

Local Government Talent Can Meet the Challenge Using a Regional Team Approach

Funders' Report on the Value of the
Convening for Action on Vancouver Island (CAVI) Program



September 2010

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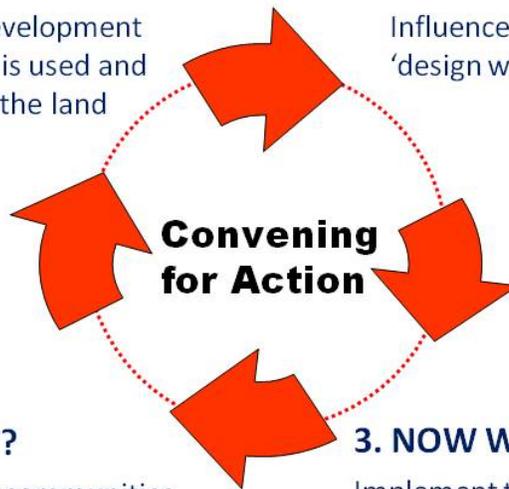
This is the “BC process” for moving from Awareness to Action

1. WHAT is the issue?

The form of land development impacts how water is used and how water runs off the land

2. SO WHAT can be done?

Influence practitioners to 'design with nature'



4. THEN WHAT?

Replicate in other communities

3. NOW WHAT can we do?

Implement the Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia

Figure 1

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Implemented under the umbrella of the Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia

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1. Introduction

Convening for Action on Vancouver Island (CAVI) is one project under the broader Convening for Action initiative, which started in the South Okanagan in 2005. Today there are projects in the South Okanagan, Capital Regional District, Metropolitan Vancouver, as well as central Vancouver Island. These initiatives share strategies, information and educational resources.

The Real Estate Foundation and the Province have co-funded CAVI under the umbrella of the Water Sustainability Action Plan. The Action Plan is led by the Water Sustainability Committee (WSC) of the BC Water & Waste Association (BCWWA) in partnership with the funders, WSC members, and participating local governments.

Convening for Action in British Columbia

The strategy for leading and implementing change is called *Convening for Action in BC*. This blend of capacity in expertise and funding, as well as shared focus, has achieved several important outcomes:

- Recognition that water sustainability is an intrinsic value; it runs with the land and the natural and human assets upon it;
- The concept of water sustainability, linked to planning for use and conservation of land, promotes holistic approaches to managing settlement change;
- The collaboration of practitioners in the provincial ministries, professional associations, regional / municipal governments, and non-profit sectors can lead to systemic change in processes for reviewing and deciding land use proposals;
- The collaboration increases respect of expertise and experience, and it promotes dialogue; and
- The collaboration supports the learning environment necessary to explore innovation and adopt improved strategies that become leading practices.

Developed over four years, the **Convening for Action on Vancouver Island** (CAVI) initiative might be called a demonstration. This report reviews the investment of the funders and collaborators and describes outcomes.

Figure 1 on the preceding page conceptualizes the **outcome-oriented** 'convening for action' process. Leading and implementing change requires bridging of the gap between interest (talk) and practice (action).

Context for Action

Commencing in 2005, the Province of BC, through the Ministry of Community and Rural Development and the Ministry of Environment, agreed to collaborate with the Real Estate Foundation and the BCWWA Water Sustainability Committee to advance planning and practices for water sustainability in the local government context. The partnership umbrella is the Water Sustainability Action Plan.

Convening for Action addresses water sustainability in BC and it engages practitioners whose careers, professions, employment and volunteer roles impact the land. Land and water are inextricably linked and strategies to achieve water sustainability require collaboration and a shared approach among practitioners.

Convening for Action supports advancement of leading practices using three strategies:

- Fostering development and formalization of regional collaborations of practitioners through educational and facilitation services such as the *CAVI Learning Lunch Seminar Series*;
- Providing web-based communications through the Water Bucket website; and,
- Enabling leading practices through tools such as the Water Balance Model.

Leading practices must understand the complexity of human and natural systems and lead to implementation that provides for human needs while avoiding harm to the ecology that supports settlement. Convening for Action supports integrated approaches to managing settlement change and recognizes that the solutions themselves will be complex due to the number of organizations, practitioners and mandates involved.

Convening for Action is a principal component of a larger strategy focused on "implementing a new culture for urban watershed protection and restoration in BC," which was launched by key stakeholders in 1997. To review this history and appreciate CAVI in its broadest context, refer to *Beyond the Guidebook 2010*, which is available on the Water Bucket website at:

<http://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/sites/wbccfa/documents/media/403.pdf>.

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2. Convening for Action on Vancouver Island

Launched in September 2006 in conjunction with the *Water in the City* conference, the CAVI initiative is now in its fourth year of collaborating with local governments and others. CAVI supports the "Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia."

CAVI challenges Vancouver Island communities to **visualize what they want to look like in 50 years.**

Program Goal

The goal of CAVI is to facilitate the move toward water sustainability through implementation of green infrastructure policies and practices. CAVI defines "green infrastructure" in terms of a design with nature approach to managing settlement change and mitigation of climate change impacts.

Program Delivery

The Province of BC and the Real Estate Foundation co-fund CAVI. Local governments and other clients/collaborators make considerable in-kind investment. The Water Sustainability Committee of the BC Water & Waste Association (BCWWA) serves as an Advisory Committee and has provided administration support for the management of CAVI's work. As well, the committee's network has helped CAVI tap into practitioner and institutional expertise it needs for program development and delivery.

Innovation and Quality: Without the leadership and expertise CAVI accesses through its Advisory Committee, it could not achieve the innovation and quality of educational and research services that it has. Both retired and current practitioners whose careers concern use and conservation of land serve on the Advisory Committee. It is another resource that enables CAVI to develop and deliver high quality programs.

Leadership: Funding from the key partners over several years has allowed CAVI to employ a strong manager, continuously develop and deliver programs, as well as optimize access to its Advisory Committee and partners for needed expertise.

CAVI Program Aligns with Provincial Initiatives

CAVI focuses on water sustainability as a fundamental approach to planning for the social, economic and environmental health of regional communities. This strategy enables communities to manage settlement change in balance with ecology. With the focus on achieving water sustainability, CAVI supports delivery of the objectives of the *Living Water Smart* and *Green Communities* initiatives of the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Community and Rural Development (MCRD), respectively.

As principal funders, the two Ministries and the Real Estate Foundation have together provided funding for CAVI program elements during the years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. Personnel of these agencies also have participated in planning and educational activities of CAVI.

The MCRD supports local governments to access CAVI services. Through its support of the CAVI-local government collaboration in the Comox Valley, for example, MCRD intends to help demonstrate a regional team approach to integrated sustainability planning (further details follow).

The funding of the Real Estate Foundation of BC emphasizes designing with nature and "green value" objectives in CAVI educational materials and services. As well, the Foundation supports engagement of the non-profit sector in CAVI activities. The CAVI focus on working with planners, engineers and the real estate sector meets the expectations of the Water Sustainability Committee of BCWWA.

On-the-Ground Services: From the point of view of the funders, CAVI effectively delivers on-the-ground services to target audiences in their locales. This local delivery focus together with engagement of local practitioners in program design builds strong collaboration. In this context, CAVI successfully delivers broad values as well as a number of specific services.

On the next two pages, first the broad values are noted; followed by specific services/deliverables.

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CAVI Focus is on Broad Values

CAVI provides a focus on the following broad values and strategies:

- Communities must declare their values to have a vision of what they will be like in 50 years.
- Settlement change (decisions about use and conservation of land) must be managed in relative balance with the ecology that supports the built environment.
- Planning to achieve these goals must be regional as well as local.
- Planning for and implementing water sustainability is a practical strategy to realize the values set out above.

CAVI Provides Specific Services

Specific services provided by CAVI include the following:

Management of the Convening for Action Initiative - A volunteer board of experienced practitioners in land-related careers and professions (active and retired) oversees CAVI's strategy development and annual work plans.

The day to day work of CAVI is managed by the Program Coordinator and Leadership Team. Both levels of direction have been and remain consistently strong.

Communications and Reporting - The Water Sustainability Committee of BCWWA established, and CAVI has enhanced, the Water Bucket website (www.waterbucket.ca). CAVI uses waterbucket.ca very strategically and presents content well-designed for the audiences involved in CAVI seminars and other activities.

All of CAVI's print materials employ a consistent format and offer brevity appropriate for the target audiences. CAVI communications are high quality. CAVI provides the funding agencies with written reports at least semi-annually.

Priority projects involve frequent updates and review of strategy with the funders involved. CAVI has made presentations in the education program at annual conferences of the BCWWA.

Principal CAVI Services - Since late 2006, CAVI key services include:

- **Convening Stakeholders:** to consider collaborative actions to address water sustainability and other issues pertinent to integrated planning strategies; this is a patient, conversational approach that CAVI utilizes well.
- **Water Balance Model Seminars:** CAVI has delivered several professional development sessions for use of the Water Balance tool. The Surrey Forum in March 2009, for example, adapted the Cowichan Valley Forum format for establishing local government expectations. (To learn more, refer to stories on the Convening for Action community-of-interest on Water Bucket).

- **Showcasing Green Infrastructure Innovation:** In 2007 and 2008, and at the request of local governments, CAVI facilitated guided field trips sponsored by local governments to demonstrate infrastructure and real estate projects that met "green value" and "water sustainability" goals in their communities.

Twelve case profiles (including some "Showcasing Innovation" projects) assembled by CAVI (REF funding) are available. The Showcasing programs (six in total) were sold out.

- **Learning Lunch Seminar Series (LLSS):** This educational strategy provides information in a roundtable format. The content is developed in collaboration with a team of local practitioners who decide what they need. CAVI finds the resources and manages the process.

Each LLSS has four hours of content and interchange in three separate seminars. The LLSS draws on expertise from relevant provincial ministries, the POLIS program at the University of Victoria, West Coast Environmental Law Foundation, Real Estate Foundation, Comox Valley Stewardship Centre, and other sources.

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The LLSS differs materially from the continuing professional education programs of the various professional organizations in that the LLSS is **outcome-oriented** – the participants work for change in practice, very applied, and supported by specific research if needed.

Finally, several levels of collaboration characterize the CAVI strategy:

- Support by several funders that confer frequently about CAVI's work.
- CAVI has relationships with many sources of expertise.
- CAVI works to include the development sector, conservation and stewardship sector, and other practitioner groups in its audiences.
- CAVI shares the lessons learned through its programs with other regions, including Capital Regional District, Metro Vancouver and the South Okanagan.

CAVI is having an Impact

In order to fulfill its role as a demonstration initiative, CAVI has brought together local government implementers and community representatives in neutral forums. CAVI has also facilitated inter-regional sharing and networking; and is connecting the dots among other initiatives that address water sustainability and holistic approaches to managing settlement change. These initiatives are:

1. **Comox Valley:** An Integrated Watershed Approach to Settlement
2. **Regional District of Nanaimo:** Action for Water
3. **Cowichan Valley Regional District:** Cowichan Basin Water Management Plan
4. **Capital Region:** Bowker Creek Blueprint
5. **Metro Vancouver:** Integrated Liquid Waste & Resource Management Plan
6. **South Okanagan region:** local Government Ecological Standards and Practices

Convening for Action started in the South Okanagan. The cross-fertilization process has come full circle. South Okanagan communities are adapting and building on lessons learned on Vancouver Island, in particular the Comox Valley.

Holistic Context: CAVI's method has helped practitioners in regional settings to more fully appreciate that a holistic context is required to adopt strategy that will support implementation of land use and water sustainability planning and practices.

Over three years, the Comox Valley project has influenced key departments in the four local governments to support and use a regional team process for reviewing and managing land use development proposals. An outcome of the 2009 Learning Lunch Seminar Series was formation of CV-OPS, the acronym for *Comox Valley Inter-Governmental Engineering/Operations Liaison Group*.

The scope of CV-OPS concerns land use and urban design practices that will support water sustainability, especially design-with-nature approaches.



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3. The Future of Convening For Action

The future success of Convening for Action requires adequate funding for management and program development costs. The extent of collaboration required means that many relationships and communications needs have to be managed.

CAVI has proven its value as a high level service for innovation in the local government context. While CAVI attracts and uses considerable volunteer and in-kind resources, the core management and research services are essential and must be met. Now that the demonstration phase is concluding, key funders will not continue to provide significant grants. CAVI must find alternative sources of funding.

In view of the foregoing, the Water Sustainability Advisory Committee ought to plan to secure revenue from other sources. These options include:

- Obtaining some funding from the local governments that engage CAVI services. Much of CAVI's educational programming could qualify under the professional development budgets of the local governments. When possible CAVI should have any Learning Lunch Seminar Series it offers approved for credits by the Planning Institute of BC and the Association of Professional Engineers.
- The Comox Valley project is well defined. The local governments might apply to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities "Green Municipal Fund" for support.
- There may be some CAVI projects that could apply to the Island Coastal Economic Trust and / or the Vancouver Island Economic Alliance for funding.
- The "Community Development Program" of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is another potential funding source.
- In the future, CAVI may be able to apply to the Real Estate Foundation for funding to support delivery of specific educational and research services.
- Corporate sponsorships and registration fees are other funding sources that CAVI ought to consider.

A New Society

Finally, in October of this year Convening for Action and its companion initiatives, the Water Balance Model and the Water Bucket Website, will be moving under the management of a new society – the *Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia* (i.e. to be branded as "the Partnership"). The purposes of the Partnership are:

- a) To promote and advance protection and management of natural and engineered water resources.
- b) To provide educational, research, and technical services and tools for practitioners involved in water resources functions.
- c) To foster integrated protection and management strategies through practitioner expertise.

The society will enjoy the expertise, support and investment of the same individuals that have developed and serviced these tools and resources during the past decade.

Moving from Education to Implementation:

The graphic below conceptualizes the mind-map that has been guiding CAVI program delivery. It illustrates how education leads to action. This will continue to guide the approach of the Partnership in the years ahead.

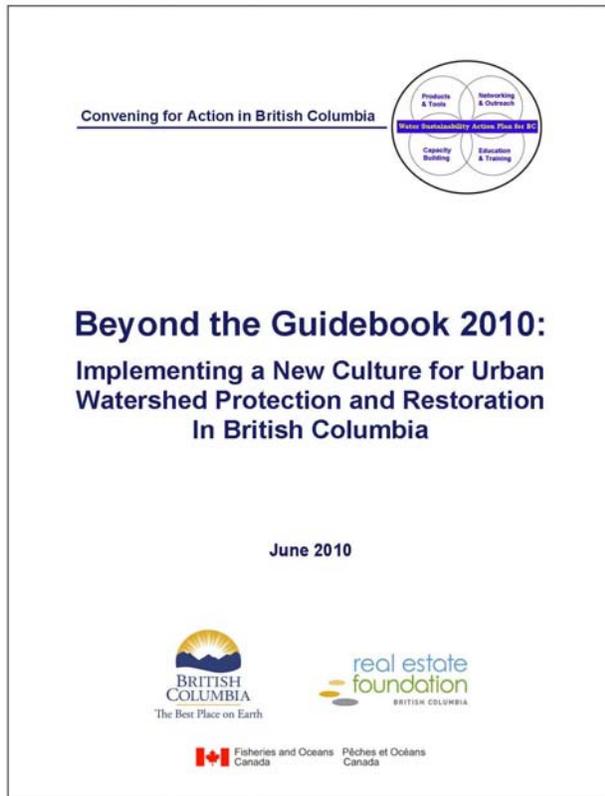


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4. Conclusion

As suggested in this report and more extensively described in *Beyond the Guidebook 2010*, Convening for Action is a bold pursuit of systemic change. As a demonstration initiative, CAVI has illustrated the incremental approach that builds needed collaboration.



Changing the Practitioner Culture: The three to five-year time frame anticipated by the funders and CAVI Leadership Team, worked out at four years. The final portion of the fourth year, ending early 2011, involves key implementation trials. The Comox Valley CAVI participants are now utilizing their regional team approach for specific land use decision cases.

A key ingredient in changing the culture is patience. It takes time to incrementally change the practitioner culture and implement a new way of doing business.

Return on Investment

The funders that have invested in CAVI have received good value for their investment. In summary, these values are:

- As noted in the introduction, CAVI has made the case strongly that the concept of water sustainability is a holistic value that runs with the land and must be linked to planning for use and conservation of land, thus promoting holistic approaches to managing settlement change.
- Based on a regional perspective, practitioners can and must collaborate to make changes in the systems (processes) for reviewing and deciding land use proposals.
- And, such collaboration supports the learning environment necessary to explore innovation and adopt improved strategies that become leading practices.

In the course of CAVI's work in the Comox Valley several specific deliverables were provided:

- The Learning Lunch Seminar Series (LLSS) professional development program format for research and education.
- The founding of the "CV-OPS" strategy by valley practitioners.
- Research concerning the drivers of large-scale real estate development in the Mid-Island region.
- An analytical tool for comparison of regional values and impacts of master-planned developments. This tool, the Matrix, will be tested on North East Comox and presented in a LLSS early in 2011.
- And, exchange of learning with other regions in the province using convening for action strategies.

In conclusion, the Convening for Action initiative has delivered a range of specific services as well as intra-regional collaboration. CAVI has demonstrated that systemic change is possible, even in the complicated sphere of planning for use and conservation of land with a focus on water sustainability. It requires understanding and pursuit of holistic outcomes.