

Uncovering Tools and Practices for Facilitating Effective Relationships in BC's Local Government System

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Executive Summary

Local governments play an important function in the everyday lives of British Columbians around the province. They provide residents with services such as policing, fire safety and public transportation, and opportunities for people to become involved in their communities. For local governments to be able to effectively provide services to the public, local governments need to be properly managed. Elected officials and administrative staff collectively make up the local government organization. Elected officials provide strategic direction and governance for local governments, and administrative staff research, provide recommendations and implement the direction given to them by elected officials.

To ensure that local governments operate as effectively and efficiently as possible, there needs to be a healthy working relationship between elected officials and administrative staff. Many local governments across BC benefit from healthy working relationships between elected officials and administrative staff. When relationships are effective, less time needs to be spent on relationship building or conflict resolution, and more resources can be put towards the daily operations and governance of local governments. Ineffective relationships can have the opposite effect on local governments; they can slow down operations and make collaboration, innovation and compromise more challenging.

Thus, the primary research question this project intended to address is:

What tools and practices are, or could be used by, local governments to facilitate effective relationships between elected officials and administrative staff in BC?

Methodology and Methods

The project was guided by two methodologies: a needs assessment and cross jurisdictional scan. A needs assessment was used to assess what tools and practices currently exist to foster effective relationships with what tools and resources could be used to better foster effective relationships. The cross jurisdictional scan was used to gather data about the tools and resources other jurisdictions already provide to their local governments regarding relationships.

Four methods were used to gather data for this project: a literature review, a cross jurisdictional document review, semi-structured one-on-one interviews and a focus group. Data for the literature review was collected from scholarly sources and publications by local government practitioners. Data presented in the cross jurisdictional scan was found online, primarily on provincial and local government websites. Twelve semi-structured interviews were held with retired and current elected officials and administrative staff. Lastly, a two-hour long focus group was held with local government practitioners. The data collected from the four methods was thematically analyzed and is presented in the findings, discussion, and recommendations chapters.

Key Findings

The key findings for each of the sections of the report are:

Literature Review: As found in the literature, there are a number of potential variables that can affect the relationship between elected officials and administrators, such as overlapping roles and pressures from new technology. There appears to be no single contributing factor that dictates if a relationship will be effective or not. A significant amount of the literature available on this subject matter assesses the roles and responsibilities of elected officials and administrators and the overlap that can take place between these roles. It was also evident through the literature that there can be differences between the personality traits and skills of elected officials and administrative staff. These differing personality traits and skills can affect the relationships between elected officials and administrators because of the different goals and priorities associated with each role.

Additionally, challenges to the local government system such as new technologies, increased citizen participation and an increase in the number of CAOs retiring, all play into the relationship between elected officials and administrative staff. New pressures on the system can place more strain on relationships and cause role confusion as local government staff are tasked with adapting to new challenges.

Cross jurisdictional scan: There are a number of different ways that provincial jurisdictions are currently providing tools and resources to local governments, elected officials, and administrative staff to help them successfully perform their jobs and foster effective relationships. Each province has a suite of tools and resources that it provides to its local governments. The tools and resources in other provinces range from softer tools such as guides to stronger legislated tools such as mandatory codes of conduct. Some of the primary tools and resources that other provinces have in place to foster effective relationships include mandatory training for elected officials, integrity commissioners, peer mentoring and handbooks.

Interviews and focus group: Interview and focus group participants identified a number of factors that place strain on the relationship between elected officials and staff. Some of these factors are new and emerging, brought on by advances in technology or new global issues; while others, such as the impact of local government size, have been around longer. Some of the factors listed by respondents include: changes in technology; increased use of social media; shifting public perceptions of local governments; and increased movement of CAOs.

Interview participants also listed a number of smart practices that they found useful in fostering effective relationships including: using honest and open communication; developing high levels of trust and respect for colleagues; mentoring new CAOs; and using strategic planning to define the roles and responsibilities of each local government actor. Participants also listed some tools and practices that might be useful to explore further, such as increased training opportunities for CAOs; public education and training for candidates before and after elections; and more peer mentoring opportunities.

Discussion and Analysis

One of the key findings from the research is that there are a number of tools already available to local governments that focus on relationships; however, the range of tools and practices available for elected officials and administrators is not always well known to these actors. A number of the

tools and practices that emerged from the findings focused on proactively building effective relationships, instead of reactively addressing relationships that have already broken down. While these proactive tools may be more useful for local governments to build and sustain effective relationships, it was also found that it is beneficial to have reactive materials for local governments to consult and use if relationships break down. The research indicates that there is a need for additional tools, practices and resources, both proactive and reactive, and as a result, the following list of recommendations has been developed for the local government system to consider.

Recommendations

The recommendations focus on proactive tools and practices for facilitating effective relationships between elected officials and administrative staff. As many of the recommendations include suggestions for conducting further research about specific tools and practices, actors within the local government system can begin exploring these recommendations as soon as resources are available to do. Additionally, as many of these recommendations require partnerships and further research, there may be benefit in undertaking work on multiple recommendations simultaneously.

Recommendation 1: Conduct further targeted research and analysis around the factors which place pressure on local government relationships (such as technology and CAO turnover), and around tools and practices that are intended to foster effective relationships (such as strategic planning and human resource practices).

Recommendation 2: Explore opportunities for developing further educational materials for potential candidates, elected officials and the public about the role of local governments, including basic information on regional districts and municipalities.

Recommendation 3: Explore existing and future training opportunities and resources for CAOs and newly elected officials through collaborative efforts between the Ministry and local government partners such as UBCM, LGMA and LGLA.

Recommendation 4: Undertake work to explore options for materials and resources that could be developed for pre-candidates and/or newly elected officials.

Recommendation 5: Explore ways to help elected officials and administrative staff to strengthen their understanding regarding their respective roles and responsibilities under BC's local government legislation.

Recommendation 6: Enhance local government system capacity to prevent and manage relationship-centered conflicts by exploring peer based tools (such as peer mediation and peer mentoring).

Taken together, the above recommendations are designed to:

- explore opportunities for further developing the Ministry's knowledge about this topic;
- highlight the Ministry's strong relationship with local government partners;

- emphasize the importance of providing the appropriate education, resources and training materials; and,
- suggest specific tools and practices that would be beneficial to explore in the future.

Overall, these recommendations are intended to help address this topic from a number of different approaches, each of which should assist in both developing new tools and resources, and in educating local governments about the ones that are already available.

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1.0 Introduction

Local governments play an important function in the everyday lives of British Columbians around the province. Local governments provide residents with services such as public transportation, parks and recreation, drinking water, police and fire safety services amongst a list of other key services. They are also the closest and considered to be the most responsive form of government to citizens because of geographical proximity and delivery of everyday services (Union of BC Municipalities [UBCM], 2015, p. 2). Local governments also provide the public with opportunities to be closely involved in their communities by voicing their opinions and ideas, and collectively contributing to the priorities of their local government. Additionally, they often provide the public with channels of information that they can access about topics such as business and economic development, community events, and regulatory services. All of these functions would not be possible without the elected officials who are responsible for setting the policy direction for local governments, and the administrative staff who are responsible for researching and implementing the policies developed by elected officials.

To ensure that local governments operate as effectively and efficiently as possible, there needs to be healthy working relationships between elected officials and administrators. This report, through the use of a literature review, a cross jurisdictional scan, interviews and a focus group, seeks to better understand what tools and practices facilitate effective relationships between elected officials and administrators in BC's local government system, and to assess potential gaps in existing tools.

1.1 The Project Client and Problem Definition

Many local governments across BC benefit from healthy working relationships between elected officials and administrative staff. Effective relationships enable local governments to operate efficiently to the benefit of the public. When relationships are effective, less time is diverted to relationship building in a crisis situation, or to conflict resolution, and more resources can be put towards the daily operations of local governments. Ineffective relationships can have the opposite effect on local governments; they can slow down operations, impact effective governance, and make collaboration, innovation and compromise more challenging. Understanding what tools and practices facilitate healthy relationships between elected officials and administrators can be useful for enabling efficient operations and effective governance of local governments, and for creating healthy working environments for elected officials and staff members.

This project is being written for the Local Government Division of the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development (The Ministry). The Ministry is responsible for supporting local governments, non-profit organizations and residents to create healthy communities that are safe, economically resilient, well governed and provide residents with opportunities to participate in sports and the arts (BC Ministry of Community Sport and Cultural Development [CSCD], 2015, p. 5). Part of this responsibility includes providing local governments with the support, tools and practices that enable them to provide residents with the services, programs and governance that they require. The Ministry works with local governments in a number of

different areas ranging from grants and programs, incorporation studies, planning, dispute resolution, to providing the intent of local government legislation. The Ministry also provides local governments with advisory services and materials that can be used to aid them in making decisions and solving complex issues.

One of the program areas that should specifically benefit from this research project is the Governance and Structure Branch, located within the Ministry's Local Government Division. The staff in the Branch that provide advisory services are responsible for advising local governments on a range of local government issues, assisting local governments with governance and service delivery issues and partnering with local government organizations to provide education, advice and best practices (CSCD, n.d.(a), para. 1). One of the areas that staff provide local governments with clarification and advice about is how to facilitate more effective relationships between council members and administrative staff. In order to provide local governments with the most accurate and appropriate advice and resources for building more effective relationships, the Ministry identified the need for further research and analysis, particularly around some of the current gaps in information and practices. Although this project was written for the Ministry, the recommendations and information included within the project are applicable to and are intended for the benefit of the entire local government system.

1.2 Project Scope

The scope of this project includes regional districts and municipalities in BC that collectively are referred to as 'local government'. Local governments are composed of a politically elected council or board and an administration that is appointed based on the principles of merit. Elected officials and administrators have different responsibilities that together comprise the everyday functions and operations of a local government. Elected officials, such as councillors, and mayors are responsible for developing policy and representing the interests of the local government (UBCM, 2015, p. 11). Administrators, on the other hand, take the policy direction of council and put it into practice through the delivery of services and other operations of the local government (UBCM, 2015, p. 13). Strong, resilient working relationships between council members and administrative staff are important for ensuring that the operations of local governments are carried out as effectively and efficiently as possible (Siegel, 2015, p. 406).

George Cuff (2009a, p. 65) a seasoned consultant on municipal governance, cites that "If I had but one opportunity to get a message across to those entering the field of local government, or almost any other profession, I would emphasize the fundamental value of building sound relationships." Additionally, Cuff (2009b, p. 85) mentions that there needs to be a clear understanding of the significant differences between the roles of council and the CAO. Creating a definition for each of the roles in a local government can be useful in clarifying the responsibilities for each role and uncovering areas of potential overlap, thereby reducing conflict between roles.

To foster and maintain effective relationships, deal with role confusion, role overlap and provide local governments with guidance in better understanding their legislated roles and

responsibilities, Canadian provinces typically provide advisory materials and resources for administrative staff, council members or both (with some of the materials touching on disputes between council and administration). Although the Ministry provides a range of advice and assistance to local governments for fostering healthy relationships, it would like to further explore research on this topics to understand what other tools may be helpful to strengthen these relationships.

1.3 Project Objectives and Research Questions

Although many local governments already benefit from healthy working relationships, the purpose of this project is to identify specific tools and practices that local governments use, or could use, to further facilitate healthy working relationships between elected officials and administrators in BC's local governments. Providing local governments with more proactive advice and materials about facilitating stronger relationships may assist with reducing the number of instances that reach a critical vent or crisis point.

The Governance and Structure Branch of the Ministry and the local government system may benefit from additional information about what tools and practices assist local governments in creating and maintaining healthy working relationships, so that the Ministry is better equipped to provide local governments with support. To be able to provide local governments with more targeted resources, the gaps in information available about factors that can strain relationships and factors that facilitate more effective relationships would benefit from further research and analysis.

Thus, the primary research question this project intended to address is:

What tools and practices are, or could be used by, local governments to facilitate effective relationships between elected officials and administrative staff in BC?

In addition to the primary research question, the following areas were explored:

- **Issue Identification:**
 - What does the scholarly literature (both within and outside Canada) say about facilitating effective relationships between elected officials and administrators?
 - What are some of the pressures that local governments are currently managing which have placed strain on relationships between elected officials and administrators?
- **Current Tools and Information:**
 - What tools and resources are available to local governments in BC?
 - What tools and information do other Canadian provinces provide to their local governments for facilitating more effective relationships?
- **The Gaps in Tools and Information:**
 - What tools and information is available to local governments in BC are not being utilized to their full potential?
 - What do elected officials and administrators identify as areas that could benefit from additional tools and information?

For the purpose of this report, healthy and effective relationships refer to relationships that are built upon mutual trust and respect. A healthy and effective relationship between elected officials and administrative staff is one in which both parties understand each other's role and responsibilities, respect the advice and opinions of one another, establish open lines of communication and minimize conflict (unless it is used constructively). A healthy and effective relationship enables both parties to work co-operatively together to further the goals and priorities of the local government in a way that is respectful of the local government's resources (e.g. time and money).

1.4 Rationale and Importance

The rationale for writing this report is to discover information about what fosters effective relationships in local governments. There is literature available about this subject from other local governments and provincial governments within Canada, as well as in other jurisdictions; however, there is limited research that is specific to the BC context. BC is unique in that it is comprised of both municipalities and regional districts that have slightly different governance structures than other provinces. Each province has different local government actors that are prescribed varying responsibilities in provincial local government legislation; the responsibilities of an actor in one province can be different from the responsibilities of the same actor in BC. Additionally, each province has its own local government organizations that contribute to the local government system in different ways. The unique context of BC's local government system provides a need for research and analysis specific to BC.

There continues to be conflict between various roles within local governments that can have wide-reaching effects on the healthy functioning of local governments and the community-at-large (for example, a number of recent examples of fallouts between council and their administration in some communities across BC such as Nanaimo, McBride, Pouce Coupe, Saanich and Lantzville). Discovering the reasons for such conflicts and ways to foster good relationships, and prevent the breakdown of others is timely for conducting a research project on this topic. There is also the potential for this information to be used by the client, specific local governments, and local government organizations (e.g., the Local Government Management Association and the Union of BC Municipalities to develop other complementary informational materials and/or resources).

1.5 Organization of the Report

Following the introduction of this report, the second chapter provides contextual information about BC's local government system, including the different forms of local governments, the composition of local governments, and the legislative framework of local governments. Chapter three discusses the methodologies that were used to guide this project; detailing the four different methods that were used to gather and analyze data.

Chapters four through six, which is the body of the report, discuss the different themes and findings that were discovered through the four methods that were used; a literature review, a cross jurisdictional scan, semi-structured one-on-one interviews and a focus group. Chapter

seven, the discussion presents the analysis of overall themes that emerged from the research project. Chapter eight lists six recommendations for the local government system to consideration. A conclusion, list of references and package of appendices rounds out the remainder of the report.

2.0 Background

This chapter discusses the local government system in BC, including the different forms of local governments that are relevant to this project, the structure of councils, regional district boards and the administration, the key roles of each actor, the legislative framework of local governments and the role of some local government partner organizations in BC's local government system. The purpose of this section is to give the reader a strong foundation for understanding how BC's local government system operates and the key actors within it, as it relates to the research question.

2.1 Overview of the Local Government System

BC's local government system is based upon a number of key elements: responsibility, financial independence, intergovernmental collaboration; and public accountability (CSCD, 2006a, pp. 4-5). The system is unique in that it is primarily composed of two different forms of local government: municipalities and regional districts. There are a number of other local government authorities that are commonly governed by an elected board and provide local services such as improvement districts, water communities, regional hospital districts and library boards (UBCM, 2014(a), pp. 1-6); however, for the purpose of this report 'local governments' refers only to municipalities and regional districts.

2.1.1 Municipalities

Municipalities in BC were established in the mid 1800's. They were first created to provide local services to the public as BC's population began to steadily increase due to the fur trade and the gold rush. Today there are 162 municipalities in BC with populations varying from approximately 110 residents in Zeballos (excluding the resort municipality of Jumbo Glacier, which has a population of zero) to over 640,000 in the City of Vancouver (CSCD, 2014). There are four different types of municipalities—villages, towns, cities and districts—which are generally defined by the size and density of their population (Bish and Clemens, 2008, p. 25).

Municipalities only cover a small portion of the land base in BC, yet contain approximately 87% of the population (CSCD, n.d.(c), para 3). Municipalities are responsible for providing municipal residents with services such as police, fire, transportation, water, sewer, park and recreation, and business licensing (Bish & Clemens, 2008, pp. 29-30). Municipalities, similar to regional districts, are one of the closest levels of government to the public. The public's proximity to municipalities gives them the opportunity to be more directly engaged in community activities and express their concerns to municipal councils.

Municipalities are granted their powers through provincial legislation, which will be described below, but are also provided with a great deal of authority in both governing and carrying out their daily operations. While the Province and municipalities do share some space in concurrently regulating specific activities in the five distinct spheres of "public health, protection of the natural habitat, wildfire building standards and prohibition of soil deposit or removal" (CSCD, n.d.(b), para 2), and although the Province plays a role in some local issues; overall, municipalities, similar

to regional districts, are treated as an independent and autonomous level of government by the Province.

2.1.2 Regional Districts

The regional district system is relatively new in comparison to the municipal system, which had been around for approximately 100 years before the regional system was implemented in 1965 (UBCM, 2015, p. 6). There are 27 regional districts in BC that have populations ranging from 3,200 people in the Central Coast to over 2.3 million in Metro Vancouver (UBCM, 2015, p. 6). Regional districts cover nearly the whole province, with the exception of the Stikine region in Northwest BC. They are comprised of member municipalities and unincorporated areas, otherwise known as electoral areas (UBCM, 2014(b), p. 1).

Regional districts serve three main functions in BC, they: provide regional governance and a forum of representation for regional communities and residents; provide a political and administrative framework for partnerships between municipalities and regional areas; and provide local government for rural areas with no municipalities (CSCD, 2006b, p. 5). Because regional districts represent both municipalities and rural areas, they must maintain accountability to the member municipalities and to the public (CSCD, 2006b, p. 12). Regional districts are hybrids that provide both regional and local services. Although regional districts are only mandated to provide a few services (ex. solid waste planning and emergency planning), the flexible arrangement of the regional district model allows for the provision of many more services, and at many scales, to effectively customize the needs of each region and its individual members (Bish & Clemens, 2009, pp. 49-50).

2.2 The Legislative Framework

There are two main acts administered by the Ministry that create the structure for both municipalities and regional districts; the *Community Charter* and the *Local Government Act* (Vancouver is governed by a separate piece of legislation, the *Vancouver Charter*) (CSCD, n.d. (d)). As laid out in the legislation, local governments are: autonomous and self-governing; democratically elected; non-partisan in theory and structure; corporate by design but with governmental powers and self-financed, mostly through taxes on property and fees for specific services. Under the legislation, regional districts and municipalities are held accountable to, and by, the residents which they represent (CSCD (c), n.d.).

The *Local Government Act* provides the authority to create municipalities and regional districts; together with the *Community Charter* these two acts enable regional districts and municipalities to perform their responsibilities (Harding, 2012, p. 1). Generally, the local government legislation is based upon the principle of maintaining accountability to citizens and is enabling rather than prescriptive, granting local governments a large deal of freedom in carrying out their business. Specifically, many sections within the *Local Government Act* are applicable to both municipalities and regional districts such as accountability processes (CSCD, n.d.(d)) nomination of candidates for office, voting, land use management and qualifications for local government office.

The *Community Charter* lays out the legal framework for municipalities, which grants them the legal status of a person and provides them with a broad set of municipal powers and duties that can be used to address community needs (Bish & Clemens, 2008, p. 23). Additionally, the *Community Charter* grants municipalities certain regulatory power and concurrent regulatory authority in five spheres, and contains a provision which outlines the framework for provincial-municipal cooperation (Bish & Clemens, 2008, p. 23). The *Community Charter* also includes principles and a section that holds the Province accountable for consulting with the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) on any legislation that affects local governments, with the exception of schools (Bish & Clemens, 2008, p. 12).

There are five main municipal roles that are included under the *Community Charter*: councillor, mayor, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), financial officer and corporate officer (Community Charter, 2003). Councillors and mayors are elected by voters in each municipality to represent and act on the interests of the public (UBCM, 2015, p. 2); the CAO, corporate officer, and financial officer positions, on the other hand, are administrative, meaning they are not elected but instead are appointed to the positions (Bish and Clemens, 2008, p. 34). Often times, depending on the local government structure and size of the local government, an administrator might be responsible for more than one role (ex. CAO and corporate officer) (Bish and Clemens, 2008, p. 34). Consistent with the principles and legislative framework that sets out local governments as autonomous and independent (UBCM, 2015, p. 5) the *Community Charter* lays out broad responsibilities for each of the five roles.

Specific to regional districts, the *Local Government Act* includes provisions such as the purpose of regional districts, governance and procedures (including the composition of regional boards), general powers and responsibilities, specific service powers, bylaw enforcement, financial management and Regional Growth Strategies (Local Government Act, 2015). The main roles for regional districts such the corporate administration, financial administration and chief administrative officer are included in the *Local Government Act* (Local Government Act, 2015).

2.3 Composition of Councils, Regional Boards, and the Administration

There are two main areas of local government that are applicable to this research project: elected bodies and the administration, for both municipalities and regional districts. Municipal councils, regional district boards (the two elected bodies) and the administration will be discussed in more detail below, as they apply to the research project.

2.3.1 Municipal Councils

A municipal council is the governing body of a municipality and is responsible for developing policies, adopting bylaws and ensuring that these policies and bylaws are properly implemented and enforced by the administration (UBCM, 2014(c), p. 1). The council is composed of a mayor and an even number of councillors. The number of councillors generally depends on the size of the municipality—the larger the municipality, the more councillors. The number of councillors on a council can range from 2 to 10, but generally the number is 4, 6 or 8. Councillors and mayors serve for four year terms, commencing at the first meeting after the general election and concluding at the first meeting after the general election held four years later (UBCM, 2014(d),

p. 1). Additional council duties include financial planning and budget approval, appointment of regional district board representatives, consultation with citizens, and the appointment of certain administrative officials. A municipal council is also responsible for establishing, by bylaw, a corporate officer position and a financial officer position (the council is not required to appoint anyone to the CAO position, but in most cases does).

2.3.2 Regional District Boards

Similar to municipalities, regional districts are run by a group of elected members or directors (collectively known as a “regional district board”) and supported by administrative staff. Regional district boards are governed by a board of directors composed of elected officials appointed from the member municipalities of each regional district, directly elected electoral area directors and a chair. Directors that are appointed from municipalities are decided upon by vote of their respective municipal councils and remain on the board until their municipal council decides to change the appointment (CSCD, n.d.(e), para 3). Electoral area directors are directly elected to the regional district board by the electoral area and serve for a full four-year term (CSCD, n.d.(e), para 3). The chair is elected from and by the regional district directors each December to serve a one year term as chair (CSCD, n.d.(f), para 2). For an overview of appointments and elections to regional districts refer to *Figure 1*. The size of a regional district board is dependent on the population of the electoral areas and municipalities which compose the regional district (CSCD, n.d.(f), para 2). The regional district board is responsible for decision making, enacting bylaws, and ensuring an adequate provision of services to the regional district.

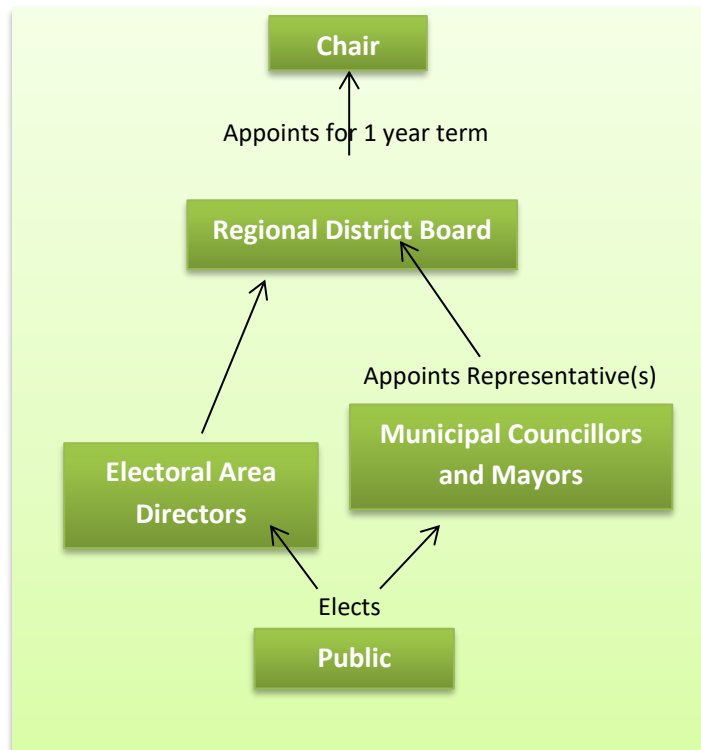


Figure 1. Regional Board Composition and Governance Structure

2.3.3 The Administration

Regional districts and municipalities both have an administrative component that is responsible for carrying out the day to day operations of the local government corporation. The role of administration is to implement the decisions made by a municipal council or regional board and to provide information and materials that help elected officials make informed decisions (UBCM, 2015). The administration is generally organized into a number of departments (depending on the size of the local government), each of which is headed by a director who reports to a senior official, often the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or corporate officer (UBCM, 2015, p. 13). In addition to the positions of CAO, corporate officer, and financial officer, many local governments (depending on the size of the population and resources) also fill the following positions: engineer, planner, approving officer, building inspector, recreation director and auditor (UBCM, 2015, pp. 13-14).

2.4 The Key Roles in Local Government

The following sections provide a brief summary about the main local government roles in BC and what their responsibilities are in relation to one another. The importance of each role to this report is discussed briefly below, for a more detailed list of the responsibilities assigned to each role in the legislation please refer to Appendix 1.

2.4.1 Chief Administrative Officer (Staff)

Both municipal councils and regional boards are granted the power to hire a CAO position; however, neither is required to do so (UBCM, 2014e, p. 1). The CAO is hired by council or the regional board to serve as the administrative head of the municipality or regional district, and as a liaison between administrative staff and elected officials. The CAO is responsible for ensuring policies and programs are implemented, advising and informing elected officials on the operations of the local government and any other local government affairs (e.g. staffing) (Bish and Clemens, 2008, p. 34). The CAO also provides elected officials with business and management advice, and acts as a representative in negotiations with other government bodies (District of Chetwynd, n.d. para 2).

The role of the CAO is defined within both the *Community Charter* and the *Local Government Act*. Although both of these acts broadly set out the responsibilities of the CAO, it is up to each local government to determine the scope of specific CAO responsibilities (Cuff, 2014, p. 7). The CAO works directly with both elected officials and administrative staff on a regular basis (UBCM, 2015, p. 13), more so than any other administrative position. It is the CAO's role to provide leadership in ensuring that the direction given by elected officials is properly implemented, managed and regulated (Bish and Clemens, 2008, p. 34). The CAO also works closely with department heads and senior management who are responsible for different areas of service (CSCD, 2005, p. 107). Additionally, to ensure that elected officials are kept informed about any issues or new updates, the CAO generally works closely with the mayor or regional district chair (Cuff, 2014, p. 9).

2.4.2 Corporate and Financial Officer/Administration (Staff)

There are two administrative roles which local governments are required to fill as legislated by the *Community Charter* and *Local Government Act*. These positions are corporate officer and financial officer for municipalities and corporate administration and financial administration for regional districts (UBCM, 2014e, p. 1). Although these two positions are given different titles in the legislation, their roles are relatively the same in both municipalities and regional districts. Unlike the CAO position, the local government legislation provides more specific responsibilities for the corporate and financial officer/ administration positions (Local Government Act, 2015; Community Charter, 2003).

The corporate officer/administration is seen as the expert of local government protocol and procedure and is responsible for official correspondence (UBCM, 2015, p. 13). The Union of BC Municipalities (2015, p. 13) states that “the corporate officer (administration) acts as the link between the public, staff, and the council or board. He or she is responsible for preparing agendas, keeping minutes of meetings, publishing official notices, drawing up bylaws, safeguarding public documents and providing public information”

The financial officer/ administration is in charge of the accounting functions of the local government, including the preparation of financial statements, as well as investing, receiving and expending funds in accordance with the policy direction of the local government and the law (UBCM, 2015, p. 13). The financial officer/ administration serves as the elected officials’ financial advisor, providing council with advice about how to finance capital projects, the steps involved in developing the five-year plan, advice regarding legality, expenditures, and information about taxation policy (UBCM, 2015, p. 13).

2.4.3 Mayor (Elected official)

BC’s *Community Charter* refers to the mayor as the ‘chief executive officer’ (UBCM, 2014c, p. 2). The mayor is responsible for serving a leadership role on municipal councils in addition to serving a similar policy making function as other councillors (e.g. only has one vote on council) (Bish and Clemens, 2008, p. 34). In addition to fulfilling councillor tasks, the mayor is responsible for leading council by facilitating a team approach among council members and the administration and serving as an unbiased moderator between council members and the administration by communicating information to both parties (Higgins & Goulden, 2012, p. 9). The mayor serves the leadership role for elected officials and the CAO serves the leadership role for staff. To ensure that there is coordination between policies developed by elected officials and the implementation of these policies by staff, the mayor and CAO benefit from working closely together.

2.4.4 Municipal Councillor (Elected official)

As legislated in the *Community Charter*, councillors have the responsibility for considering the well-being and interests of the municipality when making decisions, contributing to the development of programs and policies and participating in council meetings (Staples, 2008, p. 6). Councillors use their expertise, knowledge of the community and stakeholder consultations to set priorities and create policies that are in the interest of the municipality; this is often done

through a decision making process. Decision making on a council generally requires a simple majority of present councillors (for certain matters a two-third majority is necessary) (Bish and Clemens, 2008, p. 32). To arrive at a decision it is important for councillors to be able to work well with one another to ensure that council can arrive at strong decisions to guide the municipality. The work that councillors must undertake in weighing multiple interests and setting priorities and policies for the municipality creates a guideline for administrators to follow as they carry out the operations of the municipality (UBCM, 2015, pp. 11-12).

2.4.5 Regional District Board Chair (Elected official)

At the first meeting of the regional district board each year, the board elects a chair and a vice chair (UBCM, 2014f, p. 1). The board chair is the head and chief executive officer of the regional district (CSCD, 2005, p. 14). The responsibilities of the board chair are outlined in the *Local Government Act* and include such duties as presiding at board meetings, communicating information to the board, directing the management of regional district business and affair, and recommending bylaws, resolutions, and measures that may assist in good government (Local Government Act, 2015, s. 218). Similarly to mayors, the board chair serves as the key link between the board and the administrative organization of the regional district. The board chair's role also includes being a spokesperson for intergovernmental relations (Staples, 2006, p. 6) and providing leadership to board members.

2.4.6 Regional District Board Directors (Elected official)

There are two types of regional district directors: directly elected electoral area directors, and municipal directors who are appointed to the regional board by respective member municipalities (CSCD, 2005, p. 13). It is the responsibility of regional district directors to represent the interests of their municipality or electoral area on the board, while at the same time considering the interests of the entire region. Electoral area directors must, and municipal councils may, appoint alternate directors to serve in the absence of the director (CSCD, 2005, p. 13). As with municipalities, regional district directors set the direction for the regional district, by formulating the plan and priorities for the regional district, developing policies and adopting bylaws and resolutions to guide the regional district (UBCM, 2015, p. 12). It is the role of the regional districts administrative organization to put these policies and programs into practice by carrying out the day-to-day business of the regional district (UBCM, 2015, p. 12).

2.5 The Role of Local Government Partner Organizations

There are many partner organizations in BC, who through direct and indirect collaboration with the Province and local governments, play key roles in the effective governance and operations of the local government system. Partner organizations support and contribute to the local government system in a number of ways, and work directly with local governments, elected officials, administrators and the Province to provide supports, resources and platforms for organizing around local government issues. The number of organizations contributing to BC's local government system is vast (e.g. organizations representing finance, insurance, hospitals, school trustees), but for the purposes of this report, the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), the

Local Government Management Association (LGMA) and the Local Government Leadership Academy (LGLA) are highlighted, as these organizations have the most direct relevance to the project.

2.5.1 The Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM)

The Union of BC Municipalities was formed over 100 years ago to serve as a common voice for local governments in BC (UBCM, n.d., para 1). The Union of BC Municipalities serves an important role in BC's local government system by providing local government with a platform to bring issues forward to the Province (its advocacy role) and a way for local governments to work with one another on issues affecting multiple jurisdictions. The Province often looks to UBCM for advice and engagement on key local government issues to ensure that the voice of local governments is considered in developing and implementing provincial policy. This partner organization, with support from LGMA and LGLA, also plays a key role in providing resources and tools to elected officials and local governments for continuous growth and development.

One of the main roles of UBCM is to engage in policy work, the bulk of which is done through its annual convention held every September. The Union of BC Municipalities annual convention is a place for local government officials to network and discuss policy and local government issues, and includes a number of "clinics, resolutions and debates, as well as speeches from the Premier, Minister of CSCD [the Ministry] and the Leader of the Opposition" (BC Government News, 2015, para 1). The convention provides elected officials with workshops on important policy issues and a platform to voice concerns and discover other local governments grappling with similar issues. Additionally, at the convention local government officials are given the opportunity to submit and debate resolutions about key local government issues. The resolutions which are passed at the convention are submitted to the Province for consideration, responses from the Province and potentially further policy work (UBCM, 2016, para 1).

2.5.2 The Local Government Management Association (LGMA)

The Local Government Management Association provides support to the administrative professionals of the local government system. This partner organization also works directly with the other partners and the Province to identify areas where local government administrators may need more resources and supports. The local government management association provides supports to administrative professionals through mentoring, education, professional development and networking opportunities, and through products and services for local government managers to help them do their jobs, make valuable connections through networking opportunities and advance their careers (Local Government Leadership Academy [LGMA], n.d.(a), para 1).

The Local Government Management Association provides members with a number of educational programs such as an approving officers workshop, CAO forum, clerks and corporate officers forum, fire service administration and women in leadership forum (LGMA, n.d.(b), para 1-3). Other services offered by the LGMA for administrators are scholarships and accreditation programs such as the Board of Examiners Certification Program (offered in partnership with the

Ministry and UBCM) and the International Institute of Municipal Clerks accreditation/certification program for Municipal Clerks. The organization also provides administrators with educational opportunities through its Municipal Administration Training Institute (MATI) courses which cover topics such as management, leadership, CAO success and communications (LGMA, n.d. (c)). The main event that the LGMA holds for its members is an Annual General Meeting (attended by approximately 400 to 500 delegates) and conference which provides members with educational session on current issues and keynote speakers (LGMA, n.d. (d), para 1-2).

2.5.3 The Local Government Leadership Academy (LGLA)

The Local Government Leadership Academy (LGLA) is a leadership development initiative for local government and First Nations elected officials and senior administrators (Local Government Leadership Academy [LGLA], n.d.(a), para 1). The Academy was founded in 2005 when, in acknowledgement of its 100th anniversary, as stated by LGLA (n.d.(b), para 1) “UBCM conducted an analysis of training and educational resources available to local elected officials and senior administrators in British Columbia”. The analysis found that there was a need for a more coordinated, comprehensive support for local government elected officials and senior staff; and thus, the LGLA was developed with support of the Provincial Government and five other agencies (LGLA, n.d.(b), para 1).

The Local Government Leadership Academy provides elected officials and senior administrators with leadership development opportunities to improve local governance (LGLA, n.d.(c), para 1). The organization also works closely with UBCM and LGMA to identify areas where elected officials and administrators may need additional support and resources to successfully act in their roles. Many of the programs and workshops that are offered by the LGLA are taught by people who have either done extensive consulting for local governments, who currently work for or represent local governments or who have had an extensive career in local government. The LGLA also provides elected officials and administrators with a number of written materials (available on its website) on topics such as roles and responsibilities, local government law, local government finance, community planning and decision making (LGLA, n.d.(d)). A unique certification program in local government leadership is also offered to elected officials through LGLA (LGLA, n.d.(e)).

2.6 Summary

BC has a complex and unique local government system. Understanding all of the components of the system as they relate to relationships, roles and responsibilities is important to understand when researching the relationship between elected officials and administrative staff. The *Community Charter* and *Local Government Act* are the primary pieces of local government legislation in BC, together serving as the framework for BC’s local government system. These two acts grant local governments a great deal of authority and autonomy in carrying out their operations while ensuring that local governments remain directly accountable to the residents that they represent.

Local government partner organizations also play an important role in BC’s local governments system. They channel input and concerns from local governments to senior levels of government (and vice versa), and provide forums for local governments to come together and discuss issues impacting multiple jurisdictions and interests. These partner organizations are also important in identifying areas where elected officials and administrators can benefit from supports, resources and tools and through delivery of relevant resources, course and workshops. Finally, local government organizations work collaboratively with the Province to ensure that local government issues and provincial priorities are being best aligned to serve residents. Refer to *Figure 2* for a visual overview of the topics discussed in this chapter.

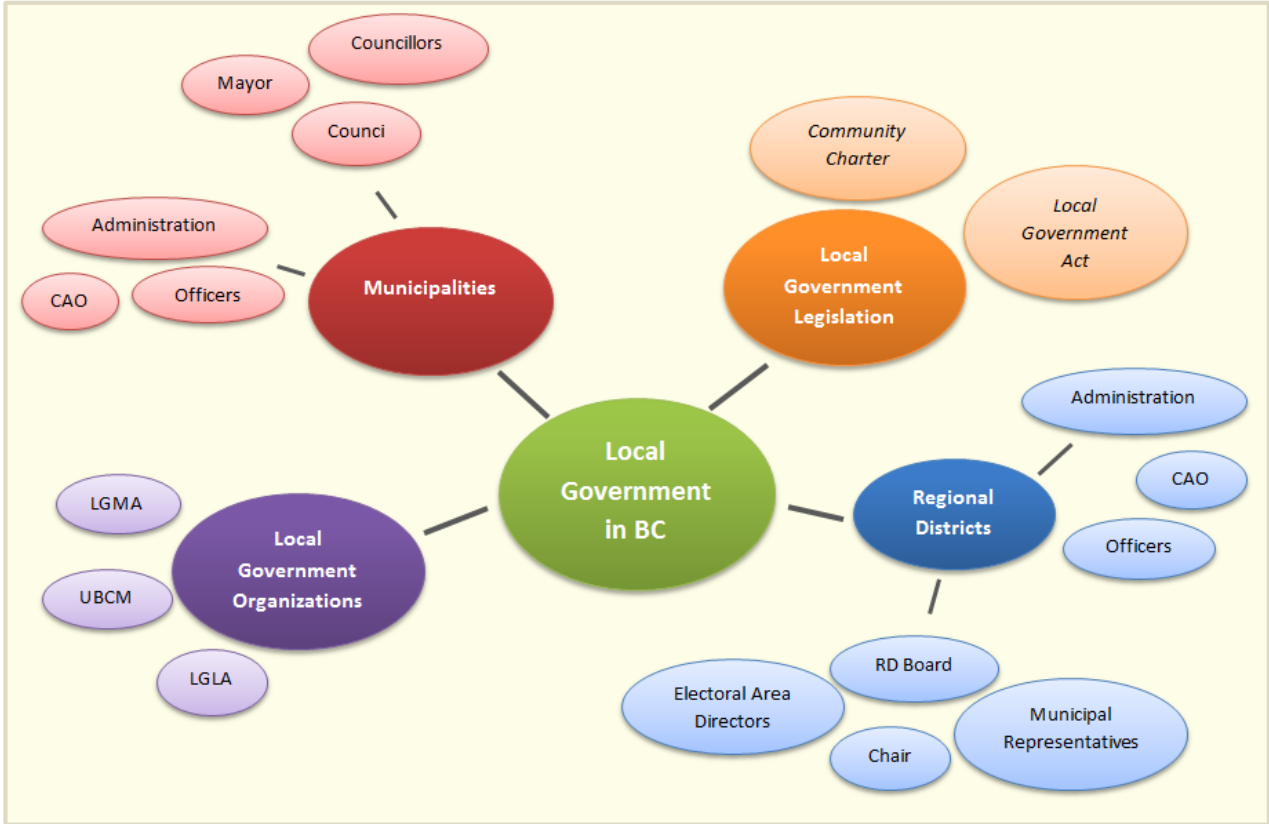


Figure 2. Local Government in BC.

3.0 Methodology and Methods

To gain insight into what tools and practices facilitate effective relationships between elected officials and administrative staff, a range of approaches and methods were used, including a literature review, a cross jurisdictional document review, semi-structured interviews and a focus group. The primary research methodology that was used to frame the research design was a needs assessment, as well as a cross jurisdictional scan. Details on how these methodologies and methods were applied for the research project are discussed below.

3.1 Methodology

Two methodologies were used in this project, a needs assessment which served as the primary methodology (using three data collection methods) and a cross-jurisdictional scan which served as a secondary methodology (using a document review).

3.1.1 Needs Assessment

The University of Minnesota notes that “A needs assessment is a systematic process of investigating a population or community to assess the state of current resources such as knowledge, abilities, interests, and approaches pertinent to the focus of the needs assessment” (n.d., para. 1). Needs assessments are commonly conducted to assess whether there is a need for a program or service, by examining the way things are with the way things could be (University of Minnesota, n.d., para. 2-3). Needs assessments suggest what the probable need for services or programs are based off of the information that the researcher collects; it is not conclusive because the final assessment is dependent on the data that the researcher is able to gather (Soriano, 1995, p. 2). The purpose of using a needs assessment for this research was to identify issues that could be placing strain on healthy relationships and the tools, practices and resources that can address these issues. The needs assessment uncovers what the needs are (e.g. tools and training) for fostering more effective relationships.

3.1.2 Cross Jurisdictional Scan

The cross jurisdictional scan was used to review tools, information, and resources provided by other jurisdictions about relationships between local government administrators and elected officials. Cross jurisdictional scans are often used to identify what is done in other jurisdictions, and to identify good practices to consider. For example, in the chapter written by Gerald included in *New Accountabilities, New Challenges* by Wanna, Lindquist and Marshall (2015, p. 399), Gerald uses a cross jurisdictional scan in her study on the Australian National Audit Office to identify how often other national audit agencies apply cooperative performance audits, and how they apply them.

The cross jurisdictional scan is limited to jurisdictions that have a similar local government system to BC; therefore, it includes the tools and resources other Canadian provinces provide. Every Canadian province was reviewed for the cross jurisdictional scan because each one provided its local government’s with a unique mix of tools and practices. Although other states and countries

provide tools and resources to local governments, the scan was limited to Canadian provinces because these jurisdictions are the most similar to BC.

The purpose of the cross jurisdictional research was to create a better understanding about the tools that other governments use to facilitate effective relationships. This information provided examples of what the gaps in tools and practices could be for BC's local governments. Sources used for the cross jurisdictional scan were all publicly available through the internet, primarily posted on government websites or contained within guidebooks, handbooks and other resources available on the internet. Additionally, provincial legislation was also referred to in order to obtain a better understanding about the context within which other provinces provided these tools and resources.

3.2 Methods

The primary research for this project was qualitative research collected from interview and focus group participants. The research methods typically associated with a qualitative research methodology are in-depth interviews, focus groups, case studies and ethnographic studies (Jencik, 2011, p.510). The use of a qualitative methodology is intended to yield rich, in-depth findings that would be difficult to obtain by use of quantitative methods such as surveys. Qualitative research can lead to powerful theory because the research is concerned with the variety and the complexity of different social contexts (Brower, Abolafia, & Carr, 2000, p. 368). Qualitative research is also generally inductive in nature (Leaderman & Leaderman, 2013, p.1074), meaning that the findings from the research emerge from the main themes uncovered from the raw data instead of being structured by a specific methodology (Thomas, 2006, p. 283). An inductive approach guided this research study because prior to conducting the research the themes that would emerge from the data were not fully known; therefore, an inductive approach provided more flexibility for conducting research and analyzing the data.

Four methods were used to collect data: a literature review, a cross jurisdictional document review, interviews and a focus group. Together, the four methods cover a breadth of information from scholarly sources, multi-jurisdictional government publications and from the personal experience and knowledge of individual interview and focus group participants. The combination of secondary data gathered from the literature review and cross jurisdictional scan was used to form a good basis of information about the topic, while the individual interviews and focus group provided more detailed, personal information, that in combination were analyzed to uncover themes.

3.2.1 Literature Review

The first method used in this study, the literature review, was intended to provide a background on the scholarly information that is available on this topic. While there are many different types of literature reviews, they are typically a comprehensive survey of inquiries that have previously been undertaken that relate to the research question (Miller & Yang, 2007, p. 62). Additionally, a literature review tends to explain why the research is important, gives a historical background

on the subject, and discusses what is known and not known about the research topic (Miller & Yang, 2007, p. 62).

The literature review in this study assessed different themes relating to local government relationships such as good governance, role definition, conflict between roles, internal government relations and the relationship between council and the CAO. There are many scholars as well as local government practitioners such as C. Richard Tindal, Susan Nobes Tindal, George Cuff and David Siegel, who have done extensive research on local government related to governance and the roles and responsibilities of local government elected officials and administrators whose work was also analyzed in the literature review. This research served as the basis for understanding what types of tools and practices scholars believe facilitate healthy working relationships within governments.

Data gathered from the literature review was first broken down and analyzed by theme in the literature review chapter and was then compared with the data gathered from the cross jurisdictional scan, interviews and focus group in the seventh chapter of the report. The sources used for the literature review were accessed through the internet via google and google scholar, UVic's Summons 2.0 from databases such as Wiley Online Library, JSTOR and Taylor & Francis Online, and the CSCD library and online catalogue. The main search terms used were 'council-staff relationships', 'political administration relations local government', 'CAO council', and 'roles and responsibilities local government',

3.2.2 Cross Jurisdictional Document Review

The purpose of the cross jurisdictional research was to create a better understanding about the tools that other governments use to facilitate effective relationships. This information provided examples of what the gaps in tools and practices could be for BC's local governments. Sources used for the cross jurisdictional scan were all publicly available through the internet, primarily posted on government websites or contained within guidebooks, handbooks and other resources available on the internet. Additionally, provincial legislation was also referred to in order to obtain a better understanding about the context within which other provinces provided these tools and resources.

3.2.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are interviews that generally consist of a number of questions that are followed-up by further improvised prompt questions that seek additional information from the interviewee regarding their response to the original question (Wengraf, 2001, p. 12). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with retired elected officials and administrators who had multiple years of experience working in BC's local government system. The goal of the interviews was to gain in-depth knowledge about the tools and practices that facilitate effective relationships from people who have ample experience in the field. People who have worked in local government have had to navigate relationships with their co-workers and therefore have used specific tools and practices to help them be successful in their relationships. They are the people who know what works and what does not work; therefore, it was expected that they

would be able to provide detailed information to compliment the information which was gathered through the other methods.

For this research project, interviewees were selectively sampled from retired elected officials and current or retired administrative staff. Selective sampling, otherwise known as purposive sampling, is a form of non-probability sampling in which the researcher selects interviewees on the basis of which people will provide the most useful information or be the most representative (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2014, p. 162). The reason for the use of selective sampling is to obtain findings that are provocative, lead to new insights, and can be compared and contrasted with the other evidence that is gathered (Brower, Abolafia, & Carr, 2000, p. 368).

In selecting potential interview participants, a list of criteria was taken into consideration to ensure that they would provide the most useful and in-depth information. The criteria included: number of years working in local government, type of local governments the participant had worked for and which local government the participant had worked for. Additionally, when crafting the list, consideration was given to those who may have experienced challenging relationships or had been in situations where they were able to overcome challenging relationships. The process used to select interview participants was a collaborative effort with input from staff within the Ministry and a LGMA staff member, in addition to information already available to the Governance and Structure Branch of the Ministry. The Union of BC Municipalities was also consulted with and invited to provide input into the selection of interview participants but was unable to participate any further in the process.

Twelve people were contacted about participating in the research project with the goal of conducting at least 10 interviews. The aim was to interview an even mix of retired elected officials and administrative staff to ensure that the data was as balanced as possible between the two groups. Of the 12 people contacted to be interviewed, 11 agreed to participate; of which six were retired elected officials and five were administrative staff. The sample was also limited to people who had worked primarily in BC's local government system; however, it was not limited to any one area in BC. Additionally, one local government practitioner was not able to participate in the focus group so a one-on-one interview was held with this individual. The findings from this interview were included with and analyzed with the other interviews, thereby rounding out the 12 individual interviews.

Once the list of potential interview participants was compiled, they were contacted about participating in the interview and given a short summary of the project proposal (to provide them with more background information about the project) and a consent form to fill out if they chose to participate (See Appendix 2). The respondents who had publicly available contact information were contacted by the researcher about participating in the research study either by email or by phone. Respondents who did not have publicly available information were contacted by a Ministry staff member about the study and directed to me if they were interested in participating.

The 12 interviews took place between June and August of 2016 either at a coffee shop or over the phone. Interviews were held in person when feasible (close enough proximity between the researcher and the participant); in cases where it was not, the interview was held over the phone.

All interviews were recorded and notes were taken by the researcher during the interviews. The interview was guided by a set of interview questions (see Appendix 3) which was mixed with additional probing questions. The interviews ranged in length from approximately 30 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes.

3.2.4 Focus Group

The final data collection method used for this project was a small focus group held with local government practitioners. Hennick (2013, p. 1) states that “the aim of a focus group discussion is to gain a broad range of views on the research topic over a 60-90 minute period, and to create an environment where participants feel comfortable to express their views”. Participants for the focus group were selectively sampled from people who would provide the most applicable information for answering the research question and this meant people who had amassed a great deal of knowledge about relationships within BC’s local government system were approached. Many of the people selected for the focus group teach local government courses at universities, do consulting work for local governments, and/or teach seminars to local government professionals. Selecting people with knowledge in these areas was intended to provide a broader view on the themes and trends in local government that could affect relationships between elected officials and administrative staff.

Members for the focus group were contacted in the same manner as interview participants (see Appendix 4 for focus group consent form). Five participants took part in the focus group that was held at a Ministry meeting room. The two clients (research team) and the researcher were present for the focus group. The focus group lasted approximately two hours and was structured around themes and open ended questions that any participant was welcome to speak to. The focus group was recorded and notes were taken by the researcher and research team. The researcher was responsible for guiding the focus group discussion; however, to allow participants to discuss a wide range of information relevant to the research question, the researcher allowed for a fairly open format for discussion (refer to Appendix 5 for a list of questions which guided the focus group discussion).

3.3 Data Analysis

A thematic approach was taken to analyzing the data that was collected through the four methods. Thematic data analysis is a systematic approach used to analyze qualitative data, often involving the identification of themes and patterns by coding and classifying data (Lapadat, 2010, p. 926). Once data is organized by theme it is analyzed by “seeking commonalities, relationships, overarching patterns, theoretical constructs, or explanatory principles” (Lapadat, 2010, p. 926).

The way the data that was collected was organized was through the use of open coding. Open coding segments the data into concepts and categories through the use of comparative methods to group data together and give these groups conceptual labels (Pandit, 1996, pp. 10-11). Coding is used to identify and label concepts that occur throughout the data (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2014, p. 380) so that they can be made sense of, and later organized into themes. Rather than having a predetermined list of themes, the themes emerged while coding the data. The themes which

emerged from each method were then compared and contrasted and presented in the discussion and recommendation chapter.

3.4 Strengths and Weaknesses

3.4.1 Strengths

One of the greatest strengths of the data collection was the participation rate and enthusiasm of participants. Of the 18 people contacted to participate in either the focus group and or the one-on-one interviews, 17 agreed to participate. The participants were eager to share their stories and their knowledge on the topic which made it easier to draw out themes when analyzing the data. Additionally, the participants all had an extensive background in local government; therefore, they all provided rich and relevant information about the tools and practices that they found useful and what tools and practices could be considered.

Another strength of the research is the multi-faceted approach which was taken to collecting data. By using four different approaches, the topic could be explored from a number of different angles. Collecting a wide range of data from scholarly sources, other governments and from individuals with local government experience provided a breadth of information that could be compared and contrasted to uncover themes. Many themes emerged in multiple methods which also gave the themes more weight because they did not emerge from only a single data source.

3.4.2 Weaknesses

One of the main limitations of the research is sample size and the method of sampling. Time and resource constraints for this project limited the number of people that could be interviewed and the number of focus groups that could be held. While the small sample size was able to yield insightful data; the findings cannot be generalized to the larger population. The different characteristics of each of BC's 189 local governments cannot be fully represented by the findings from the 12 interview and five focus group participants; however, they would likely share many similarities.

Another weakness of the study, regarding the cross jurisdictional scan, is the amount of information that was available about relationships on the internet. Outside jurisdictions were not contacted for samples of materials that they provide to their local governments; therefore, the research relies on information readily available online. There may be additional important resources, practices and tools that other jurisdictions use and provide that were not researched in this project because they were not readily available online. A potential avenue for future work to address this limitation could be conducting interviews with provincial staff and/ or elected officials and administrative staff from outside provinces.

Although these could be seen as weaknesses to the study, the research was structured to capture as much data about the topic as feasible through multiple methods, taking into consideration time and resource restraints.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has laid out the methodologies that guided this research project and the four different research approaches that were used to collect data: a literature review, cross jurisdictional document review, semi-structured interviews and a focus group. Through the use of multiple qualitative methods, the research is able to benefit from a range of data collected from multiple sources and instruments. The next three chapters will present the findings from the four methods; the first of which will be the literature review.

4.0 Literature Review

A literature review was conducted to develop an understanding about the scholarly research available about facilitating effective relationships between elected officials and administrative staff at the local government level. Because the local government system differs by region, the literature review only covers literature from areas which have similar local government systems to BC, such as the USA and other Canadian provinces. Although BC has a unique local government system that consists of both municipalities and regional districts, it is believed that the literature from outside of BC is still applicable for answering the research question in the BC context. Many of the themes that emerged from the literature review are applicable to local governments regardless of if they are a regional district or municipality.

The dominant themes that emerged from the literature that will be discussed in the following sections are: the relationship between politics and administration, roles and responsibilities, overlapping roles, the council-manager form of local government, personality traits and skills differences, challenges to the system and conflict.

4.1 The Relationship between Politics and Administration

This section reviews the literature on relationships between elected officials and administrative staff more generally, prior to delving into the literature that touches more specifically on aspects of this relationship. Jacobsen (2006, p. 303) writes that “the relationship between politics and administration has been one of the most central topics in public administration since the writings of Woodrow Wilson and Max Weber”. Svava (2006, p. 1065) sees the relationships between politics and administration as an absorbing issue at all levels of government, but is the most accessible and visible at the local government level. Another way to look at the relationship between administration and politicians is as an “active exchange within limits” (Svava, 2008, p. 49). In this sense, actors in one sphere cannot perform the functions of actors from another sphere but they often times might have to perform limited actions generally performed by the other actor (Svava, 2008, p. 49).

Looking specifically at local governments, one of the main ways in which councils and staff define a successful municipality is one that has respectful, harmonious relationships in which people are engaged in positive and productive relationships with the people who they work together with (Kearns, 2005, p. 25). A healthy working relationship between the CAO and council allows council to delegate increased policy-making authority to the CAO, thus giving the CAO a greater sense of self-empowerment in his or her job (Demir & Reddick, 2012, p. 528). Many scholars have looked at the relationship between elected official and administrative staff at the federal and provincial/state level, but there is less information available about the relationship at the local government level.

4.2 Council-Manager Form of Government

The council-manager form of local government is the most dominant form of local government in place across Canada. Because this form of local government is the most dominant form, there is a substantial body of research which examines this form of government. While not all local

government in Canada use this system, (other forms include the council-mayor system and the committee system) previous cross-Canadian studies have revealed that most do and that it is the most successful structure used (Cuff, 2009a, p. 100). Not only is it the most commonly use form of local government in Canada, but it is also the most popular form of local government in Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (International City/County Management Association,2007, p. 2).

The council-manager form of local government was borne out of the reform movement in the States to combat unethical behaviour and corruption in local government by ensuring effective management within the structure (IMCA, 2007, p. 2). Under this system the major political/administrative interactions take place between the office of the city manager and council (McAllister, 2004, p. 210). The manager is hired by the council and is required to be responsive to the interests of council and to serve at the pleasure of council without a set term (Svara, 1990, p. 52). The primary role of elected officials is to set goals and strategies and it largely remain separate from management decisions other than selecting the manger and periodically conducting performance reviews of the manager (Svara, 2006, p. 1068). In comparison, the mayor-council form of local government is characterized by separation of powers between the legislative (council) and executive (mayor) functions (Nelson, 2011, p. 543).

Scholars have assessed how well the council-manager system operates compared to other systems. Svara (1990, p. 54) found that the council-manager system is more predisposed to cooperation and less so to conflict than the council-mayor system. Tindal et al. (2013, p. 312) claim “proponents of the council manager system contend that it provides for greatly improved coordination of administrative activities, frees the councillors from unnecessary detail, and allows them to concentrate on their primary role of policy making”. This system takes the strong political leadership of elected officials and combines it with the managerial and administrative experience of an appointed manager (IMCA, 2007, p. 2).

The Canadian system more generally, does not always place as much focus on a complete separation between the responsibilities of elected officials and the administration, as sometimes council will have a relationship with department heads (Tindal et al., 2013, pp. 313-314). There is also the view that the council-manager system strengthens the position of professional administrators while at the same time weakening the position of the elected officials (Svara, 1990, p. 70). A study by Killian and Choudhury (2010, p. 17) found that many city managers would like to spend more time on the political role and less time on the management and policy role. Additionally, research by Demir and Reddick (2012, p. 528) showed that the longer a CAO works in office the more they are able to develop a greater power base in their communities which affects how they perceive their roles in relation to council. CAOs that are more experienced and educated have greater insight into what makes local government more efficient and effective and are more likely to reflect the priorities of council (Demir and Reddick, 2012, p. 528).

4.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Much of the research on relationships between elected officials and administrative staff in local government focuses on understanding the roles and responsibilities of councillors, the mayor and the CAO as a means of facilitating effective relationships between elected officials and administrative staff. Kearns (2005, p. 25) states that a great deal of the current literature focuses on governance, in particular, on the roles and responsibilities of councillors and senior staff members. While many scholars believe that identifying roles and responsibilities is an important process for facilitating effective relationships between council and staff, many believe that it can also be one of the most challenging things for local governments to do. For example, Leach (2010, p. 96) provides a list of qualities that foster good relationships, claiming that the most difficult thing on this list is clearly defining the respective roles and responsibilities in a way that encompasses the key differences between the 'political' and 'managerial' roles but also with enough flexibility to apply it.

Another area of literature on roles and responsibilities speaks to separation, or lack thereof, between the roles and responsibilities of elected officials and administrative staff. Siegel (2010, p. 155) claims that the separation between politicians and administrators is permeable where the two meet. Additionally, Siegel (2010, p. 155) argues that the fluidity makes it very challenging to specify the role of the CAO and the mayor and councillors, regardless of attempts to clarify these roles through mechanism such as bylaws or employment contracts. Despite the difficulty of clarifying roles and responsibilities, Tindal and Tindal (2007, p. 117) emphasise the importance of developing a code of practice and a protocol as a way of formalizing arrangements between elected officials and administrative staff. Tindal and Tindal (2007, p. 118) claim that putting a protocol or code of practice into writing provides for continuity of the relationship over time and can serve as a valuable tool to be used for new staff and councillor orientation and training activities. Additionally, a report conducted by the United Kingdom's Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Commission recommended that CAOs and elected officials negotiate their roles early on in their relationship with one another (Finlay, 2007, pp. 34-35).

Svara (1990, p.144) speaks to the roles and responsibilities of councillors more broadly, stating that councillors are responsible for shaping the mission of the organization, detailing the overall purpose of the organization and developing the major goals that the organization should pursue. Hansen (2001, p. 115) echoes this, claiming that local councillors have been given the role of being general goal-steering decision makers, who are responsible for setting the overall goals of the local government as well as the financial framework of it. Svara (1990, p. 146) also claims that there are potentially three roles that a council member can fill depending on the local government: representational, governance and supervisory. Cuff (2002, pp. 43-47) developed an expanded generalized list of the roles of councillors which includes the following roles: leadership, representational, conflict resolution, policy guidance, in determining service delivery, monitoring results and fiduciary leadership. Additionally, Svara (1990, p. 80) argues that in order for the local government to function well, elected officials need to have a good understanding of their respective roles and establish good working relationships.

Also within the purview of roles and responsibilities, there is a large amount of literature written about the role of the CAO (also known within the literature as the city manager). Nalbandian (2006, p. 1050) a local government scholar, claims that the responsibilities of the city manager is

to develop agendas for council meetings, make sure that council is aware of issue within the community that they might otherwise not be aware of, make policy recommendations, prepare the local governments budget and authorize reports developed for council by staff. Nalbandian and Nalbandian (2003, p. 14) also argue that local government professionals must have knowledge of the political and policy arenas, knowledge of administrative best practices, change management skills and policy skills that allow the local government professional to bring the right people together to work on projects, resolve and manage conflict, and to educate others.

Siegel (2015, p. 412) speaks specifically to the leadership role of the CAO, claiming that they are responsible for leading out, leading down and leading up. Leading out refers to dealing with community groups, other governments, the media and other organizations (Siegel, 2015, p. 412). Leading down refers to the responsibility for leading staff members to ensure that services are efficiently implemented and delivered, and leading up refers to exercising some leadership over council such as speaking truth to power (Siegel, 2015, p. 412). Nalbandian and Nalbandian (2006, p. 1053) also argue that the role of the city manager has increasingly involved the role of acting as an alliance builder and facilitator within the government and between other organizations, groups and associations.

4.4 Overlapping Roles

Another small part of the literature related to roles and responsibilities is the overlap that can take place between the roles of elected officials and administrative staff. Svava (2006, p.1067) writes that from the research Svava has conducted in the field of local government relations, that elected officials often offer broad definitions about their roles that clearly separates the role of policy and administration; however, when asked to discuss specific activities they perform, officials often identified multiple cases when there were overlapping activities. This research showed that there is evidence that overlap between responsibilities can occur; however, this overlap does not necessarily lead to negative impacts, sometimes it is actually quite normal for overlap to occur. Jacobsen (2006, p. 307) also argues that in many countries there is personnel overlap in the areas of politics and administration because many politicians have experience in administration and many administrators have been engaged in political careers.

Ashton, Kshner and Siegel (2007, p. 275) also argue that it is important for elected officials and administrative staff to understand their respective roles, but that a neat separation between responsibilities is generally impossible to maintain in practice. Tindal and Tindal (2007, p. 101) also agree, stating that since the role of council and staff ultimately overlap, it can be very challenging to avoid conflict and ensure an environment of collaboration. While there is evidence that overlap between the roles is inevitable, Cuff (2009a, p. 48) argues that there are still areas that should be separate and distinct from one another.

4.5 Personality Traits and Skills Differences

There is some literature written about the personality differences of elected officials and administrative staff, as well as the differences in hard and soft skills that elected officials and administrative staff have. This is related to council and staff relationships more broadly because

it can help point to some of the reasons that conflict can arise, and conversely how understanding these differences can improve relationships.

One study by Ashton, Kushner and Siegel (2007, p. 273) looked specifically at personality traits of municipal politicians and staff as a way of understanding if personality traits could explain why the two groups do not always share the same perspectives and sometimes find it difficult to work together. This study referenced the often quoted work *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies* by Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981) claiming that politicians and public servants are different in their dominant personality trait, with the dominant trait of politicians being energy and the dominant trait of public servants being equilibrium. The energy of politicians makes them able to provide new ideas and prevent stagnation of the organization while the equilibrium of public servants can ensure that these ideas are fully vetted before they are implemented (Ashton, Kushner, & Siegel, 2007, p. 273).

The findings of a study by Ashton, Kushner and Siegel (2007, p. 286) pointed to differences between elected officials and staff in the areas of ‘extroversion’, ‘openness to experience’ and ‘sociable’. Overall, these results showed that the two groups did differ significantly in some major personality characteristics, which support the idea that politicians push for change, while public servants are generally more focused on the operational efficiency of the organization. The study concludes by stating that it is important for each group to understand the differences in order to prevent tension, a loss of patience and respect for each role, and that the best municipalities will use the creative tension between elected officials and staff to improve the performance of the local government (Ashton, Kushner, & Siegel, 2007, p. 287).

In addition to the research that Ashton, Kushner and Siegel have done in this area Demir and Reddick (2012) speak to some of the skills differences in their work, claiming that city managers need to develop skills in facilitation, situational analysis and conflict resolution while elected officials need skills that enable them to create a broader, longer term perspective on policy problems. Cuff (2002, p. 71) also neatly presented some of the differences between council members and staff, which have been summarized in the following table:

Table 1. *Key Differences between Councillors and Administrators in Canada*

Councillors	Administrators
Chosen from lay people of the community	Hired based on professional expertise
Make decisions based on what they perceive as the wishes of the majority of the community	Make decisions/provide recommendations based on their academic training and/or expertise as to what works best
Elected for four year terms	Generally appointed to positions that may span a whole career
Focused on what they can achieve during the course of their term of office	Administrators may think in terms of the next 5 to 10 years
Input by the public to councillors often appears to reflect urgency	The same input to administration may be far less time-sensitive

4.6 Challenges to the System

A number of major changes to the political, social and economic environment within which local governments operate have made the governing of local communities very challenging (Demir & Reddick, 2012, p. 526). Nalbandian, O'Neill, Wikes & Kaufman (2013, p. 567) list three contemporary leadership challenges facing local governments today: department heads being increasingly encouraged to work the intersection between political and administrative domains, being able to collaborate with other local governments on issues that are not grounded in a single jurisdiction, and the notion that citizen engagement is now imperative rather than optional. Nalbandian et al. (2013, p. 572) argue that these challenges are in part due to a "widening gap between what is administratively sustainable and what is politically acceptable and that connecting the two is a prerequisite for effective governance." Additionally, two global trends; administrative modernization and the search to protect a local government's political identity and sense of community, have served to widen this gap (Nalbandian, 2013, p. 572).

Increased citizen involvement in local government and the use of new technologies are two other areas that have been cited as causing challenges to the local government system. The blurring of the lines between the political and administrative realms is due to the increase in citizen engagement and changes in information technology which has increased the availability of local government information to everyone (Svara, 2015, p. 59). Nalbandian and Nalbandian (2003, p.12) also make reference to the modernization of technology being a challenge for local governments because it opens up the accessibility of information to the public in a way that was not possible before. Because of the increased accessibility to reports, agendas, drawings, minutes and other information, staff must deal with special interest groups and the public in new ways (Nalbandian & Nalbandian, 2013, p. 12).

Another new challenge that the local government system is facing that could have an impact on the relationships between council and administrative staff is the demographic shift in the CAO community. McIntosh (2009, p. 79) collected demographic information in 2008 about CAOs from around Canada and from the sample size found that 75% of respondents were over the age of 44 and 23% were over the age of 55. A large number of CAOs are part of the baby bomber generation who have begun to and will continue to retire in the near future (O'Flynn & Mau, 2014, p. 155). Filling all of the upcoming CAO vacancies with people with enough expertise and experience will be one of the most difficult challenges facing municipalities (O'Flynn & Mau, 2014, p. 167). To be able to fill the increasing vacancies, municipalities will have to place a focus on succession planning and leadership training and development (O'Flynn & Mau, 2014, p. 167).

4.7 Conflict

Conflict within local government is an area which has been given attention by local government scholars. One measure that can be used to assess the quality of governance is the level of cooperation and conflict between elected officials and administrators (Nelson & Nollenberger, 2010, p. 696). As quoted by Svara in Nelson & Nollenberger (2011, p. 700):

"Conflict represents an escalation of disagreement when group members with incompatible goals seek to impose their preferences on others.... It is not simply the

presence of tension and disagreement but rather a situation that exists when the tension escalates into a higher level of native interaction.”

Leach (2010, p. 90) states that it is inevitable for there to be differing views between elected officials and administrative staff, even those who have excellent relationships with one another. The difference in opinions between the involved parties, which often reflect the differences between managerial and political obligations, has the potential to lead to conflict if both parties hold their differing views strongly (Leach, 2010, p. 90). While the relationship between elected officials and administrators can be problematic in all three levels of government, it can be the most challenging at the local level due to the small size of local government, combined with its open nature (Ashton, Kushner & Siegel, 2008, p. 44).

The UK SOLACE (2005, pp. 34-35) report, which was commissioned to understand what the different dimensions of managing in a political environment are and how local chief executives and senior managers can best manage in this environment, identifies a list of potential factors that contribute to difficult relationships elected officials and administrators find themselves in. Some of the factors identified by the SOLACE (2005, pp. 34-35) report include:

- Officers implementing programs which members do not approve;
- The top administrator position is becoming more stressful with increasing review and oversight by other bodies;
- Increased pressures on local governments due to outside inspection, which can create division between officials and staff if the local government receives a poor report;
- The existence of whistle-blowing protection;
- Councillors who take on a more active managerial position because of new executive or mayoral arrangements.

Another cause of conflict according to Whitaker and DeHoog (1991, p. 164) is elected officials and administrators not performing to each other’s expectations, in which case confrontation can be unavoidable. When an administrator asserts their professional values, and they are in opposition to that of council, conflict can also arise (Whitaker and DeHoog, 1991, p. 157). Another condition which can lead to conflict is when elected officials concern themselves in the work of the administration (Stocker & Thompson-Fawcette, 2014, p. 794). Although many administrators agree that councillors should have some involvement in administration, data indicates that many of them believe that the current levels are too high (Stocker & Thompson-Fawcette, 2014, p. 794).

Additional reasons that conflict can arise between elected officials and administrators are: style differences, interference in roles and responsibilities, abuse of power by council, unwillingness to exercise flexibility, poor communication, administration holding a political agenda, abuse of trust and confidentiality, lack of management, policy agenda and discipline and a misunderstanding of power and authority (Cuff, 2002, pp. 72-79). As mentioned in an early section, the differences between the work styles, job requirements and personalities of administrators and elected officials can also be a cause of conflict between the roles.

Conflict can be difficult for those involved in the relationship, but it can also have an impact on the effective functioning of the local government. As quoted by Nelson & Nollenberger (2011, p. 696) “High levels of conflict and low levels of cooperation can hinder the decision-making process”. Whitaker and DeHoog (1991, p. 156) claims that when conflict over what is considered good public policy prevents taking action on a pressing public problem or leads to the loss of an effective CAO, then the conflict harms the community. Ashton, Kushner and Siegel (2007, p. 276) also echoes this notion, arguing that there can be serious consequences for the local government when the relationship between council and staff breaks down because it can paralyze the local government while allegations are exchanged.

Conflict between elected officials and administrative staff can also be harmful when it leads to the dismissal of a CAO. The former British Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government agreed that ‘too many chief executives are being dismissed because they have fallen out with council leaders’ (Leach, 2010, pp. 1-2). A study by Whitaker and DeHoog looked at the effect that conflict can have on the turnover of CAOs and have found that there is a relationship between the two. Whitaker and DeHoog (2010, p. 164) found from their sample of CAOs who left office, only 33 percent experienced little or no conflict prior to leaving office. Additionally, Whitaker and DeHoog (2010, p. 157) found that it was twice as likely for CAOs who worked in high-conflict situations to leave office than those who did not; and that they accounted for approximately half of the turnover of those sampled for the study. Although conflict can lead to turnover among CAO, it does not always. The Whitaker and DeHoog’s (1991, p. 158) study showed that half of the managers who described themselves as working in high conflict situations were still in office two years later.

Conflict is not always a negative and destructive force in local government; it can stimulate discussions which lead to creative options and better policy solutions which are mutually beneficial (Whitaker and DeHoog, 1991, p. 157). Leach (2010, p. 91) claims that local governments should not seek to prevent conflict because it is inevitable, but instead should have effective mechanisms in place to deal with it if and when it occurs. When the differences between councillors and administrative staff (that have the potential to create conflict) come together in a positive way then there can be a cohesive relationship between the two which allows the local government to deliver effective outcomes (Centinic-Dorol, 2000, p. 46).

4.8 Conceptual Framework

A scan of the literature has shown that there are a number of potential variables that can impact the relationship between elected officials and administrators. There appears to be no single contributing factor that dictates if a relationship will be effective or not. Taking this into consideration, the conceptual framework has been developed to include these variables. The research seeks to understand what facilitates a healthy and effective relationship, from the literature gathered it appears that a healthy and effective relationship is built upon structure, a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities and the ability to prevent conflict unless it can be used constructively.

The literature has shown that the dominant local government system in BC is the council-manager form of government, in which the major interactions take place between the council and the city manager (or CAO). The need for structure is evident in this form of government which creates a system for communication and interactions to take place that can impact the interactions between elected officials and administrators, thus shaping the relationships between these roles.

A significant amount of the literature available on this subject matter assesses the roles and responsibilities of elected officials and administrators. Understanding how roles and responsibilities are defined and executed will play a large part in developing a thorough picture of what tools and practices facilitate effective relationships. In addition to this, there will need to be consideration given to how there can be overlap between the roles and responsibilities of elected officials and administrators, and how this overlap plays into relationships. It is also evident through the literature that quite often there can be differences between the personality traits and skills of elected officials and administrative staff. These differing personality traits and skills can impact the relationships between elected officials and administrators because of the different goals and priorities associated with each role.

Additionally, challenges to the local government system such as new technologies, increased citizen participation and an increase in the number of CAOs retiring, all play into the relationship between elected officials and administrators. New pressures on the system can place more strain on relationships and cause role confusion as local government staff are tasked with adapting to new challenges. Keeping in mind the variables which underlie a healthy and effective relationship, thought must be given to how these pressures can place strain on and impact relationships. Finally a holistic framework for understanding local government relations would not be complete without a component which focuses on the role of conflict in the relationships. Conflict must be understood as not only a destructive force which can impact the operations of a local government, but also as a force which can be an impetus for creativity and change. Refer to the framework used in the body of the paper (see *Figure 3*).

Research Question: What tools and practices are, or could be used by, local governments to facilitate effective relationships between elected officials and administrative staff in B.C.?



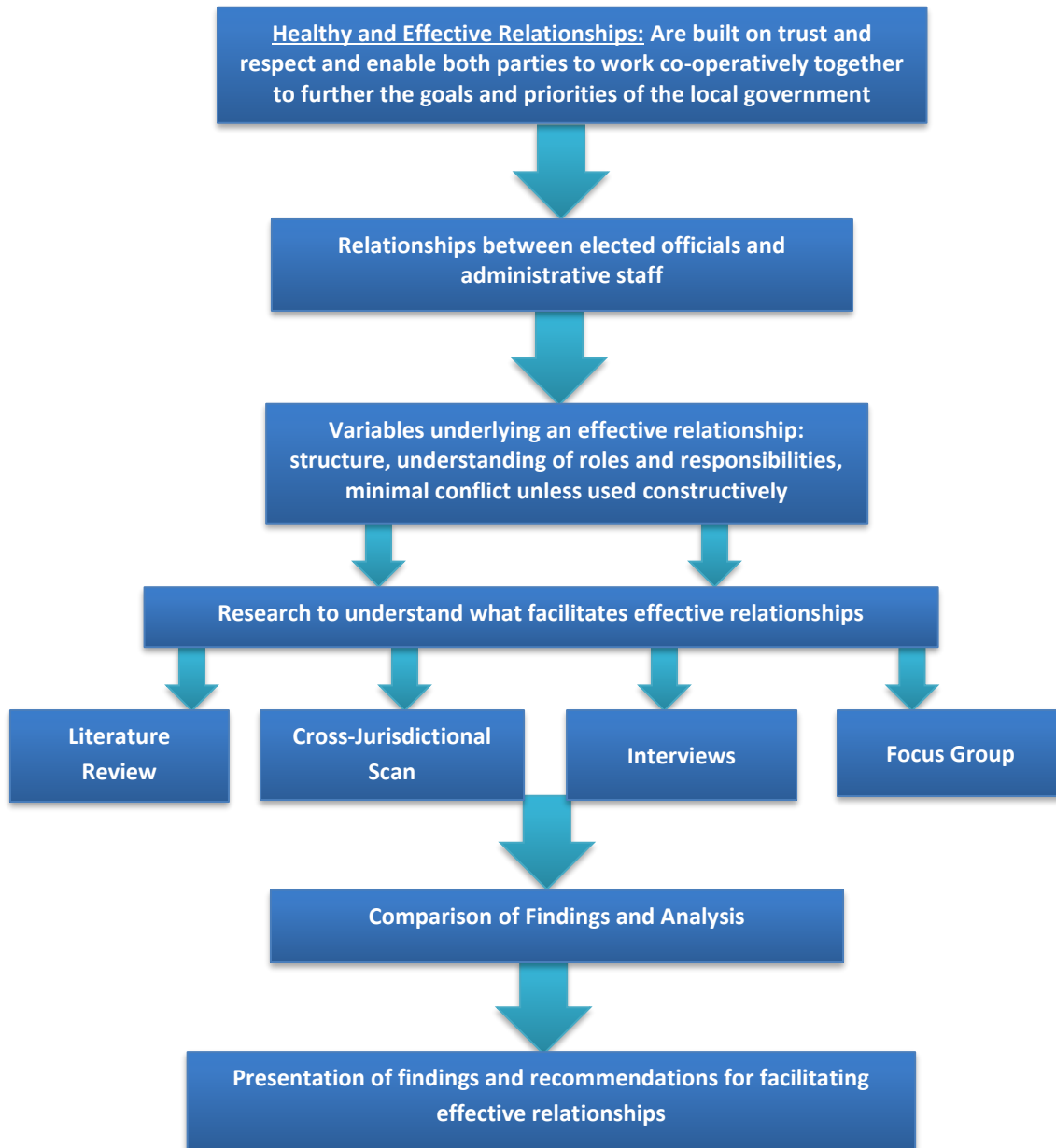


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework

5.0 Findings: Cross Jurisdictional Scan

This section presents the findings from a cross jurisdictional scan conducted to uncover the tools and practices available for elected officials and administrative staff in jurisdictions outside of BC. To gather information for the cross jurisdictional scan, a number of government websites from

other provinces in Canada were reviewed to see what materials they provided to their local governments in the area of relationships, roles and responsibilities, as well as looking at relevant legislation. Numerous online searches were also conducted with key words such as “council-staff relationships”, “local government accountability”, “guides for council and CAOs” and “local government relationships” to find materials that were published from other jurisdictions and tools that are used. This section also provides some context about the local government system within the jurisdiction that will be discussed as it relates to the research.

To find information provided by other provinces regarding elected officials and staff relationships, the information that was provided on each of Provincial local government ministry websites was reviewed. All provinces have key local government legislation (e.g. *Municipalities Act*, *The Municipal Act*, *Municipal Government Act*, etc.) which lays out the roles of the council, CEO, CAO, and sometimes additional designated officers. In addition to the legislation, many provinces have developed guides and handbooks to provide additional information to local governments, administrators and elected officials about their roles and responsibilities. Provinces, often in partnership with local government organizations, also developed unique tools and practices, such as mandated training or peer mentoring networks for facilitating effective relationships. These tools, resources and practices will be discussed in more detail in this section and are summarized in a table in Appendix 6.

Although there are other third party tools that local governments have at their disposal in other provinces such as an ombudsman, these tools are out of scope of the project. Many of these tools play a role in the larger framework of local government accountability, but are not specific to fostering effective relationships. For the purpose of this paper, the tools and practices available in other jurisdictions will be limited to guides, resources, and tools such as codes of conduct.

5.1 Alberta

Alberta’s primary legislation governing municipalities is the *Municipal Government Act* (Government of Alberta, n.d.(a), para 10), which lays out the role of council and the responsibilities and duties of the CAO, designated officers, councillors and the mayor. The roles and duties listed in the legislation are very similar to those listed within BC’s legislation. One key difference is that Alberta’s *Municipal Government Act* specifies that councillors should obtain information about the operation or administration of the municipality from the CAO or designated person. This provision may limit the interaction that takes place between elected officials and lower-level staff. Although slightly different, BC has a provision under section 153 of the *Community Charter* which states that a person must not interfere with a municipal officer or employee exercising his or her powers, duties or functions.

In fall 2015 and spring 2016, amendments were made to Alberta’s *Municipal Government Act* that aim to provide more role clarity for council and administration and which now require all municipalities to develop and adopt a code of conduct (Government of Alberta, 2016). The amendments also require municipalities to provide orientation training to elected officials within 90 days following each municipal election and by-election on matters such as roles and responsibilities, budgeting and financial administration (Government of Alberta, 2016).

To help municipalities and the public better understand what municipalities are, what they are responsible for and the key municipal roles set out in the legislation, the Government of Alberta has developed a variety of written material, available on its Municipal Affairs website. One resource, titled “Municipal Resource Handbook”, lists a number of topics that are hyperlinked to more detailed PDF files. The Municipal Resource Handbook includes topics such as code of ethics for municipal employees, hiring a CAO, preparing council meeting minutes (Government of Alberta, n.d. (b)).

Finally, Alberta has a peer based tool called the Peer Network for Dispute Resolution. This tool uses “current and former municipal leaders who have proven success resolving inter-municipal disputes” (The Peer Network, n.d.(a) para 1). The peer mentors are elected officials and administrators who are trained in dispute resolution, communication and coaching (The Peer Network, n.d.(b) para 1). They provide free of charge advice to municipalities about alternative dispute resolution techniques and inter-municipal cooperation (The Peer Network, n.d.(b) para 2).

5.2 Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan has a number of acts that work together to form the basis of rules for municipal government. The *Municipalities Act* and *The Cities Act* serve as the basic legislation for the province’s southern municipalities and the *Northern Municipalities Act* serves as the framework for northern municipalities (Government of Saskatchewan, n.d., para 1-4). Together these Acts include the general duties of councillors, the mayor and the administrator (CAO).

The Government of Saskatchewan also made amendments to its *Municipalities Act* in the fall of 2015 requiring all municipalities to adopt a model code of ethics which was developed through consultations with municipal partners (Government of Saskatchewan, 2015, para 4). Additionally, these changes have also provided the provincial ombudsman with the power to investigate any alleged breaches of codes of ethics and council administration procedures (Government of Saskatchewan, 2015, para 4).

To provide clarity for understanding these roles and responsibilities, the Government of Saskatchewan provides municipalities with an Administrator’s Orientation Guide, and a Municipal Council Member’s Handbook. The Municipal Council Member’s Handbook stresses the importance of a good, effective working relationship between council and the administration as one of the most important aspects of good municipal government (Government of Saskatchewan, 2012, p. 16).

5.3 Ontario

Ontario’s municipal legislation, the *Municipal Act*, serves as the framework for local government in Ontario. This act contains the role of council, the head of council, the administration and the CAO, similarly to BC. The Act also recognizes that local governments are responsible and accountable levels of local government and recognizes the need and importance for ongoing consultation with municipalities on matters of mutual interest with the province (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, n.d., para 3-4). Additionally, the Government of

Ontario highlights the importance of local governments remaining accountable to the public. To do this, municipalities are responsible for adopting policies around the hiring of employees and the delegation of powers and duties; they may choose to adopt policies regarding staff conduct and social media use (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2016, p. 5).

In 2006, *Ontario's Municipality Act* was amended to increase municipal accountability and transparency; and included a provision which empowers each municipal council in Ontario to appoint an integrity commissioner (Rust-D'Eye, 2011, p.1). *Ontario's Municipality Act* also empowers local councils to develop a code of conduct for elected officials. The integrity commissioner is independent but reports to council on issues related to the code of conduct, procedures, rules, and policies governing the ethical behavior of council members and boards (Rust-D'Eye, 2011, p.1). The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs (2016, p. 6) cites that "if a member is found to have contravened the code of conduct, the municipality may impose a penalty of a reprimand or suspension of pay for a period of up to 90 days".

To assist local governments and councils in understanding their roles and responsibilities, and how they should maintain accountability to the public, the Government of Ontario has developed two resources that are available on the Ministry's website. One is a guide for municipal council that was developed for the 2014 municipal election. The guide provides information about local government, the law making role of councillors, a fiscal context, land use planning, building regulations, emergency management, affordable and social housing and council-staff relationship and roles (Government of Ontario, 2014). The second resource is a guide specific to municipal accountability, transparency, and confidentiality. This resource outlines the tools that municipalities have to promote integrity and accountability such as an integrity commissioner, a municipal ombudsman, and an auditor general (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2016).

5.4 Quebec

Quebec has taken a more hands on approach to dealing with municipal accountability and relationships after dealing with a great deal of reported corruption in the municipal system. Quebec has a number of acts which together provide Quebec's framework for local government. Some of these acts include the *Cities and Towns Act*, the *Municipal Code of Quebec* and the *Municipal Powers Act*. In addition to these pieces of legislation the Province has developed legislation such as *Municipal Ethics and Good Conduct Act* to promote ethical conduct and behaviour. The purpose of this act is to require local governments to adopt a code of ethics and conduct which must be revised after each general election and require every member of council to participate in a professional program on ethics and good conduct (Gouvernement du Québec, 2010, p. 2). This training must be done within six months of the beginning of an elected official's term. Also included within the *Municipal Ethics and Good Conduct Act* is the ability for the Minister to refer the examination of any elected officials who may be in violation of the code of conduct Quebec to the Municipal Commission (Gouvernement du Québec, 2010, p. 2). The Municipal Commission is an independent government agency with the power to investigate municipal matters related to ethical behaviour and serve as a municipal consultant (Gouvernement du Québec, n.d., para 1).

5.5 New Brunswick

New Brunswick's primary legislation is the *Municipalities Act*, which includes the roles and responsibilities for councillors, mayors and designated officers. The *Municipalities Act* leaves the role of defining responsibilities and duties of the CAO with the council through by-law or resolution. The Province of New Brunswick provides council and administrative support to local governments through practices such as hosting municipal orientations, educating and engaging stakeholders and working with local government partners (Government of New Brunswick, n.d. (a)).

Aware of situations of conflict between council-staff, council-council and council-mayor relations, the Association of Municipal Administrators of New Brunswick and the Union of Municipalities in New Brunswick, sanctioned the formation of a Conflict Resolution Committee (Government of New Brunswick, n.d.(b), pp. 29-30). The committee is not a professional mediation group, instead it is a peer mediation group which can be used as a tool by local governments in identifying problems and ways of arriving at mutually satisfactory ways of resolving issues (Association of Municipal Administrators of New Brunswick, n.d., para 1).

To assist local governments in understanding their roles, the Government of New Brunswick also developed a general local government resource manual. The comprehensive manual details the responsibilities of each key local government role and describes and emphasises the importance of the relationship between these roles, lays out what makes up an ideal council-staff relationship, provides an overview table of the differences between council and senior staff and provides examples of role confusion (Government of New Brunswick, n.d.).

The guide also lists activities and strategies that council and its administration may wish to consider for fostering role understanding and teamwork (Government of New Brunswick, n.d. (b), 24). One of the activities listed was the suggestion that local governments create an orientation information package that could be accompanied by one or more information sessions that allow council and the administration to review orientation materials together (Government of New Brunswick, n.d. (b), 24). Additional activities that are proposed in the handbook are joint planning sessions, and a list of detailed suggestions for newly elected officials and administrators; such as, the importance of communication, letting each person do their job and well-defined reporting relationships. Following this section, the guide has a section on conflict resolution which lists different sources of conflict and how to resolve them.

5.6 Other Canadian Provinces

Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia all play a role in local government relationships in their respective jurisdictions. Each province has guiding legislation that lays out the responsibilities of key government roles. Each of these provinces provides some form of informational guide or handbook to help local governments interpret their legislative requirements. Because many of these guides and resources provide similar overviews about roles and responsibilities, expectations of administration, human resources and relationships, they will not be discussed in further detail in this section; however, Appendix 6 provides an overview of what these resources are. These provinces have also developed

additional tools to round out their selection of relationship resources and tools including codes of conduct and human resource materials.

The use of codes of conduct has been previously mentioned in the sections on Alberta, Saskatchewan and Quebec (require codes of conduct) and Ontario (empowers municipalities to adopt codes of conduct). The government of PEI's handbook also advocates for the use of a code of conduct for municipal employees which should be updated to meet the needs of the municipality (Government of PEI, 2013, p. 14). To help municipal councils in developing a code of conduct, the Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities has a model code of conduct available on its website (Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities, n.d., para 1). Similarly, the Government of Manitoba's councillor guide makes reference to the mandatory requirement for municipalities to establish a municipal employee code of conduct (Government of Manitoba, 2014, p. 20). While both of these provinces stress the importance of a code of conduct, one Province has chosen to legislate this requirement, while the other has chosen a softer approach in the form of a model code that councils can choose to adopt.

Human resource practices is another area that some provinces provide information. For example, the Government of Nova Scotia's Municipal Affairs website provides a local government resource handbook containing a section about human resources. This section provides information about the importance of developing a code of ethics for municipal administrators, of conducting performance appraisals for municipal staff; it also contains information about hiring a CAO (Government of Nova Scotia, n.d.). The section on hiring a CAO includes information about the role of the CAO and council, the legislative framework for the CAO position, the relationship between council and CAO, and qualifications that CAOs should possess (Government of Nova Scotia, 2005). To ensure a healthy working relationship between the council and CAO, this section stresses open communication between council and the CAO on a regular basis to develop a strong relationship which has the mechanisms needed to deal with conflict (Government of Nova Scotia, 2005, p. 6).

5.7 Summary of Cross Jurisdictional Scan

The cross jurisdictional scan has shown that there are a range of ways that other provincial jurisdictions are helping local governments to foster effective relationships. Some of these tools are legislative (prescriptive, broad and required) such as mandatory training, increased legislative role clarity, mandatory codes of conduct and the power to develop an integrity commissioner. Jurisdictions have also taken softer approaches to providing tools for enhancing and building upon the legislative tools and framework, such as developing guidebooks or handbooks for newly elected officials and local governments that outline roles and responsibilities. Additionally, many jurisdictions have worked with local government partners to provide tools and resources such as peer based mediation and mentoring services and model codes of conduct. From the research it appears that other jurisdictions provide a spectrum of tools to help elected officials and administrative staff foster effective relationships. While it is difficult to conclude from the cross jurisdictional scan what tools and resources are the most beneficial in fostering effective relationships, it appears that other jurisdictions see the value in providing (either solely or with

local government partners) some suite of resources to local governments on topics related to relationships.

6.0 Findings: Interviews and Focus Group

This chapter presents the key findings from a five participant focus group and 12 one-on-one interviews.

The purpose of the focus group was to gain an understanding about BC's local government environment and how it has changed over the last few decades. The focus group provided broad information about relationships and how they have been impacted by demographic and cultural shifts in local government. The information from the focus group laid the groundwork for what was discussed in the interviews, which were more specific to individual experiences working in or for local governments.

The purpose of the one-on-one interviews was to discover what tools and practices had been useful for elected officials and administrators while they represented and worked for various local governments. Most of the respondents had extensive background in local government, many being involved in local government for their entire career. Many respondents have also been quite extensively involved in the local partner organizations like UBCM, LGMA and/or LGLA.

Although focus group and interview participants all had differing experiences (mayors, councillors, CAOs, board directors and chairs and consultants), there were many themes that threaded through all the findings, regardless of what position a person had held. The findings have been split into two sections:

1. Environmental assessment: cultural shifts in BC's LG system and factors that can place pressure on relationships;
2. Uncovering the gaps and needs: successful tools and practices which could help foster more effective relationships

6.1 Environmental Assessment: Cultural Shifts and New Pressures

6.1.1 Overview

The environmental assessment section of the findings tells the story about what factors may be contributing to strained relationships between elected officials and administrative staff, and provides additional environmental context. It is important to understand these factors because they lay the groundwork for what tools and practices respondents felt best facilitated effective relationships. The findings which make up this section are pulled from both the one-on-one interviews and the focus group. Although the focus group questions were aimed at uncovering environmental factors, many of the experiences of individual interview participants were analogous with what was discussed in the focus group.

6.1.2 The Complex Role of Local Government and Shifting Public Perceptions

As was discussed earlier in the paper, the role of local governments is complex. Regional districts and municipalities are the two dominant forms of local government in BC, and there are many elected and administrative positions. A theme that some respondents discussed in their interviews was the lack of understanding of the role of local governments. Respondents noted

that both the public, and some elected officials, do not have a clear understanding about the role of local governments, particularly around what local governments are responsible for, what their general powers are, what the role of elected officials is, and what is in scope and out of scope for local governments.

Related to a lack of understanding about the role of local government, respondents also cited a lack of understanding about the role of mayors in BC. Local governments in BC operate under a voting system in which the mayor and councillors are given an equal weight in voting on council decisions. Some interviews noted that the mayor's label as a "Chief Executive Officer" under BC's legislation can be problematic when mayors or the public do not fully understand the responsibilities of a mayor. Although BC's legislation clearly lays out the role and responsibilities of a mayor, there seems to be confusion about the title because it is the same title given to the head of a business. In a business context, the CEO is responsible for overseeing the administration of the business; however, this is not the case for a local government. Confusion may arise when a mayor believes that their function as a CEO of a local government is the same as it would be in a business setting. From discussions, it was prevalent that more education and understanding about the mayor's position and the role of local governments could be useful for role clarity.

Two additional themes discussed in the focus group which are related to the complex role of local governments was the shift in public perception of local governments and increased engagement of the public in local politics. Focus group respondents thought that the public appears to be more demanding and less trusting of elected officials than it used to be: less trusting in the sense that they do not always know or understand the political agenda of elected officials while at the same time, not fully understanding what elected officials are responsible for; and more demanding in that they are more involved in local issues and asking more of their elected officials to respond to issues they believe require action. While it is unclear what has caused this shift, the findings hint that a cultural shift has taken place respecting public perceptions of local government and the level of public engagement in local issues.

A final theme discussed in the focus group was how the complexity of local responsibilities has increased over time. Some respondents mentioned the impact that global changes have had on the role of local government, including changes brought about by new technology and global warming. Because of the complexity of local government, the focus group noted it has become more challenging for elected officials to enter into local government roles without any prior knowledge or experience in local government.

6.1.3 Social Media and Technology

Social media and technology were mentioned, in many interviews and the focus group, as cultural shifts that have impacted the complexity of local governments. Social media has provided the public a platform for organizing around specific topics or issues that can then be used to put pressure on local governments. Focus group participants cited that often when this occurs, elected officials feel pressured to focus their attention on each and every topic demanded by the public, diverting their attention away from other key priorities or pressing issues. This situation

can place additional strain on the relationship when the advice from administrative staff is different than the demands of the public.

Additionally, respondents mentioned that the use of social media separates people from face to face interactions, giving the public an extra level of anonymity, and allowing the public to be more direct and aggressive towards their elected officials through technology (this is not something specific to local government, as evident in the comments sections of many online news articles). When the public uses social media in this way, it can be challenging for elected officials to know how to manage it. The emerging challenges around managing social media and the lack of resources on this topic suggest that this may be an area which could benefit from further exploration.

Although technology and social media can place additional pressures on local governments, the findings suggest that social media and technology have also brought about positive changes, such as increasing the public's access to information and allowing the public to become more involved in their local governments. The focus group mentioned that because of technology, public accountability has increased because the public is able to access government information more easily. Technology can also be used by local governments in a positive way, as a medium to send out information to the public and to facilitate the education of elected officials and staff.

6.1.4 Relationship with the Ministry

Many respondents were quite satisfied with their working relationship with the Province when they were serving as elected officials or working as administrator. However, one area of focus that emerged in a number of interviews was the changing demographics of the Ministry staff, resulting in a reduced collective depth of knowledge within the Ministry about local governments. Many respondents pointed out that, historically, deputy ministers and other staff members would spend their entire careers with the Ministry or came from a background in local government; whereas now, that level of specific local government experience and knowledge is waning. This may impact local government administrative staff and elected official relationships because the long term relationships between the Ministry and local governments and deep understanding of the system is now somewhat limited. This highlights the importance of succession planning, the transferring of knowledge between staff and the need for a collective understanding about local government.

6.1.5 Pressure on the CAO Position

As the responsibilities of local governments have become more complex, affecting everyone in local government and making it harder for elected officials and staff to do their jobs, new pressures appear to be particularly challenging to the CAO position. In a number of the interviews, many respondents pointed out that there has been more movement of CAOs, especially after local elections, and because of this, there seems to be less and less job security for CAOs. Although this study did not delve into the reason for this, some participants mentioned that following a local election, councils sometimes turn to hiring a new CAO as one way of implementing new changes to the organization.

Not only did respondents note that the CAO position can be full of uncertainty and less secure than other positions, it can also be very stressful; for example, it can be difficult, especially as a new CAO, to bring issues forward to council, or even more challenging, to present the unknowns of a project to council. It can also be difficult for CAOs to maneuver the fine line between being politically savvy with being politically neutral when presenting council with options, recommendations and information, and as noted by some participants, when CAOs do get caught in the politics, working their way out of it can be very stressful.

6.1.6 The Size of Local Government

This theme ran through the majority of the interviews and was discussed during the focus group. Respondents listed a number of different ways in which the size of a local government can impact relationships between elected officials and staff. For example, there is more room for differing opinions on councils of larger local governments (generally the number of councillors increases based on the size of the local government); whereas in smaller communities each councillor's vote has more weight. Respondents also cited that generally, larger local governments have more money to spend on legal services, orientation materials, training and consultants. Additionally, larger local governments have more capacity to develop in house services and training materials that can be used to address issues such as conflict of interest and harassment.

Based on the information from the interviews and focus groups it appears that small local governments are more prone to circumstances which put pressure on the relationship between elected officials and staff; however, when conflict arises as a result of pressures, often there is more media attention in larger communities. Additionally, as mentioned in the focus group, often in small communities, the public expects more of council because they represent a smaller population. Respondents cited that the situation can become challenging when the public demands more of their council if the small local government has less resources to address these demands than a larger local government might.

It can also be difficult for smaller local governments to attract talented CAOs to small town positions. This is because the pay is lower and they generally have to relocate to an area in which there is only one position for them (the CAO position). This can deter CAOs with families from seeking these opportunities because of the lack of job security for these positions. Many small communities then end up hiring younger, less experienced CAOs. It can also be challenging for small (also often rural) local governments to attract a large enough candidate pool for local office in small communities. Councillors, the mayor and CAOs are also generally closer to the public in small communities. The public is more likely to know who their CAO is and approach them about issues when the CAO is outside the office.

6.1.7 Regional Districts versus Municipalities

A final environmental theme that emerged through the interviews with respondents who had worked for, or represented, a regional district, was the different challenges that regional districts encountered related to conflicting priorities and geographic dispersion of board members. It is important to note that the board of a regional district is different than the council of a municipality. As mentioned in the background section of the report, regional districts are composed of electoral area directors, elected directly by the electors in the area they represent, and municipal directors are appointed by their municipal council. The chair of the regional district is not directly elected to the position in the same way a mayor is. The chair is appointed by vote of the board to serve a one-year term.

Relationships at the regional district level are thus fundamentally different than those at the municipal level. For example, Metro Vancouver has a board of 40 directors and the Capital Regional District has a board of 24 directors. The board size for the majority of regional districts is between 10 and 15 directors. This is in comparison to municipal councils, which are generally composed of a mayor and between three and 10 councillors. The difference in number of elected officials can affect the role of the CAO. For instance, a CAO of a large regional district is responsible for interacting with far more elected officials than the CAO of a small municipality. This can make the task of managing multiple interests and agendas more difficult for the CAO. Additionally, respondents commented that the role of a CAO for a regional district is difficult because they interact with board members less than they would at a municipal level. Board members are spread around the region, and not centralized in a single area like councillors are in a municipality, which can make it more challenging for the CAO to become familiar with the personalities of all board members.

While there is often a lack of understanding about the role of municipalities, it appears that this is even more prevalent in the regional district system. Focus group and interview participants discussed how often times regional districts must justify their existence to some board members who do not understand why certain funding and resources are put towards regional district activities over municipal activities. The role and responsibilities of regional districts is provided for in the *Local Government Act*; however, it appears that even so, some elected officials and members of the public may not fully understand the reason for and purpose of this role.

A final challenge noted by participants was the difficulties that can arise when municipal representatives or electoral area directors have narrow agendas that do not take into account the considerations of the entire region. When this scenario takes place, it can be challenging for regional district board members to provide clear direction to the staff on priorities and programs.

Taking into consideration all of the environmental themes that were discussed in this section, the following table provides a summary of the environmental themes that emerged from the interviews and focus group.

Table 2. *Overview of Environmental Themes*

Themes	Summary of Information
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Complexity and shifting perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There appears to be a lack of understanding about the role and responsibilities of local governments and the mayoral position in BC • Public engagement in local government and community issues appears to have increased • There appears to be a shift in public perception of local government and elected officials related to political agendas of elected officials • The role of local governments has become more complex due to global changes such as climate change and technology
Social media and technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides the public with a platform to organize around specific topics or issues • Can allow the public to be more blunt and aggressive due to the level of anonymity • Can provide the public greater access to information and become more engaged in community issues • Has the ability to open local government up more to the public, thereby increasing public accountability
Relationship with the Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents were generally happy with their working relationship with the Ministry • Concerns were raised about the changing demographics of Ministry staff Ministry and the impact this could have on collective knowledge
CAO pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been increased movement of CAOs, particularly following local government elections • It can be challenging for CAOs to bring issues forward to council and engage council in open dialogue • It can be difficult for CAOs to manage the line between being politically savvy and politically neutral
Local government size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There can be more room for differing opinions on large councils • Large local governments generally have more money to spend on legal services, training and consultants • It can be challenging to attract CAOs and candidates to small, rural local governments • Expectations from the public in small local governments can put pressure on staff and elected officials
Regional districts versus municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional district chairs and board members are more geographically dispersed than municipal councillors • There appears to be a lack of public understanding about the role of regional districts • There may be more differing opinions on a regional board than on a municipal council due to the range of regional issues and interests

6.2 Uncovering the Gaps and Needs: Successful Tools, Practices and Resources

6.2.1 Overview

The second section of this chapter presents the findings from the focus group and interview participants that focus on identifying the gaps in either availability or utilization of resources, tools and practices for fostering effective relationships, in addition to areas that could benefit from further research and analysis. The tools and practices in this section are ones that respondents found helpful while in their role with local government, and tools and practices that

are not currently being utilized to their full potential. Included in this section are ideas from respondents about what could be developed for BC, as well what tools local governments are perhaps not aware of, but already have at their disposal. More research and analysis will likely be needed to explore how some of these new or underutilized tools could be used in the BC context.

6.2.2 Trust, Respect and Communication

The importance of trust, respect and communication was discussed directly or indirectly in every interview and in the focus group. Many interview participants placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of respect in developing and maintaining a good working relationship. When a relationship is respectful, time can be spent on local government operations and does not need to be spent on repairing or rebuilding relationships. Respect is important but it can also be lost when it is not properly managed. Respondents commented that when people begin to lose respect for one another it can be nearly impossible to regain.

Similar to respect, many respondents stated that there must be a high level of trust between the CAO and council to foster a healthy and effective relationship that works in the interest of the public. Elected officials are often responsible for making decisions about complex issues. To make these decisions respondents mentioned that they must be able to trust the advice they receive from staff. CAOs and other staff must also be able to trust that council has made decisions and put forward policies to the best of their knowledge. It takes time to develop a relationship which is built on trust; however, once it is built it, stands as the foundation for strong relationships.

Many respondents pointed out that regular and open communication between elected officials and staff serves as the foundation for developing trust and respect for one another. There were a number of practices which interview respondents listed that were helpful in maintaining good communication with their colleagues. Some of these practices include:

- It is often helpful for the CAO and mayor to meet daily to fill each other in on any new situations or issues as they arise. Doing this ensures that both parties are informed and able to report back to their colleagues.
- It is important for the CAO and mayor to be open and honest with one another even if it requires them to be direct in their communication. Honest communication often serves as the foundation for developing trust between these roles.
- A good practice for the CAO to maintain is being clear when communicating with council, and ensuring that council is giving the CAO clear direction. Clear communication allows the CAO to fully inform council about administrative concerns, issues and progress, and enables the CAO to provide clear direction to the administration in carrying out council priorities.
- Communication is important in managing any crisis situations that may arise. It is often useful to bring everyone involved in a crisis together to talk about what happened, figure out what the underlying issue is and discuss the underlying interests of each involved party.

- Respectful communication is important for facilitating healthy channels of communication, establishing trust and building strong relationships.
- It is useful for the CAO to possess and continually develop the skills needed to start conversations with elected officials about difficult issues.

While the importance of these practices was mentioned by a number of participants, each practice may not be applicable to every local government. In these instances, more exploration and discussion of these practices may be necessary as they relate to the individual local government.

6.2.3 Council and Staff Relations, Roles and Responsibilities

The majority of interview participants discussed the importance of understanding the different roles and responsibilities of staff and elected officials, including where the line between council and administration lay. Role confusion can be one of the triggers for relationship issues; therefore, the practice of understanding each role and the responsibilities assigned to the role can be important in maintaining strong relationships. Respondents also discussed the importance of respecting one another's roles and responsibilities. Respecting the roles that each person in local government must perform can help prevent people from overstepping into a role they should not perform and mitigate any conflict that could be caused as a result.

Many of the interview participants worked for local governments that operated under a system of government (formalized by policy or procedures) in which the CAO is the one window to and from council. The majority of participants mentioned that this system worked the best for them because it limits confusion, streamlines information and reduces conflict. In this system a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each elected official and administrative staff is important in ensuring that information is properly streamlined through the CAO. Many respondents thus mentioned the need for clear roles and responsibilities to lay the groundwork for effective relationships. Respondents mentioned that it is important for the CAO, mayor and councillors to understand the reason for separating the duties assigned to each role and the importance of this separation.

Some respondents noted it is important for the mayor to take a leadership role in having conversations with councillors about respecting the roles of other councillors and the responsibilities of the administration. It is also important for the CAO to have this conversation with senior staff so that each senior staff member is aware of what their responsibilities are in relation to one another. If every employee and elected official is aware of the responsibilities of the key roles then potential for role confusion and conflict can be reduced. This can be achieved through collective discussions with staff and/or elected officials or through a role and responsibility policy developed by the local government. Additionally, respondents mentioned that it can be useful to have a proactive plan for dealing with different role confusion or conflict situations in the event that they should arise. One practice mentioned was designating a specific person that staff can talk to if they are unsure about their role and responsibility in a given situation.

6.2.4 CAO Smart Practices

As discussed in the findings, the CAO position can be especially difficult and challenging to navigate. Many interview respondents provided advice and good practices that CAOs can use to both prevent challenging situations and navigate them if they do arise. Useful practices for CAOs to consider include:

- Ensuring that the CAO does not venture into the political realm; the CAO should be politically savvy but not appear to be politically aligned with council or a member of council.
- Maintaining a good working relationship with elected officials but refraining from developing friendships with elected officials; the relationship needs to stay professional.
- Be gentle but firm in communicating with council. This means standing up for what the CAO believes is right, but doing so in an evidenced based and diplomatic way.
- Developing good mediation and communication skills.
- Acting as a facilitator that helps council get to the place they need to be to make a decision on issues, priorities and programs.
- Always continuing to develop skills throughout the CAOs career. Continuous learning is important for navigating this complex position and adapting to changes.

6.2.5 Training Before and After Local Government Elections

The theme of pre-nomination and newly elected training came up in around half of the interviews and was discussed in the focus group. Some respondents mentioned that over-promising in elections by uninformed candidates can become a huge source of conflict if these candidates are elected. If a candidate makes a promise to undertake an action that they are legally not able to, tension can arise when the administrator has to tell the elected official that they cannot do what they promised. In preventing such occurrences from arising, a number of respondents felt that there could be more resources and materials for candidates which specify what the role of councilors and mayors are and the legal duties of municipalities. For example, many respondents mentioned that pre-nomination educational materials could be a useful tool for outlining duties and preventing overpromising in elections.

While many respondents highlighted the need for pre-nomination materials, even more respondents discussed the importance of orientation materials for newly elected officials. Many of the respondents stated that when they first started in local government there were limited or no orientation materials; however, today many local governments provide robust training. Even so, a theme that arose throughout many interviews and the focus group was the need to enhance materials and training, especially with regards to training around roles and responsibilities. Respondents highlighted the importance of providing thorough orientation opportunities. Some mentioned that it can be useful to provide an initial orientation and then a follow up/refresher orientation a few months later to ensure that the information was fully digested. While it appears from the interviews that many local governments provide newly elected orientations and training, the number that do, and the extent to which local governments provide these resources is unknown.

The focus group participants stated that often times there is too much emphasis placed on bad behaviour and that instead, training and orientations should also be based on good behavioral practices. Bad behaviour seems to be what is rewarded in the media; when a councillor behaves poorly that is what is covered. Therefore, the focus group participants thought that there should be more focus on good behaviour in trainings and orientations. Respondents also mentioned that undertaking behavioural training proactively before it happens makes it easier to label the behaviour if it occurs and makes it less personal.

Another idea which was discussed in the focus group and mentioned in an interview was developing standardized materials which local governments could use for training and reference. For example, other provinces have handbooks and sample codes of conduct. The focus group thought that something similar to this could be beneficial for local governments, particularly smaller local governments which have limited resources. The standardized material could serve as a base model of information which local governments could tailor to their individual needs.

6.2.6 Training from Local Government Organizations

Local government organizations serve as a voice for local governments, work directly with the Province on local issues and provide elected officials and administrators with educational materials and training opportunities. All of the respondents felt that the materials, workshops and resources which were provided by local government organizations such as UBCM, LGMA and LGLA were useful for orientation purposes, networking and relationship building. Many administrators and elected officials developed contacts and built relationships through the programs, courses and events held by these organizations.

The Municipal Administration Training Institute programs offered by LGMA were cited in a number of interviews as being very helpful to CAOs for further developing their skills sets. The MATI courses are multi-day courses for administrators on subjects such as communications, management, leadership, community planning and information for CAOs and approving officers. The Local Government Management Association's CAO forum and UBCM's CEO and regional district forums were also positively cited in a number of interviews. The only downside listed by respondents to some of these forums is that the people that might benefit the most from these forums do not attend. Finding ways to ensure that elected officials and attend these workshops and forums, for example incentivizing attendance, may be an area for further exploration.

6.2.7 Mentoring

Currently there is no formal peer mentoring services available in BC specifically to match new CAOs or elected officials with mentors when they first begin their role. Often those seeking mentoring can informally speak to local government organizations, the Province or other local governments to assist them in finding peers they can talk to about navigating their new role. The Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA) has a mentorship program which some respondents cited to be a useful tool for CAOs. Some of the interview respondents, following their retirement from local government, served as mentors to new CAOs. In these roles they would share their experience working as a CAO, help the new CAO navigate their position

and give them honest feedback. These interview participants felt that mentoring is a valuable tool for people coming into a new CAO position. Even respondents who did not serve in a mentoring role stated the importance of mentoring for both new CAOs and newly elected officials.

While there is no formal peer mentoring tool available in BC to match new CAOs or elected officials with one-on-one coaching with retired CAOs and elected officials, LGMA offers another form of mentoring tool which can be quite useful to local governments. This mentoring tool, called “Teamworks” can be used for more specific questions and help. This tool allows local governments to seek assistance in areas such as strategic planning and council/staff relations, and connect with other local governments to carry out a project related to the area of interest (LGMA, n.d. (e)). This tool can be useful for local governments in addressing specific concerns related to council and staff relationships and for providing an avenue for elected officials and administrators to connect directly with other local governments that have first-hand experience in dealing with similar situations.

6.2.8 Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a process used by many local governments to identify community priorities and develop a plan to carry out these priorities. The strategic plan is generally developed by elected officials who set community goals with input from administrators. The strategic plan is used to guide the priorities and direction for the local government and can help administrators implement policies and programs in-line with strategic priorities. Local governments can choose how they conduct a strategic plan; however, often times the strategic planning process can take place over multiple days/ sessions and include workshops from guest speakers and advice from consultants.

An annual strategic planning session was cited by interview participants as a useful platform for working on relationships and setting clear policy for roles and responsibilities. The strategic plan is a good forum for bringing elected officials and administrators together to discuss the priorities of the local government and set a focus for future policy work. Many participants said that team building and scenario exercises are very useful tools to use in strategic planning sessions to build effective relationships. Scenario activities can be acted out or talked through. For example, “what would we do if...” These activities give staff and elected officials a good understanding about what each person’s role is and what happens when these roles are not properly respected. They also provide a forum for proactively talking through difficult situations when there is no conflict. Although strategic planning sessions were positively discussed in one-on-one interviews, this tool is not used by all local

6.2.9 Human Resource Practices

Human resource (HR) practices can encompass a number of areas and topics. In relation to participant responses, HR practices include performance evaluations, workplace harassment policies and effective hiring practices. The importance of having strong HR practices in place was mentioned in some of the interviews. The respondents mentioned that it is important to

understand HR because it can play a large role in relationships. Understanding HR is valuable for knowing how to handle and manage employees and provide constructive feedback to staff and elected officials.

One HR practice which was mentioned in the interviews was the use of performance evaluations for CAOs. This tool does not need to be formalized into an annual review; many respondents felt that it was useful to give performance reviews during or upon completion of a project, or casually in one-on-one check-in meetings. Providing advice on a more regular basis gives both parties the opportunity to talk about issues before they become large and potentially destructive to the relationship. The focus group also suggested that evaluations do not have to be about the performance of individuals, but can also be about evaluating the effectiveness of relationships within a local government more broadly.

Another HR theme which emerged was workplace harassment. Some respondents mentioned that there could be more training and materials available about workplace harassment so that elected officials and administrators know what constitutes good and bad workplace behaviour. Materials around this could be useful in ensuring that there is a process in place for dealing with any workplace complaints. The focus group mentioned that respectful workplace policies and practices can be useful, especially for new councillors. They give newly elected officials a snapshot of how things are done, what responsibilities lay with whom and how to behave on council. Similarly, codes of conduct and conflict of interest policies can be useful proactive tools, however, once conflict has arisen many respondents stated that these tools are not as useful. Another example of standardized HR material that respondents felt could be useful was a guide for hiring a CAO, similar to what is available in some of the other Canadian provinces.

6.2.10 Understanding Personalities

Some of the respondents that benefited from good working relationships spoke to being able to work with a good mix of personalities. It seemed from these comments that personalities play a role in developing healthy relationships and minimizing conflict. Many respondents also mentioned that it was easier to accomplish things when people's personalities were more aligned and they had similar goals for the organization. That being said, there were still times when there were disagreements, and in these situations the best advice given by respondents was to make sure not to take anything personally. This means seeing the differences of opinion as just that, and not attacking people's individual personalities.

A tool which was cited by two respondents for understanding personalities was personality testing. These respondents mentioned that personality testing can be a useful relationship tool for gleaning information about the different personalities that will be working together on a council or board. Proactively understanding personalities can be a useful proactive tool for identifying what personalities could clash and what personalities will work well with one another.

Taking into consideration the themes that were discussed in this section, the following table provides a summary of the successful tools practices and resources that emerged from the interviews and focus group.

Table 3. *Overview of Successful Tools, Practices and Resources and the Gaps*

Themes	Summary of Information
Trust, respect and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust and respect are important for maintaining effective relationships Open and honest communication is key for developing trust and respect There are a number of practices which interview participants have used to maintain good communication
Role and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to understand roles, responsibilities and the line between roles Many local governments have policies and procedures in place which make the CAO the one window between council and administration
CAO smart practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CAO should remain neutral and maintain a professional working relationship with council Good mediation and communication skills are valuable for the CAO position The CAO should continue to develop his/her skills through continuous learning opportunities
Training before, during and after local elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-nomination materials can be developed to prevent over-promising in elections It is important for local governments to have thorough orientation materials Orientation materials should have a strong foundation in what constitutes good behaviour, less focus should be placed on what makes up bad behaviour
Training from local government organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local government organizations provide good materials for orientations, networking and relationship building There could be a focus on findings way to ensure that people full utilize the resources provided by local government organizations
Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no formal peer mentoring service in BC to match newly elected and new CAOs with mentors; there is a Canadian service and LGMA offers targeted mentoring Mentoring was cited as a useful practice for both administrators and elected officials
Strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic planning can serve as a useful platform for working on relationships and undertaking scenario based training activities Strategic planning is not a formalized tool, it is used by some local governments but not all
Human resource Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance evaluation can be used to provide advice and discuss issues on a regular basis Respectful workplace policies and practices can be useful in mitigating conflict Standardized materials such as CAO hiring guides can serve as a useful HR tool
Understanding personalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personalities play a role in developing healthy relationships and minimizing conflict When there are disagreements, it is best not to take them personally

6.3 Summary of Interview and Focus Group Findings

The findings reveal that there are a number of factors that can place strain on the relationship between elected officials and staff. Some of these factors are new and emerging, brought on by

advances in technology or new global issues; others have been around longer. While some of the changes impacting local governments add strain to relationships, some of the changes can be used positively to enhance relationships.

Respondents listed a number of smart practices which they used during their careers in local government. Many of these practices are subtle relationship practices such as developing trust and respect with one another and being clear in communication. Other practices were more tangible such as providing mentorship to new CAOs and newly elected officials, or using strategic planning sessions as opportunities to discuss relationships, roles and responsibilities.

While respondents drew on a number of different practices throughout their local government careers, many made suggestions as to additional practices and tools that could be further developed or could be better utilized by local governments. Together these smart practices and suggestions for further work have demonstrated what some of the gaps and needs may be in BC for developing effective relationships between elected officials and administrative staff.

7.0 Discussion and Analysis

The purpose of this project was to identify tools and practices that BC local governments use, or could use to facilitate effective working relationships between elected officials and administrators. The findings have suggested that local governments benefit from increased efficiency when relationships are good. Healthy relationships between elected officials and administrative staff are important because they allow local governments to put all of its resources towards identified priorities and efficiently delivering services to residents. When relationships become unhealthy, more time and resources are diverted from priorities and are spent on rebuilding relationships. Therefore, it is beneficial for local governments to spend time and resources on proactively building solid foundations for effective relationships to prevent expending valuable resources on trying to rebuild relationships that have fallen apart. Many themes such as the value in proactively building relationships from the outset were common in the findings produced from each research stream. These overarching themes will be discussed in more detail this section.

7.1 Pressures on BC's Local Government System

Many of the pressures which local governments in BC must deal with were discussed in the literature review, the focus group and the interviews. Some of these pressures include the challenges which new technology and social media have brought about, the pressures which CAOs are faced with, new global shifts and increased public engagement. Each of these pressures is unique and multi-faceted; there are many ways in which these pressures can affect local governments and place strains on relationships. For example, technology has increased the openness of citizens to local governments, elected officials and CAOs. People are able to join together through social media to make demands of their local governments in a way which were not possible before the introduction of social media.

Other factors such as the size of municipalities and the form of local government used appear to have an impact on relationships. The findings have suggested that regional districts and smaller local governments are sometimes faced with additional pressures than mid to large municipalities (or wealthy small municipalities). In municipalities, these pressures include: limited resources for training and education; additional public involvement; and less ability to attract candidate pools for local office and CAO positions in small municipalities. In regional districts these pressures include: competing municipal interests; lack of understanding about the role of regional districts; and difficulties in reaching consensus on multi-jurisdictional issues. While it is difficult to conclude precisely how these pressures influence local government relationships, they appear to be areas of concern for many respondents. These areas could benefit from further research and analysis to better understand the full impact of these pressures and how best to mitigate or deal with them.

Other pressures which were raised throughout the findings sections that could impact relationships was the retirement of CAOs and the challenges of succession planning, role confusion and personality traits and skills differences. Presented altogether there appears to be a number of different factors which can impact relationships. Understanding how changes to the

local government system such as these impact relationships is important in developing tools and resources to help elected officials and administrative staff. It seems that multiple factors can lead to the breakdown of a relationship or the development of a healthy relationship.

7.2 The Overall Framework of Local Government in BC

As discussed throughout this paper, BC has a complex system of local government. The system includes both regional districts which are governed by a chair and directors and municipalities which are governed by councillors and a mayor. There are also many different administrative areas and positions which make up the daily operations of each local government. Additionally, BC's legislation treats local governments as an autonomous level of government with many powers and responsibilities. It can be challenging to fully understand how BC's local government system operates without spending a great deal of time researching the system or working directly with or for it. There appears to be a need for more information for the public and elected officials about the foundations that BC's local government system is based upon and the role of local governments in the lives of the public.

Many interview respondents and the focus group pointed to the lack of understanding by the public, candidates and newly elected officials about the roles and responsibilities of local governments. Some cited that this could be an area to address for fostering effective relationships because it could prevent both candidates from overpromising in during election, and the public from pressuring elected officials to make changes outside of their legal authority. It is also valuable for the public to understand how their local government works if they want to become directly engaged in local government and local issues.

Many other jurisdictions have developed resources such as guides, handbooks and informational websites for the public and elected officials that describe the local government system and the roles of those within it. While the Ministry has developed and made available some resources on its local government website in the form of guides and informational webpages, this is area that could benefit from further work. Exploring ways to help the public and elected officials better understand BC's complex local government system could be useful in proactively preventing relationship breakdowns.

7.3 The Importance of Partnerships

One of the themes which emerged from the findings is the importance of partnerships between the Province, local government organizations and local governments. Many interview respondents positively discussed their interactions and relationships with both local government organizations and the Ministry during their tenure in local government. Many respondents mentioned how they were able to seek support and advice from the Ministry when they had issues or needed someone to talk to. Respondents were also happy with the services which local government organizations provided to them, such as training, workshops and forums.

Similarly, from the cross jurisdictional scan it was apparent that this type of relationship has been beneficial in other jurisdictions. Many of the jurisdictions reviewed also appeared to benefit from relationships between local governments, the Province and local government organizations.

Provincial governments and local government organizations in other jurisdictions, similar to BC, have partnered to develop materials and training for local governments to help them with various aspects of relationships. The research suggests that there is value in developing strong relationships between all parties involved in local government to help local governments develop and maintain effective relationships.

Within BC, there are a number of tools available to elected officials and administrative staff through local government organizations such as training course, workshops and forums. The Province also provides some tools and supports to local governments such as one-on-one advice through the Ministry's Advisory Services program area. While these programs, tools and practices appear to be quite effective, there is likely room for more resources specific to relationships between elected officials and administrative staff. For example, many former CAOs mentioned the importance of training for developing strong relationships; thereby advising CAOs to seek out opportunities for learning and skills development.

7.4 Future and Newly Elected Officials

Many of the findings from the focus group, interviews and cross-jurisdictional scan demonstrated a need for education and training for candidates running for office and for newly elected officials. Regarding candidates, many interview participants believed that targeting resources towards people running for office would help foster effective relationships once they are elected. Respondents felt that providing tools and resources before an election could be a good tool for people to use to either screen themselves in or out of running for office based upon their qualifications and the demands of the role they were considering running for. Candidates do not always understand the full extent of demands that will be placed upon them before they decide to run for office. Information for candidates would help them assess if they are fit for the position.

The Ministry developed a candidate guide for BC's 2014 local government elections. This guide provides good administrative information about running for office such as who can run, how elections work, campaign financing, etc. The Ministry also held a webinar and developed a brochure in led up to the 2014 elections. Expanding upon tools such as these could be beneficial for candidates that need additional resources that explain in detail what it means to be an elected official, what elected officials are responsible for, and the relationship elected officials have with administrative staff. This resource could serve as a good proactive tool to ensure that candidates know they will be responsible for doing if they get elected and what their role will be in relation to the staff they work with.

In addition to providing materials for candidates, another common theme was providing sufficient training and resources for newly elected officials. The cross-jurisdictional scan demonstrated that the majority of other jurisdictions provide resources in the form of handbooks and guidebooks for newly elected officials. Of the nine Canadian provinces reviewed, seven of them had developed a handbook or guidebook for newly elected officials or council. Some of the themes included in these resources included information about their roles and responsibilities, the roles of the administration and the need for a good working relationship between elected officials and administrative staff. While a substantial handbook or guide for newly elected

officials may not be necessary in BC, it is an area that can be considered for further research and analysis.

The need for successful orientations for elected officials was also prevalent throughout the findings. Orientations help newly elected officials navigate their new positions and build relationships with their administration. They can be a key tool in ensuring that newly elected officials understand what their role is and how they should behave. Many of the interview and focus group respondents provided suggestions for ensuring that orientations are beneficial to newly elected officials. These suggestions included discussing roles and responsibilities, utilizing scenario based learning to prevent conflict between elected officials and administrative staff, ensuring that orientations are interactive and providing follow up orientation sessions.

7.5 Understanding Roles and Responsibilities

The theme which was the most prevalent throughout all four streams of research was the roles and responsibilities of each key administrative and elected position. Much of the literature that was reviewed regarding relationships between elected officials and staff touched on roles and responsibilities. The literature stated that understanding the differences can be one of the most challenging exercises for local governments to do; however, this exercise can also be one of the most important practices for mitigating conflict and fostering effective relationships. Every handbook, guidebook and webpage reviewed in the cross-jurisdictional scan discussed the different responsibilities of the major local government roles to some extent; many specifically citing the provincial legislation that outlined the roles. A number of the materials explicitly pointed out how important it was to understand the roles and responsibilities of each elected official and administrator.

Respondents also discussed the need to proactively discuss and define roles and responsibilities and the need to ensure there is a clear separation between elected officials and the staff. Different local governments did this in various ways, such as: through policy documents; presentations by outside consultants; scenario based learning; or through materials for newly elected officials. Although there appears to be many ways to ensure that there is a clear understanding about roles and responsibilities, the general theme is that defining roles and responsibilities is an important proactive practice that local governments can undertake.

There are some resources provided by the Ministry and local government organizations about roles and responsibilities. Many local governments also create their own materials or policies to govern responsibilities. Although there is already some tools and resources in this area, the importance of roles and responsibilities was brought up in all four methods and cited as an area that could be explored further. Because BC's local government legislation is the basis for defining roles and responsibilities, it could be beneficial for the Ministry to explore ways of helping local governments understand the responsibilities of each local government role as set out in BC's legislation.

7.6 Preventing and Managing Conflict

Conflict was a theme that emerged in all of the methods, and is central to a discussion on relationships. Conflict can arise when relationships between elected officials and administrative staff break down. When relationships break down, the consequences can be felt throughout the organization. Local governments have an interest in avoiding situations of conflict because they can negatively impact the efficiency of the organization and the morale of everyone working for/ representing it. Developing practices to prevent and manage relationship-centred conflicts is important in sustaining healthy working relationships.

There were many tools and practices that came out of the findings to both proactively mitigate conflict and to reactively manage it. Some jurisdictions provided materials about developing effective relationships in an attempted to mitigate any conflict from arising further along. Many interview respondents spoke about the importance of developing a relationship between councillors, the mayor and CAOs which allows for open and honest communication. Additionally, many interview respondents emphasized the importance of developing mutual trust and respect to prevent conflict. Other tools and practices cited in interviews and the focus group to develop effective relationships, thereby mitigating conflict, was mentoring, such as the services available in Alberta, and the use of strategic planning sessions to discuss roles and responsibilities.

In BC when conflict arises some of the tools local governments can use include: seeking advice from the Ministry; hiring an external consultant; looking to other local governments for advice; and attempting to address the issue internally. One tool uncovered in the cross jurisdictional scan which seemed relevant to BC was the peer based Conflict Resolution Committee in place in New Brunswick and Alberta's Peer Network. More formalized peer tools such as these could serve as useful avenues for local governments to use in managing and preventing conflict.

7.7 Summary of Discussion and Analysis

There are already a number of tools available to local governments for addressing relationships, sometimes it is just a matter of knowing which tools and practices work the best for the situation. A number of the tools and practices which emerged from the findings are ones which proactively build effective relationships instead of reactively address relationships that have broken down. It appears from this research that these proactive tools may be more useful for local governments to build and sustain effective relationships; therefore the recommendations in the following section build upon these themes.

8.0 Recommendations

8.1 Overview

This section includes a list of recommendations for the local government system (municipalities, regional districts, partner organizations and the Ministry) to consider. The recommendations focus on proactive tools and practices for facilitating effective relationships between elected officials and administrative staff. Because the recommendations are for the local government system more broadly the client preferred a list of recommendations instead of a list of options. Each recommendation will be briefly discussed and analyzed as it relates to BC's context. The chapter will conclude with a potential implementation strategy for the local government system to consider in reviewing the recommendations.

8.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Conduct further targeted research and analysis around the factors which place pressure on local government relationships (such as technology and CAO turnover), and around tools and practices that are intended to foster effective relationships (such as strategic planning and human resource practices).

While this research project has been insightful in identifying some of the pressures that can strain relationships, more research and analysis could be undertaken to further understand these pressures. Further research would also be beneficial to better understand the tools that the research has identified that could be used to prevent or mitigate pressures.

The challenges that local governments are faced with are complex and can vary substantially by local government; to address the complexity and variation of issues this topic would benefit from further research and analysis about both causational factors, and tools that could be used to address relationship issues. There are many local governments in BC which operate under different systems of governance (e.g. council-manager, mayor-council) and are faced with different issues. Understanding what the best tools and practices specific to BC are is not an easy task. Therefore research in the areas of technology, CAO turnover and changing public perceptions of local governments would be beneficial in understanding the pressures that local governments face and identifying additional tools that could be developed.

While the following recommendations present additional tools and practices that could be beneficial for local governments in preventing and mitigating some of these pressures, more research over time could expand this list. Tools which were positively cited by respondents for developing effective relationships that should be further explored include mentoring, strategic planning, HR practices, defining roles and responsibilities and personality testing.

Additionally, as was demonstrated through all four streams of research, there are many different tools and resources that other jurisdictions use to improve relationships such as standardized materials, training for elected officials and administrators and codes of conduct. Although interview respondents agreed on many practices that are useful for developing strong relationships, some respondents had differing opinions on what practices worked the best, and

what tools should be created to prevent and manage conflict. For example, some former CAOs mentioned the importance of mentoring, while others stressed the value in using strategic planning to work on relationships. While it appears that there is great value in many of the tools discussed by respondents more work could be done to further explore which tools would provide the most value, or would work the best in BC.

Further research and analysis could be done solely by the Ministry or in partnership with local government organizations and/or local governments. This project has uncovered many of the factors that influence relationships, including what tools and practices are useful for fostering effective relationships. While the research has provided a large amount of data, there is still more research and analysis that can be done to target areas such as smaller communities issues or understanding working style differences. This recommendation builds off of the work that this project has begun by further identifying the needs in BC and for exploring and developing additional tools and resources.

Recommendation 2: Explore opportunities for developing further educational materials for potential candidates, elected officials and the public about the role of local governments, including basic information on regional districts and municipalities.

Further tools and resources in this area could be beneficial in mitigating conflict before it arises by educating elected officials and the public about local governments and their responsibilities. Developing further materials which can help the public and elected officials gain a better understanding about what local governments can and cannot do, what services they provide and how they are governed, could be a beneficial tool in mitigating misunderstandings about local government roles and responsibilities. While BC already has some materials in this area, when comparing BC with other jurisdictions this area presented itself as a potential need for BC.

Technology could be used to the benefit of the Ministry and the local government system more broadly in exploring educational materials. One interview participant mentioned that people engage with information in new ways than they used to. Many people look for information online through quick searches instead of through more traditional channels such as published guides. Therefore, developing materials and updating and revising existing materials which are made easily accessible to the public through online platforms could allow a greater portion of the public to access these resources.

Recommendation 3: The Ministry and local government partners such as UBCM, LGMA and LGLA should work together to explore existing and future training opportunities and resources for CAOs and newly elected officials.

An inclusive approach to helping local governments foster effective relationships provides local governments with a number of avenues to turn to when they need advice and support. The Ministry has a strong relationship with local government partners, and can use these partnerships to help local governments strengthen their relationships. Each partner has specific information and resources that they can use for helping local governments develop effective relationships between elected officials and administrators. Local government organizations often work directly with elected officials and CAOs, hearing firsthand what some of their areas of concern are

regarding relationships. This information is important for developing training materials and orientation session. The Province also has a role to play in ensuring that local governments know that they have supports that they can turn to for advice and materials. As was mentioned in some of the interviews, it is often important for local governments to understand that the Province is a partner that they can look to for support.

Although there are a number of resources which local government organizations and the Province provide, it may be beneficial for the Province to work with these organizations to see if there are any needs which are not currently being filled. This could mean looking at what is currently available in BC and comparing it with some of the tools and practices available in other jurisdictions that have been identified through this research. Together with local governments, the Province and local government organizations can identify what training and resources are working well and what training and resources are not currently available but could be beneficial.

Another specific area which could benefit from further research and analysis is finding ways to ensure elected and non-elected individuals attend local government workshops and forums and have access to workshop information. Many respondents felt that the resources that are available to elected officials and administrators through UBCM, LGMA and LGLA are very valuable in fostering effective relationships. Many of these respondents also noted that the individuals that should be attending events and forums often do not. Researching ways to increase attendance or incentivize people to attend workshops and forum could be valuable in fostering effective relationships. Additionally, new ways of leveraging training could be explored. For example, local government organizations could find ways of recording workshops or speakers and providing these resources livestream on their websites.

Recommendation 4: Undertake work to explore options for materials and resources that could be developed for pre-candidates and/or newly elected officials.

Following more research and analysis the Province, local governments and local government organizations may decide what partnership would work the best in developing pre-candidate and/ or orientation materials. The role that the Ministry takes in this process could be advisory, in communicating with local governments the information that local governments could provide to candidates. The Ministry could also work with partners to explore opportunities for leveraging technology to provide accessible information to a range of prospective candidates.

Similarly, with respect to orientation materials for elected officials, the Ministry may be best suited to work with partners communicate suggested practices local governments can include in their orientations. There are many ways that orientations can be provided such as through the local government or by a hired consultant. Orientations can be short or extensive; it is up to the local government to decide what type of orientation they provide to elected officials. Within the context of BC, working with local governments and local government organizations to understand what works well for orientations and communicating this to local governments could be an effective role for the Ministry to undertake.

Recommendation 5: Explore ways to help elected officials and administrative staff to strengthen their understanding regarding their respective roles and responsibilities under BC's local government legislation.

BC's *Community Charter* defines the roles and responsibilities of the mayor (CEO), councillor, CAO, financial officer and corporate officer. The *Local Government Act* lays out the roles of the regional district positions. While these roles are articulated within the legislation, it may be beneficial to provide assistance to local governments in fully understanding how they are practiced on the ground. Other jurisdictions have done this through standardized guidebooks, some local governments do this through policies, and others use consultants to explain role differences. The Ministry may want to explore other options such as working with local government that have been successful in defining clear roles and responsibilities. This knowledge could be shared with other local government who need advice or assistance in defining roles. The Ministry could also work with local government partners to assess which roles are well understood (such as the financial and corporate officer positions) and what roles may need more clarity (such as the CEO and CAO positions).

Recommendation 6: Enhance local government system capacity to prevent and manage relationship-centered conflicts by exploring peer based tools (such as peer mediation and peer mentoring).

Peer based tools can be useful for preventing and managing conflict because a peer system can give the tool a high level of credibility due to the lived experience of mentors who provide advice. One interview respondent mentioned that consultants who have worked for, or represented, local governments have peer credibility because they have hands on experience developing strong relationships and managing conflict. Those seeking advice may therefore be more receptive of the advice they receive from someone who has been through a similar experience. Respondents also mentioned that mentoring is a valuable tool for helping CAOs and elected officials develop effective management, leadership and relationship skills. If local government's value expertise and experience in dealing with conflict and relationships then peer based tools can serve as a credible source of advice and information for local governments.

There are two different streams for peer based tools that could be further explored; those tools which proactively prevent relationship-centred conflicts such as peer mentoring, and those which manage relationship-centred conflicts once they have arisen such as peer mediation. Peer mentoring could be explored to help elected officials and staff learn how to carry out their roles and responsibilities and develop effective working relationships to prevent conflict. Peer mediation tools, on the other hand, could be useful for elected officials and staff to consult in the event that conflict does arise. Models for peer based tools that could be further explored include the mentoring and peer based groups that provide advice and suggestions to local governments such the New Brunswick and Alberta peer based services. These tools could fill a need for more formalized mentoring channels and processes for effectively dealing with disputes.

8.3 Implementation Strategy

Many of the recommendations for the local government system include suggestions for conducting further research about specific proactive tools and practices. The recommendations place an emphasis on the importance of maximizing partnerships for developing tools and resources that can facilitate effective relationships. The recommendations present practical approaches to problem solving by accessing what could be done under the current legislative framework. The implementation of these recommendations do not have a specific timing or sequencing consideration as they can be implemented incrementally once there is agreement from local government partners on the possible approaches and expected outcomes of implementing the recommendations. As the recommendations are for the local government system more broadly, the establishment of partnerships and/or working groups will be useful in deciding how best to proceed with undertaking work on the recommendations.

8.4 Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations presented take a non-legislative approach to developing effective relationships by placing a focus on education and best practices. Although, following further research the Ministry, local governments and local government partners may choose to explore more firm approaches to addressing this area. Exploring the recommendations included in this report should help the Ministry work with local governments and partner organizations to undertake work in areas that will proactively foster effective relationships between elected officials and administrative staff.

9.0 Conclusion

This project sought to answer the question:

What tools and practices are, or could be used by, local governments to facilitate effective relationships between elected officials and administrative staff in BC?

Specifically the project did this by assessing:

1. The scholarly information available about facilitating effective local government relationships, including research by local government practitioners and consultants.
2. The tools and resources that other jurisdictions make available to their local governments for fostering effective relationships.
3. The environmental factors and cultural shifts that have had an impact on relationships between elected officials and administrators.
4. The tools, best practices and resources that interview participants used to facilitate healthy relationships.
5. And the potential needs for further tools, research and work around effective relationships.

To gather information about these topics, insightful data was collected through a literature review, cross jurisdictional scan, interviews and a focus group. There were a number of recurring themes which presented themselves throughout the four findings including: the complex role of local governments, the importance of understanding roles and responsibilities, the need for open and honest communication, the importance of trust and respect in building effective relationships, the partnership role of the Ministry and local government organizations, and the value in education and training for the public, candidates and newly elected officials.

The findings suggest that there are already a number of strong tools and practices that local governments can use to facilitate effective relationships. Sometimes these tools and practices are more widely used and known, such as training sessions and forums put on by UBCM, LGMA and LGLA; other practices, like mentoring may currently be used by some local governments but new to others. Although there are already many tools and practices available, this project has identified a number of areas which the Ministry and the local government system can explore further. Because this is such a complex topic, the list of recommendations provides a number of key areas which could benefit from further research and analysis prior to the consideration of developing any additional tools and resources. By conducting more research and analysis in the identified areas, the local government system can continue to work towards facilitating an environment which fosters effective relationships between elected officials and administrative staff in BC.

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11.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Local Government Roles as Defined in BC's Legislation

CAO (Municipality and regional district)

A council and a regional district board may establish a CAO position. The responsibilities of the CAO included under section 147 of the *Community Charter* and section 235 of the *Local Government Act* are:

1. Overall management of the operations of the municipality/regional district;
2. Ensuring that the policies, programs and other directions of the council/board are implemented; and
3. Advising and informing council/ the board on the operations of the municipality.

Corporate Officer (municipality)/ Administration (regional district)

Section 148 of the *Community Charter* and section 236 of the *Local Government Act* assigns the corporate officer/administration the following powers, duties and functions:

1. Ensuring that accurate minutes of meetings of the council and council committees are prepared and that the minutes, bylaws and other records of the board/ council and board/ council committees are maintained and kept safe;
2. Providing access to the records of board/ council and board/ council committees;
3. Administering oaths and taking affirmations, affidavits and declarations;
4. Certifying copies of bylaws and other documents;
5. Accepting, on behalf of the board/ council or regional district/ municipality, notices and documents that are required or permitted to be given to, served on, filed with or provided to the board/ council or regional district/ municipality, and
6. Keeping the corporate seal and affixing it to any required documents.

Financial Officer (municipality) / Administration (regional district)

The financial officer exercises control and supervision over all financial affairs of the municipality/ board. As listed in section 149 of the *Community Charter* and section 237 of the *Local Government Act*, the financial office/ administration is responsible for:

1. Receiving all money paid to the municipality/ regional district;
2. Ensuring the keeping of all funds and securities of the municipality/ regional district;
3. Investing municipal/ regional district funds;
4. Expending municipal/regional district monies in the manner authorized by council; and
5. Ensuring that accurate records and full accounts of the financial affairs of the municipality are prepared, maintained and kept safe.

Mayor

The mayor is the head and chief executive officer of the municipality who is responsible for

performing all of the duties of a councillor, plus the following additional duties listed in section 116 of the *Community Charter*:

1. Provide leadership to council, including recommending bylaws, resolutions and other measures that carry out the best interest of the municipality;
2. Communicate information (from the CAO) to council;
3. Preside at council meetings when in attendance;
4. Provide, on behalf of the council, general direction to municipal officers respecting implementation of municipal policies and programs;
5. Establish standing committees;
6. Suspend municipal officers; and
7. Reflect the will of council and carry out other duties on behalf of council.

Councillor

There are four main roles and responsibilities listed under section 115 of the *Community Charter* that councillors are responsible for fulfilling, these are:

1. Consider the well-being and interests of the municipality when making decisions;
2. Contribute to the development and evaluation of the police and programs of the municipality respecting its services and other activities;
3. Participate in council meetings, committee meetings, and any other meetings of bodies that council members are appointed to.
4. Carry out any other duties assigned by the council or legislated under the Community Charter or any other applicable Acts.

Board Chair

The primary roles and responsibilities for board chairs of regional districts listed under section 216 of the *Local Government Act* are:

1. Ensure that the law is carried out for the improvement and good government of the regional district;
2. communicate information to the board;
3. Preside at board meetings when in attendance;
4. Recommend bylaws, resolutions and measures that, in the chair's opinion, may assist the peace, order and good government of the regional district in relation to the powers conferred on the board by an enactment;
5. Direct the management of regional district business and affairs and the conduct of officers and employees

Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form (Interviews)



**University
of Victoria**

Participant Consent Form

TAMARA GARRIOCK

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Uncovering Key Factors to Effective Relationships in B.C.'s Local Government System

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Uncovering Key Factors to Effective Relationships in B.C.'s Local Government System that is being conducted by Tamara Garriock.

Tamara Garriock is a graduate student in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria Co-op student with the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development. You may contact her if you have further questions by phone (250-710-6422) or email (tamarag@uvic.ca).

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Public Administration. The research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Kimberly Speers. You may contact my supervisor by phone (250-721-8057) or email (kspeers@uvic.ca).

This study is also being conducted for two clients: Michelle Dann, Director, Advisory Services, Local Government Division of the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development (CSCD) and Rena Bindra, Senior Policy Analyst, Integrated Policy, Integrated Policy, Legislation and Operations Division of CSCD.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this project is to identify tools and practices that local governments use, or could use, to facilitate healthy working relationships between elected officials and administrators in B.C.'s local governments. Many local governments benefit from healthy working relationships between the administrative staff and elected officials. Providing local governments with more proactive advice and materials about facilitating stronger relationships may assist with reducing the number of instances that reach a critical vent or crisis point. The Ministry may benefit from additional information about what tools and practices assist local governments in creating and maintaining healthy working relationships. To be able to provide local governments with more targeted resources, the gaps in information available about facilitating more effective relationships would benefit from further research and analysis.

Importance of this Research

The research would contribute to the knowledge of relationships between elected officials and administrative staff at B.C.'s local government level. To foster more effective relationships, deal with role confusion, and provide local governments with guidance in better understanding legislation, all other provinces provide some type of advisory material for administrators, council

members or both (with some of the materials touching on disputes between council and administration). Although the Ministry provides a range of advice and assistance to local governments for fostering healthy relationships, it would like to further explore what other tools (e.g. targeted advisory materials) may be helpful to strengthen these relationships. Therefore, it is timely for the CSCD to explore the possibility of developing tools and resources, which will likely be informed by the findings collected from this research project.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because of your extensive involvement in, and knowledge of, B.C.'s local government system. You were selected for this study based off of criteria such as the number of years you have worked for local government, the positions that you have held, and the range of local governments that you have worked for. No private employee information was accessed to select you for this study. All information used was a matter of public record which was gathered through news sources, relationships the Ministry has with the local government network and knowledge of experienced CSCD staff. The selection process was a collaborative approach that included input from the clients, CSCD staff and the Local Government Management Association (LGMA). Participants selected for this interview were sampled from retired local government officials and administrative staff.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include an interview which should take approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The interview will be semi-structured and consist of a number of open ended questions that you can answer to your level of comfort. Additional time commitment for this process will include setting up the interview time and location. The location of the interview will depend on what is most convenient for you. Potential locations for the interview are: your place of work, your home, one of CSCD's meeting rooms or over the phone. The interview will be recorded and transcribed and notes will be taken during the interview, to assist me, the researcher, in analyzing the interview responses. The recorded interviews and notes will not be shared outside of the research team (Tamara Garriock, Michelle Dann and Rena Bindra).

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the time it will take to schedule the interview and participate in it.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. Although there were a few individuals that helped select participants for this study (five people or less from the Ministry and LGMA) they were asked to keep this information strictly confidential. Information provided for this project will be assessed by theme to ensure that the confidentiality of participants is maintained throughout the process. No identifiable information will be included in the final dissemination of results to ensure your confidentiality. Additionally, you will not be asked to discuss any information that you feel uncomfortable discussing.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include helping to fill in a gap in information about the tools and practice that are most successful in facilitating effective relationships between elected officials and administrators in B.C.'s local government system. If you are still involved in local government then this information might be useful for you in your relationships with colleagues. Additionally, there is some research about this subject matter from around the world, but it is expected that this study will add to the overall state of knowledge about this subject.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data collected up to the point of withdrawal will be used if you agree to that; if you wish to have your data removed and not used in the final analysis then it will not be used and all data collected from you will be destroyed.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, there will be limits because interviews will be conducted by the research team who will know who you are. Additionally, LGMA will provide input into who should be interviewed; therefore they will likely have an idea about who is being interviewed. However, your anonymity will be protected in the dissemination of results.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected to the same extent that anonymity will be protected. There will be a few people (the research team) that will know who is being interviewed, additionally; LGMA will have an idea about who is being contacted for interviews. However, all parties involved in this process will be asked to keep this information confidential, and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the dissemination of results. If I quote a specific remark that you make in the research paper your information will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms and by removing all factors that could identify you. I will also be safely storing all data that I collect on a password protected computer.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: at a dissertation presentation, on UVicSpace (which can be accessed by the public), with CSCD staff and with the clients. If you would like a copy of the final research project I am happy to share a copy of it with you.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of once the research is complete and the project has been approved. Electronic files will be deleted and hardcopies will be shredded.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Tamara Garriock and Dr. Kimberly Speers, whose contact information has been provided above.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix 3: Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Elected Officials

General Background:

- Could you please tell us a bit about your experience and background in local government?
- How many years have you worked in local government?
- What type of local government do/did you represent? (ex. Municipal, RD)
- What positions have you held at the local governments you have represented?

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Did you receive an orientation and/or orientation materials to your roles and responsibilities?
- How was your role defined where you worked? How were the responsibilities assigned to this role articulated where you worked?
- Have your roles and responsibilities for the same position differed at all depending on the local government you were working for?
- Were/are there any tools such as guidebooks or handbooks used by the local government that you were employed by to define roles and responsibilities?
 - If yes, were these tools created and presented you by the municipality or a consultant? Do you have any copies of the materials that you were presented with that you would be comfortable sharing with me?
 - If there was/is, did you find them helpful? Is there anything you wanted to learn about but did not?
- How did your perceptions change, if all, about your roles and responsibilities over your term?

Relationships:

- Tell me about a time when you worked closely with your Chief Administrative Officer to complete a major initiative.
 - Why do you think you were able to be so successful in this project?
 - What worked well and did not work as well?
 - What was your communication approach with the Chief Administrative Officer?
- When you represented a local government did you ever have contact with other staff or did you primarily work with the CAO?
 - If yes, what type of relationship did you have with staff?
- Tell me about a time where you witnessed or were involved in a conflict between elected officials and administrative staff.
 - How was this conflict handled?
 - What do you think worked well and did not work as well?
 - Were there any resources that you consulted at the time that you found useful for resolving the conflict?

- Were there any resources that you would have liked to have at the time that could have helped?
- Is there anything that you would have done differently?
- What are some of the practices that you use to maintain good working relationships with your colleagues?

Information:

- Have you ever contacted the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development about a conflict between administration and elected officials?
 - If so do you remember which area of the Ministry you talked to?
 - Was the information you received helpful?
 - Is there any information that could have been provided that you think would have been more helpful?
- Are you aware of the Advisory Services program area of the Ministry?
 - If no, (briefly explain what Advisory Services does) would this information/service have been helpful to you at any point in your career?
- Do you consult sources of information about relationships between council and administration?
- Where do you look for this information?
- Have you ever been to a Local Government Leadership Academy or UBCM workshop on local government relationships or governance?
 - If yes, what information did you find the most useful?
 - Is there any information that you think could have been included that would have been more useful?
 - If no, (briefly explain what LGMA/LGLA does) would this information/service have been helpful to you at any point in your career?
 - If yes, how would you want this information provided to you? (e.g. conferences, websites, social media, guidebooks)

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Administrators

General Background:

- Could you please tell us a bit about your experience and background in local government?
- How many years have you worked in local government?
- What type of local government do/did you work for? (ex. Municipal, RD)
- What positions have you held at the local governments you have worked for?

Roles and Responsibilities:

- How was your role defined where you worked? How were the responsibilities assigned to this role articulated where you worked?
- Have your roles and responsibilities for the same position differed at all depending on the local government you were working for?
- Were/are there any tools such as guidebooks or handbooks used by the local government that you were employed by to define roles and responsibilities?
 - If yes, were these tools created and presented you by the municipality or a consultant? Do you have any copies of the materials that you were presented with that you would be comfortable sharing with me?
 - If there was/is, did you find them helpful? Is there anything you wanted to learn about but did not?

Relationships:

- Tell me about a time when you worked closely with your Council of the time to complete a major initiative.
 - Why do you think you were able to be so successful in this project?
 - What worked well and did not work as well?
 - What was your communication approach with the Councillors? Did this vary at all depending on the councillors you worked with or the style of their work?
- Tell me about a time where you witnessed or were involved in a conflict between elected officials and administrative staff.
 - How was this conflict handled?
 - What do you think worked well and did not work as well?
 - Were there any resources that you consulted at the time that you found useful for resolving the conflict?
 - Were there any resources that you would have liked to have at the time that could have helped?
 - Is there anything that you would have done differently?
- What are some of the practices that you use to maintain good working relationships with your colleagues?

Information:

- Have you ever contacted the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development about a conflict between administration and elected officials?
 - If so do you remember which area of the Ministry you talked to?
 - Was the information you received helpful?
 - Is there any information that could have been provided that you think would have been more helpful?
- Are you aware of the Advisory Services program area of the Ministry?
 - If no, (briefly explain what Advisory Services does) would this information/service have been helpful to you at any point in your career?

- Do you consult sources of information about relationships between council and administration?
- Where do you look for this information?
- Have you ever been to a Local Government Management Association (LGMA) workshop or meeting about local government relationships or governance?
 - If yes, what information did you find the most useful?
 - Is there any information that you think could have been included that would have been more useful?
 - If no, (briefly explain what LGMA/LGLA does) would this information/service have been helpful to you at any point in your career?
 - If yes, how would you want this information provided to you? (e.g. conferences, websites, social media, guidebooks)

Appendix 4: Participant Consent Form (Focus Group)



**University
of Victoria**

Participant Consent Form

TAMARA GARRIOCK

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Uncovering Key Factors to Effective Relationships in B.C.'s Local Government System

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Uncovering Key Factors to Effective Relationships in B.C.'s Local Government System that is being conducted by Tamara Garriock.

Tamara Garriock is a graduate student in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria who is working with the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development. You may contact her if you have further questions by phone (250-710-6422) or email (tamarag@uvic.ca).

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Public Administration. The research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Kimberly Speers. You may contact my supervisor by phone (250-721-8057) or email (kspeers@uvic.ca).

This study is also being conducted for two clients: Michelle Dann, Director, Advisory Services, Local Government Division of the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development (CSCD) and Rena Bindra, Senior Policy Analyst, Integrated Policy, Integrated Policy, Legislation and Operations Division of CSCD.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this project is to identify tools and practices that local governments use, or could use, to facilitate healthy working relationships between elected officials and administrators in B.C.'s local governments. Many local governments benefit from healthy working relationships between the administrative staff and elected officials. Providing local governments with more proactive advice and materials about facilitating stronger relationships may assist with reducing the number of instances that reach a critical vent or crisis point. The Ministry may benefit from additional information about what tools and practices assist local governments in creating and maintaining healthy working relationships. To be able to provide local governments with more targeted resources, the gaps in information available about facilitating more effective relationships would benefit from further research and analysis.

Importance of this Research

The research would contribute to the knowledge of relationships between elected officials and administrative staff at B.C.'s local government level. To foster more effective relationships, deal

with role confusion, and provide local governments with guidance in better understanding legislation, all other provinces provide some type of advisory material for administrators, council members or both (with some of the materials touching on disputes between council and administration). Although the Ministry provides a range of advice and assistance to local governments for fostering healthy relationships, it would like to further explore what other tools (e.g. targeted advisory materials) may be helpful to strengthen these relationships. Therefore, it is timely for the CSCD to explore the possibility of developing tools and resources, which will likely be informed by the findings collected from this research project.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because of your extensive knowledge of, B.C.'s local government system through the work that you have done in this area. No private employee information was accessed to select you for this study. All information used was a matter of public record which was gathered through news sources, relationships the Ministry has with the local government network and knowledge of experienced CSCD staff. The selection process was a collaborative approach that included input from the clients, CSCD staff and the Local Government Management Association (LGMA). Participants selected for this focus group were sampled from local government practitioners working in B.C.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a focus group which should take approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The focus group will be semi-structured and consist of open ended questions that you and any other focus group participants can answer to your or their level of comfort. Additional time commitment for this process will include setting up the focus group time and location. The time and location of the focus group will depend on what works best to bring the group together at once. Potential locations for the interview are: your place of work, your home, one of CSCD's meeting rooms or over the phone. The focus group will be recorded and transcribed and notes will be taken during it, to assist me in analyzing the interview responses. The recorded interviews and notes will not be shared outside of the research team (Tamara Garriock, Michelle Dann and Rena Bindra).

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the time it will take to schedule the focus group and participate in it.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. Although there were a few individuals that helped select participants for this study (five people or less from the Ministry and LGMA) they were asked to keep this information strictly confidential. Information provided for this project will be assessed by theme to ensure that the confidentiality of participants is maintained throughout the process. No identifiable information will be included in the final dissemination of results to ensure your confidentiality. Additionally, you will not be asked to discuss any information that you feel uncomfortable discussing.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include helping to fill in a gap in information about the tools and practice that are most successful in facilitating effective relationships between elected officials and administrators in B.C.'s local government system. Additionally, there is some research about this subject matter from within B.C. and Canada as well as from around the world, but it is expected that this study will add to the overall state of knowledge about this subject.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data collected up to the point of withdrawal will be used if you agree to that; if you wish to have your data removed and not used in the final analysis then it will not be used and all data collected from you will be destroyed.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, there will be limits because interviews will be conducted by the research team who will know who you are. Additionally, LGMA provided input into who should be interviewed; therefore they will likely have an idea about who is being interviewed. However, your anonymity will be protected in the dissemination of results.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected to the same extent that anonymity will be protected. There will be a few people (the research team) that will know who will be a part of the focus group, as well as those who are also in the focus group. Additionally, a staff member from LGMA will have an idea about who is being contacted for the focus group. However, all parties involved in this process will be asked to keep this information confidential, and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the dissemination of results. If I quote a specific remark that you make in the research paper your information will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms and by removing all factors that could identify you. I will also be safely storing all data that I collect on a password protected computer.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: at a dissertation presentation, on UVicSpace (which can be accessed by the public), with CSCD staff and with the clients. If you would like a copy of the final research project I am happy to share a copy of it with you.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of once the research is complete and the project has been approved. Electronic files will be deleted and hardcopies will be shredded.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Tamara Garriock and Dr. Kimberly Speers, whose contact information has been provided above.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix 5: Focus Group Discussion Questions

- Looking over the course of your career what are some shifts that you have seen in BC's local government system?
- How do you think these changes have impacted local government relationships?
- Although there have been challenges to BC's local government system, what do you think is working well? What practices have been positive for relationships?
- There has been a lot of focus given to the breakdown of relationships between staff and elected officials. Do you think that this is a systematic issue or more specific to each local government?
- Further to this do you think that size of the local government has any impact on the relationship between elected officials and administrative staff?
- Quite often a small amount of conflict can be normal and even healthy for fostering innovation and creativity. When do you think that the amount of conflict switches from being healthy to detrimental and how do you make people realize that they have gotten to this point?
- Would local governments that are suffering from relationship issues benefit more from a bottom up approach that is locally based or some tools and practices provided at the provincial level?
- What do you think are some of the most important practices, tools and/ or resources that new councillors and CAOs should be aware of to ensure that their working relationships with one another do not break down?
- Is there anything else you would like to say about relationships between administrative staff and elected officials? Is there anything that I may have missed that you think would be important for this study?

Appendix 6: Summary Table of Canadian Cross Jurisdictional Scan

Jurisdiction	Type of document(s)	Document details	Themes within	Considerations	Additional tools
Alberta	Handbook – Elected officials	Webpage which lists a number of topics that are hyperlinked to individual PDFs.	Code of ethics, hiring a CAO, guide for newly elected officials, roles and responsibilities	The guide simplifies and makes reference to sections of Alberta’s local government legislation.	Legislative amendments to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide more role clarity • require municipalities to (1) develop a code of conduct and (2) provide orientation to newly elected officials within 90 days of an election Peer Network for Dispute Resolution.
	Webpage – Roles and responsibilities	Two separate webpages with resources for CAOs and for councillors. Webpage with specific roles and responsibilities of local government players.	Roles and responsibilities, CAO specific resources, councillor specific resources	Highlights the importance of role understanding. Many specific resources include links to sections of the government’s main handbook.	
Saskatchewan	Handbook – Municipal council	22 page handbook	Roles and responsibilities, importance of good working relationships	An effective working relationship is one of the most important aspects of good municipal government.	Legislative amendments to require all municipalities to adopt a code of ethics.
	Orientation Guide – Administrators	23 page guide	Key responsibilities of the administration, list of helpful organization, agencies, ministries	The guide simplifies and makes reference to sections of Saskatchewan’s local government legislation.	
Manitoba	Guide – Newly elected	86 page guidebook	Role of council and administration, what council should expect of CAO		Mandatory requirement to develop a municipal employee code of conduct.
Ontario	Guide – Municipal Councillors	130 page guide	Roles and responsibilities, overview of local government, council – staff relationship	Was created for the 2014 municipal election. Stresses the importance of a good working relationship between staff and council.	Integrity Commissioner
Quebec	Municipal Guide	88 page guide written in French	Conflict of interest, roles, financial management, citizen participation	Outlines local government legislation relevant to elected officials.	Municipal Commission Code of conduct <i>Municipal Ethics and Good Conduct Act</i>

New Brunswick	Resource Manual – Local Government	158 page manual	Roles and responsibilities, relationship between elected officials and administrative staff, what makes an ideal relationship	Very thorough about local government in New Brunswick, and is easy to read (for most audiences, including the public). Provides examples about role confusion.	Peer Mediation Group
Nova Scotia	Resource Handbook – Local Government	Webpage which lists a number of topics that are hyperlinked to individual PDFs	Administration, HR (code of ethics, succession planning, hiring a CAO), strategic planning	This handbook is large and thorough because it is split up into a number of separate PDFs instead of as one document.	Strategic planning worksheets
Newfoundland and Labrador	Handbook – Municipal Council	152 page handbook for council	Roles and responsibilities, HR, effective staff relations	Is a thorough handbook which includes best practices for fostering effective council/administrator relations	N/A
Prince Edward Island	Resource Handbook – Local Government	88 page handbook for councillors	Roles and responsibilities, what council should expect from its administration, code of conduct	Is a local government handbook aimed at councillors, provides a number of good summary bullets which are in the form of tips to remember.	Model code of conduct
	Webpage – Municipal Government	Small website dedicated to the PEI 2014 municipal election	Overview of local government, relationship of council and administration	Provides brief information about the role of local government, the administration and council. Is an easy source of information about municipal elections for the public.	