



## Asset Management Newsletter

THIRD EDITION – SUMMER 2011 ISSUE



### Feature Article: Comox Valley Local Governments Showcase “A Regional Response to Infrastructure Liability”

*By Kim A Stephens P. Eng.,  
Executive Director,  
Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia  
on behalf of the Comox Valley Regional Team*

The initial capital cost of infrastructure is about 20% of the life-cycle cost; the other 80% largely represents a future liability. Each year, the funding shortfall grows. This is a driver for local governments in the Comox Valley to change the way they plan, finance, implement and, over time, replace or renew our infrastructure.

Sustainable Service Delivery. The Comox Valley Program is built around an annual seminar series. This program is the foundation for a ‘regional team approach’. The seminars provide a neutral forum for sharing, exploring and learning in a way that no other forum currently provides. The series attracts our local government personnel, developers, consultants, and non-government organizations located in the Comox Valley as well as local governments and others from outside the Comox Valley. The open forum facilitates cross-fertilization of experience and ideas.

*(Feature Article continued on page 2)*



#### Sustainable Service Delivery

Through a program of professional development, the regional district and three municipalities are aligning efforts, building leadership capacity and striving for a consistent Comox Valley regional approach to

#### Articles in this Edition:

- Feature article: Comox Valley Local Governments Showcase - “A Regional Response to Infrastructure Liability”
- Infrastructure Canada has New Minister
- Case Study: District of Lake Country
- Lake Country is Being Proactive – by the District of Lake Country’s CAO, Alberto De Feo (from my weekly blog)
- Australia AM Process Piloted in BC and Saskatchewan
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## Sustainable Service Delivery

*(Article continued from page 1)*

“The focus of the 2011 Series is on the unfunded ‘infrastructure liability’ confronting all local governments. One of the foundation pieces underpinning the series is expressed this way: *All those involved in land development have a role to play in achieving Sustainable Service Delivery. The players include land use and infrastructure professionals,*” states Glenn Westendorp, Public Works Superintendent with the Town of Comox. He is Chair of the 2011 Seminar Series.

“We have moved beyond continuing education solely for the purpose of professional development. The 2011 Series is aligned with the recently adopted Regional Growth Strategy and Regional Sustainability Strategy. We are exploring what implementation of regional policy means on the ground. We are working towards a **Joint Report on A Regional Response to Infrastructure Liability.**”



*Glenn Westendorp,  
Town of Comox*

## Plan it Right at the ‘Front-End’

“In April, Seminar #1 painted a picture of the ‘legacy liability’ of existing hard infrastructure – that is, roads and pipes. In May, Seminar #2 dealt with green infrastructure and ‘sustainable urban drainage’. Seminar #3 on June 30 will focus on floodplain and flooding issues,” continues Kevin Lorette, General Manager of the Property Services Branch in the Comox Valley Regional District.

“We know that the time to shape future life-cycle costs is at the infrastructure planning ‘front-end’; and we recognize the importance of thinking at a watershed scale. Protection of a community’s natural resources is an important piece in Sustainable Service Delivery, both fiscally and ecologically. Because nature has no borders, the four Comox Valley local governments are exploring how we can align and integrate our efforts at a watershed scale. We can achieve that outcome within the existing governance framework.”



*Kevin Lorette,  
Comox Valley RD*

## Key Objectives for Holistic Approach

“Town-hall sessions are an important part of the seminar program. The sharing and learning that takes place is quite powerful. An ‘Ah-Ha moment’ at Seminar #1 was realizing how we needed to describe the distinction between traditional infrastructure and green infrastructure. As the discussion swirled, it became clear that framing the infrastructure liability issue in terms of three dimensions (or categories) would help everyone’s understanding,” reports Kevin Lagan, Director of Operational Services with the City of Courtenay.

“So, to promote a holistic approach to infrastructure asset management, we have crystallized three key objectives for Sustainable Service Delivery: 1) pay down the legacy cost of existing hard infrastructure; 2) reduce the life-cycle cost of new hard infrastructure; and, 3) shift from gray to green to protect downstream values (i.e. **environmental and/or agriculture.**”

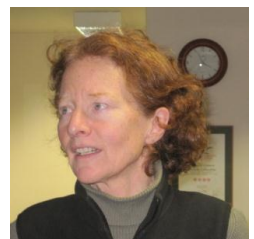


*Kevin Lagan,  
City of Courtenay*

## From Gray to Green

“The phrase ‘gray to green’ is becoming part of the language of land use professionals,” adds Judy Walker, Planner with the Village of Cumberland. “Viewed from space, the urbanized landscape appears to be mostly gray. This reflects the impact of roads, rooftops and paved surfaces. The need to shift from gray to green is implicit in the working definition of Sustainable Service Delivery. The paradigm-shift starts with land use planning.”

“After land is initially developed and/or redeveloped to a higher density, rainwater runoff volume increases. This results in cumulative impacts on streams. Local governments then bear the entire financial burden to stabilize and restore watercourses that have been impacted. At Seminar #2, we learned that green infrastructure reduces runoff volumes, decreases stresses applied to creeks, has lower life-cycle costs, and enhances urban liveability.”



*Judy Walker,  
Town of Comox*



## Design with Nature

At Seminar #1 in the 2011 Series, Glen Brown (Executive Director with the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development) provided this context: “Sustainable Service Delivery is the Province’s branding for a life-cycle way of thinking about infrastructure needs and how to pay for them over time. The approach is holistic. We are challenging local governments to think about what asset management entails BEFORE the asset is built. The paradigm-shift starts with land use planning and determining what services can be provided sustainably, both fiscally and ecologically.”

*“The legislative authority for integration of land use planning and asset management, including financial*

management, already exists within the Local Government Act and Community Charter. Local governments can develop a truly integrated Asset Management Strategy that views the watershed through an environmental lens.”

“The Province’s Living Water Smart and Green Communities initiatives are catalysts for ‘designing with nature’: **Start with effective green infrastructure and protect environmental values.** Get the watershed vision right. Then create a blueprint to implement green infrastructure,” concluded Glen Brown.



Glen Brown,  
Province of BC



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## So What is Sustainable Service Delivery?

- It integrates all the principles of Asset Management
- It understands the value of land-use planning
  - And it understands the impacts land-use planning has on service delivery
- It integrates the ‘Design with Nature’ philosophy
  - Nature is a valuable asset that must be ‘maintained’ in order to ‘operate’ effectively
  - Nature’s assets often appreciate rather than depreciate – What can we do to leverage this?
  - Nature provides multiple ‘services’ – some similar to traditional community services – i.e. Rainwater Management
  - Nature, and many of the resources it provides, are finite