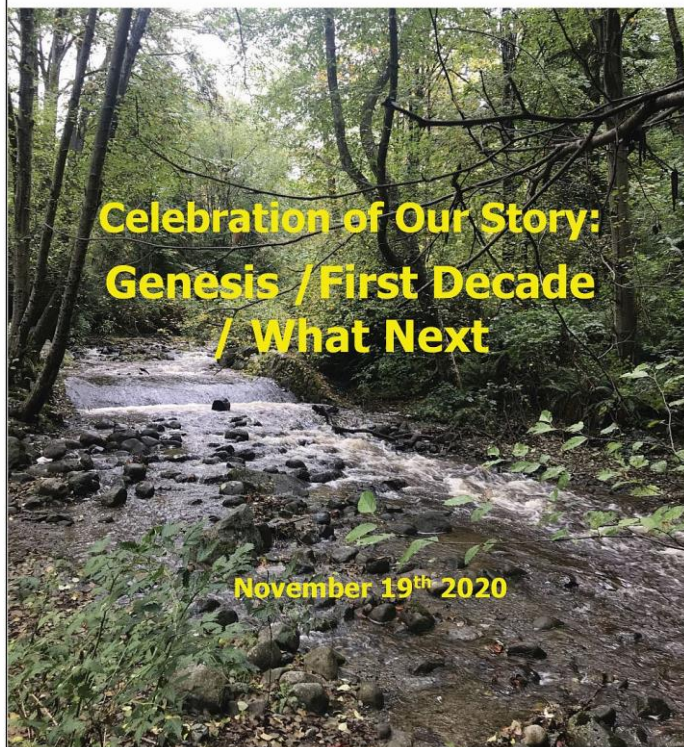


“If rural communities saw this tsunami coming, they were certainly unprepared for how quickly it arrived,” concludes Barry Janyk.

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<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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