



50 Questions for #CAMA50

One of the benefits of CAMA membership is learning from colleagues across the country. As part of the CAMA50 Project, we generated a list of 50 Questions for our Board of Directors to consider.

Questions were randomly assigned to each Board member.

CAMA BOARD OF DIRECTORS: 2021-2022



Jack Benzaquen
President/Québec



Cory Bellmore
First Vice-President
NWT/Yukon/Nunavut



Beverly Hendry
Second Vice-President
Populations Under 100,000



Tony Kulbisky
Treasurer/Alberta



Jake Rudolph
Past President



Brenda Orchard
Ontario



Dawn Chaplin
Newfoundland & Labrador



Marc Melanson
New Brunswick



Mike Dolter
Nova Scotia & PEI



Gary Kent
Populations Over 100,000



Jamie Paik
Manitoba & Saskatchewan



Vincent Lalonde
British Columbia

What piece of advice would you give to any new CAO just starting in the role?

Cory Bellmore

Take the time you need to understand what is really going on in your organization and hear both sides (Council and Administration). Listen and observe before making big changes.

Marc Melanson

For someone who is starting out as a CAO, they must make sure that they have a good understanding of the organization's culture and a clear mandate from City Council. Despite the *Local Governance Act*, by-laws and policies which govern our work, we must remain true to our values and try to maintain an objective opinion towards our organization. We must also take advantage of our colleagues' advice in the municipal world when we feel we need to do so.

In your personal experience, what has been your greatest accomplishment in your time as a CAO?

Jake Rudolph

I have been fortunate to work with strong teams and good Councils, so I would say I am proud of a strong track record of good governance and accomplishments in the organizations I have worked with.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

Gary Kent

In the Staff-Council relationship, always remember that it is Council who sets policy, based on professional advice from staff. Once a decision is made, staff need to accept it and implement. Also, although staff – elected officials' relationships ideally can be friendly, never confuse that with being friends; a good business rule for all our professional relationships.

Jamie Paik: "Make them think it was their idea."

What is your favourite place to visit in Canada, and why?

Vincent Lalonde

Honestly its all of Canada! During Canada's 150th Anniversary in 2017, my family and I drove from Newfoundland to British Columbia stopping in every Province along the way. What struck me is how every single region of Canada has amazing places and people to discover.

What was your favourite CAMA Conference, and why?



Tony Kulbisky

There have been a lot of great ones, but my favourite would be the Fredericton one. It was so beautiful and there were so many cool places to see in the area - especially on the pre-conference visit to St. Andrews. All the sessions were great, but what made it memorable was the casual night out evening, seeing the sunset and listening to great music outdoors on that patio. It was a perfect night out, great venue, great food, and people.

Name three books that you would recommend to your colleagues.

Jake Rudolph

- “*Values*” by Mark Carney. Good read on leadership and environmental issues.
- “*Younger Next Year*” by Chris Crowley. This book speaks to balance in life.
- “*A Walk in the Woods*” by Bill Bryson. An entertaining adventure about taking on a major challenge.

If you created a university course about local government administration, what would the title be?

Jamie Paik

“Managing Expectations: Everybody Wants More Services - But Nobody Wants More Taxes.”

Tony Kulbisky

“The Importance of Relationship Building”

In your opinion, what are the top three most important attributes/characteristics of a good CAO?

Marc Melanson

- **Good communicator.** In every organization, the key to success is communication, and the message must be continuously shared in the organization.
- **Lead by example.** I believe that when we lead by example, our team members will want to help us achieve our goals and dreams.
- **Be a mentor.** Throughout our careers, we have experiences that give us a wealth of knowledge. It is therefore important to learn from our mistakes and share successes and good work with our team members. It is also important to provide regular feedback to our employees and make sure that we are very clear in our expectations of them.

Aside from your current position, can you think of a Mayor you have worked with that stood out from the rest? What did you learn from them and how did they help you in your approach with your Council?

Brenda Orchard

I have had the privilege of working with many great municipal leaders in my career. One that stands out for me is a former Warden of a County in Ontario. I came to the County following the departure of the CAO, Treasurer, Director of Human Resources and Clerk. Council had commissioned a governance review from George Cuff and a series of recommendations for change were included in the report. It was a great opportunity to establish a new leadership team and implement meaningful change.

For me, this Warden was an ideal leadership partner. He provided me the space and autonomy I needed to implement substantial change and establish new policies and processes while at the same time asking the appropriate challenging questions to ensure I was meeting Council's expectations. I felt that I could trust his sincerity and his intentions. I was comfortable that if something needed to be said that he would say it to my face. We had an honest and candid rapport.

It is not easy to enter a new organization and make fundamental changes to critical functions. The trust I had in his up-front nature provided the security I needed to take risks and challenge the status quo. I have tremendous respect for his integrity.

How has CAMA helped you in your career?

Bev Hendry

The better part of my professional education and training as a CAO comes from my attendance and participation in CAMA programs. Having the national perspective on issues is an added bonus and grounds me in terms of the impact and importance of local government. The Association always gears the sessions to new and emerging issues and provides a safe place to discuss and debate the implementation and associated nuances.

Tell me about one of your biggest influences and how they helped shape your leadership style.

Bev Hendry

As a CAMA member, I have always enjoyed learning from great leader colleagues but I am thinking a more specific example is expected here. To pick one, I have enjoyed my interaction with the CAO of Peel, and CAMA Past President, Janice Baker who candidly shares her opinions and experiences on the respective roles of the CAO and members of Council. Janice demonstrates great strength of character in terms of humility, order, and humour.

Is there a particular speaker/presenter from a CAMA Conference that you would pick to come back year after year?

Jack Benzaquen

David Siegel

CAMA is looking toward the next generation of local government leaders. How do you help to cultivate young and aspiring leaders in your own organization?

Mike Dolter

I think one of the best ways to develop leaders is to demonstrate trust in their abilities and give them meaningful work where they have an opportunity to demonstrate their skills. It is equally important to be prepared to guide them when needed but not to interfere in their process.

For this to work, it's essential that you be open to innovative ideas and solutions and not simply something that follows your own way of thinking. It's essential that they get the due credit for their work either with Council or with the public.

As young leaders gain the confidence that you are there to support them, they will continue to bring new and fresh ideas forward making the organization more vibrant and responsive to the community.

What made you want to become part of the CAMA Board?

Gary Kent

I have witnessed the value of CAMA and felt I was in a position to represent the larger scale of municipalities in the network.

How has your time on the CAMA Board helped you in your own municipality?

Mike Dolter

The sharing of ideas and perspectives with my fellow Board members has been excellent in allowing me to look at issues in my community with a different lens. We need to all recognize that as a CAO you are not alone as you have a network of hundreds that are there to support you.

With any issue we are facing there is another community out there that is facing the same thing or has even come up with a solution that you can learn from. We are stronger together. The Board has also allowed me to be able to look at some of the broader issues that we are facing in Nova Scotia and work with my fellow Board members to develop solutions. The goal is always how we can help each other to make our municipalities better.

Is there a particular occasion in your career where you recall having to display resilience?

Brenda Orchard

Many years ago, I was obligated to advise Council of a particular course of action the Warden was taking on a sensitive issue. Even though I did so in the proper way, it put a strain on my working relationship with my Warden. I asked to meet with him to explain that my job as CAO is to report to Council as a whole (not to any individual Council member) and that my position of trust with Council can never be compromised. For the rest of the Warden's term of office the relationship was professional but strained. Conversations were short and utilitarian.

It was difficult at the time as I believe a CAO can accomplish much more when there is a good relationship with the Warden or Mayor. However, I reminded myself that it would have been catastrophic if I had lost the trust of my Council by failing to notify them. Council must have trust in staff. I knew I had done my job and I hung on to that to weather the storm. I was fortunate to have a good relationship with our municipal solicitor who would often remind me that the price for doing the right thing is worth cost.

Most CAOS don't grow up imagining themselves in such a role. What were your career aspirations before local government? What led you to the CAO/City Manager profession?

Tony Kulbisky

I was always destined to be in local government and my early municipal work was in the recreation and parks field. I won my share of provincial and national awards in my career and was recruited to the Territorial Government for a number of years working for Municipal Affairs helping support development of more municipalities in the Northwest Territories, but I missed working at the local level and went back to that. As I honed my skills early in my career, I wanted to move up the ranks and was encouraged to become a CAO by my mentors to lead and support communities.

What is your favourite quote?

Dawn Chaplin

Three of my favourite poems are ***The Road Not Taken*** by Robert Frost, ***The Man in The Glass*** by Peter Dale Wimbrow Sr and ***The Dash*** by Linda Ellis (I encourage you to read all these), of which I could draw excerpts, but that wouldn't give a true reflection of my favourite quote.

My parents have been my role models my entire life and I would not be where I am today, without their support and guidance. My Dad always imparts his words of wisdom on my siblings and I, and his words are not lost. If I had to pick one (and there are many), it would be "***You Are a Chaplin, Not A Melon***". This is an adaptation of the quote Rodney Dangerfield told his son in the movie – ***Back to School***.

You'll have to watch the movie to understand the context. My Dad adapted it and it serves us all well. In summary it means – *you can do anything you put your mind to, you will achieve greatness and never let the person beat you to be yourself.* The role of a CAO is demanding, a tight rope that you walk alone.

You are under scrutiny and pressure each day. Competing deadlines, demands of Council, keeping a team motivated, spreading those scarce resources to serve the residents daily, long hours and sometimes little thanks. It is lonely at the top. Decisions must be made in the best interests of the organization – at times, difficult ones.

You are responsible for implementing the directive of Council, even when your opinion differs. Sometimes you second guess yourself, you find yourself under intense pressure to change a decision you made. As tough as it is, I stay the course, stay true to myself, and realize the impact I can have working collectively with my staff team. Working together, we will achieve greatness.

In your time with the CAMA Board, what is one surprising thing you learned about the Association that you didn't know before?

Cory Bellmore

That it went through such a rocky period in the early 2000's. Also, that CAMA is fairly young and is a learning and growing organization like any other and isn't "stuck in the past".

In 50 words or less, how would you describe CAMA's value to a potential new member?

Gary Kent

It is invaluable. Just sitting in a physical or virtual room and absorbing conversations about practical problems, potential solutions and real and emerging trends delivers a massive return on investment for the membership fee, whether you are a CAO or reporting to one.

Vincent Lalonde

Cities are where the action is and CAMA's values reside in the collective knowledge of its past and present members. Administrating cities is the best job in the world but is also challenging due to the multiplicity of services we deliver. Good base knowledge is required in so many areas so professional development and networking are also a key aspect of values this organization provides to its members.

Local government has evolved quite a bit over the last 50 years. What is one positive change you have experienced in your career?

Jamie Paik

The shift from Council basically managing operations to Council focusing on governance and having the CAO manage operations as their one employee. I think this change is particularly recent for smaller urban municipalities (within the last decade or so).

Dawn Chaplin

I have worked in municipal government for over sixteen years. There have been a lot of changes during that time, some good, some bad. If I was to single out one improvement or positive change – it would be citizen communication and engagement. While communication and engagement mean very different things, they both involve a municipality's key stakeholder and whom we serve daily – the resident.

Years ago, it meant writing a letter to Council. Today, residents are in tune and follow what is happening in their municipality. They want to be heard – and they connect - via phone, email, social media, and presentations to Council. If they are passionate, impacted – they will become engaged, and will communicate. There are times when Council needs to hear from residents – budget, land use planning, feedback on levels of service and when developing plans.

Over the years, I have seen residents take a greater interest in their community. It is important to take the time to listen to our residents. While the final decision may not align with their opinion or request, residents will feel valued, respected, and heard. We must also consider – that different generations, communicate differently. Citizen engagement must be part of the process, not an afterthought or reaction.

Do you have a “CAMA Mentor” – someone in the Association who has helped/influenced you?

Bev Hendry

Everyone I meet through CAMA has influenced me in one way or another. We are not “cookie-cutter” leaders, and we all have different leadership qualities that shine in different situations. Hearing about fellow leader's experiences and approach to issues is fundamental to my growth. Often, I am presented with a perspective that I wasn't aware of and that rounds out my response to an issue or situation, whether consciously or intuitively.

Political acumen is so important for local government administrators. In your opinion, what are the three most critical attributes of having good political acumen?

Jack Benzaquen – Integrity, transparency and trust.

Dawn Chaplin

To be able to survive and thrive as a CAO, you must be politically astute. The three most critical attributes of having good political acumen are: (1) building and maintaining relationships; (2) self-awareness; and (3) knowledge.

Working in municipal government can be the most rewarding form of public service. It's where the **“rubber hits the road”** and you can make the greatest impact. To achieve the strategic vision of your municipality, you must work with numerous stakeholders – Council, staff, residents, businesses, community groups, other levels of government.

At times, a lot of personalities and a lot of opinions – sometimes at different ends of the decision spectrum. Sometimes emotions and conflict can be at an all-time high. All opinions are to be respected, you must be willing to resolve conflict, have difficult conversations, admit when mistakes are made - keeping the end goal in mind – to offer programs and services to residents in an efficient and effective manner.

You must be self-aware 365 days a year. Always conduct yourself with integrity and sincerity. You must be able to read a room, anticipate where the conversation is going, know when to speak and when to listen. You need to be able to see where the “landmines” are, to navigate “the pitfalls” and think strategically. Be respectful of the decision-making process and implement the directive of Council – irrespective of opinion.

To support your Council and staff team – you must have knowledge. This links back to developing partnerships and being self-aware as well. Knowledge of legislation, funding programs, professional development opportunities, group dynamics, trends, and best practices within municipal government. You must support and enable your staff to thrive and prosper within the organization. You want to lead the way and offer programs and services in the most efficient and effective manner possible. In addition to knowing – you must also understand – when to act and when not to. We must strive to be proactive, not reactive. Always ***“walk your talk”***.

What three prominent Canadians – alive or dead – would you like to have dinner with? Explain.

Marc Melanson

Roméo LeBlanc – Appointed Governor General of Canada in February 1995, Roméo LeBlanc is a New Brunswicker who grew up in a small community in N.B. He was the first Acadian and the first person from the Maritimes appointed to this position. He has shown through hard work and dedication one can excel as a person and anything is possible.

Terry Fox – A person from a small Canadian family like all of us, an active person, who had dreams for his career and his life. Despite finding out that he had cancer and losing his leg, he decided to undertake a project he had imagined just after his amputation: to cross Canada from coast-to-coast in order to raise funds for cancer research. Unknowingly, his inspiration and perseverance inspired thousands of Canadians to participate annually in the Terry Fox Run. He has raised significant funds to advance cancer research and save lives.

All municipal leaders/CAOs – After some reflection, my most important inspiration is having met in the past and continuing to meet leaders in the municipal world. Being able to share the successes and experiences of each and every one of them across the country is an important learning experience for me.

As the level of governance closest to the people, municipal work is demanding and full of challenges. You learn a lot through the experiences of others. Seeing how people succeed through leading an organization, in making their community shine through an innovative approach, and in doing so, advancing our profession is an inspiration to me.

In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge that CAOs/City Managers currently face?

Jamie Paik

I believe one of the biggest challenges is the aftermath of elections and having a large Council turnover. It may create a change in the short and long-range planning you have been working towards, can create a lack of job security and of course there is the challenge of getting them up to speed while managing the changes they want to immediately put in place.

Technology has changed the way all of us work. How have improvements or advancements in technology made your job easier? Has it made things more complicated in any way?

Jake Rudolph

Technology is both a blessing and a challenge. On the one hand we are able to do many more things better. The problem is the many more things and the ever-increasing expectations. Social media is a powerful tool and influencer. There is a need to be mindful of, but not vulnerable to, social media discourse.

Self-care and work-life balance is important for anyone in a leadership role. What do you do for your “me” time, to take care of your mental and physical health?

Dawn Chaplin

Working for a smaller municipality, the CAO wears many hats at times. I have a strong work ethic and high expectations of myself. I sometimes did double or triple duty, when vacancies existed within the organization – feeling as CAO I had to do that, never asking for help, otherwise I would let the organization down. There was an expectation as well, that I would carry the load.

I was always an individual who put others ahead of myself – that was until the Fall of 2019, when I officially burnt out and had to take some time away. That was hard for me to do – but I had no choice really, I had nowhere else to turn.

Upon reflection it should never have gotten to that point - I should have asked for help sooner. I am not a rear-view mirror type of person. I learn the lesson and move forward. So, what did I learn? I am not a super woman, I can say no, I can ask for help. The biggest learning for me was – if you don't have your health – you have nothing else. How can I be good to my family and to my employer and employees, if I don't look after me? And for the first time in my life, it is all about me.

Your life is divided into four quadrants - health, self, family, and work. Prior to my burnout, mine was in the reverse order. Not anymore. I still have a strong work ethic, but I have a different perspective now. I look after me first. Some days I must reset, and I can now recognize that. My body and my son remind me!

What do I do for me now to take care of my mental and physical health? The first thing I did was purchase a personal cell phone – keeping the line between life and work

separate. I walk, I meditate, I read, I journal, I listen to music, I practice yoga, I watch sports – Go Habs! I spend time with those that mean the most to me. I speak my mind and sometimes say no. I have started to do things on my bucket list. I have created boundaries.

Being in nature does wonders for my mind, body and soul. When I started on my journey back, I couldn't walk for 15 minutes – now I can walk up to 10 kilometers a day. I dug out those snowshoes I purchased five years ago and now use them – when the elements permit during the winter. During the summer months – I garden.

Life really is about balance and having no regrets. As CAO's we walk a tight rope every day. Find your balance – or as close as you can get and stay there. You want to work to live, not live to work. I am still on my journey back and am confident I can get there – it just takes time.

What is one thing you wish more people knew about local government?

Brenda Orchard

I wish people knew that the people working in local government care deeply about their community and take great pride in serving their neighbours. It is not just a paycheck. We are passionate about what we do. It can be a thankless job that is subjected to a lot of public scrutiny and "armchair coaching". Our level of caring overcomes those negative pressures, but it takes a toll on us as people.

What is your leadership style? How has it helped you in your career?

Tony Kulbisky

My leadership style is dependent on the situation, but I would say a servant collaborative approach for the most part. I don't micromanage and trust my team. If I need to intervene I will but will also do my best to support. This approach has served me well and I would think others. I always feel my job is to develop and grow future leaders.

Being able to take a risk is necessary for any leader. Tell us about a time where you took a risk and it paid off.

Bev Hendry

It's sometimes necessary to take risks and to do so with care. Looking back, there was an instance where I took a risk and it paid off and that would be when I was dealing with a "fill" and "airport" issue and the timing was such that I was between a lame duck Council and a Council elect and I needed to seek a court injunction to stop the fill activity.

I facilitated a meeting between the outgoing and incoming Mayors to advise them of the situation and the legal processes. My actions were focused on doing the right thing to protect the community and the potential liability was far greater than the risk.

Looking back on your career so far, what advice would you go back and give yourself when you were first starting out?

Jamie Paik

I would say that in the beginning of my career I struggled with delegating tasks. An efficient municipality operates as a team and delegating not only helps with making the workload more manageable for you, but it also shows your staff that they are valuable and trusted with important tasks.

What are your aspirations for CAMA over the next 50 years?

Vincent Lalonde

As cities are ever more important, CAMA will become invaluable over the next 50 years as cities and their administrators are called upon to provide even more to its residents.

There are many benefits to being a CAMA member. In your opinion, what is the greatest benefit?

Cory Bellmore

Networking, Networking, Networking. I can't say enough about the importance of being able to connect with colleagues on all issues.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way you lead your organization?

Brenda Orchard

The COVID pandemic has caused us to focus even more on the mental health and stress levels of our staff. Prior to the pandemic we would have said that we were doing a lot to support the well-being of our staff...and that was true. However, due to the pandemic we have seen the need in a clearer and more urgent way. The impact of our new programs such as Peer Support "Its Ok to Not be OK" have proven to some, who might have previously been skeptical, that we need to bolster our staff.

I believe that staff also have developed an increased level of expectation of care from management. The bar has been raised on both sides. We have responded with new programs such as Peer Support and a Staff-to-Staff Recognition program and we modified our Flex Time policy to allow for continued work-from-home options for staff. The pandemic has brought people more into focus.

Mike Dolter

The nature of the pandemic required me to become a better communicator in many ways. Meeting with both Council and my Senior staff became more frequent to ensure that we all had the same information and that everyone had a complete picture of the ever-changing situation. It was also critical to provide all levels of staff with the autonomy to make decisions in key areas that were impacted by the pandemic and the restrictions we were operating under.

We also had to be mindful of the overall mental health of the organizations as well as individual employees that were all coping in their own ways. Finally, we all now realize that there are other options available to us other than our once rigid structure of working from the office and physically meeting together. As an organization, the virtual meeting and remote work is now another tool available to us to meet organizational objectives.

Many organizations have had to adapt their programs and services due to the COVID pandemic. Is there one change that you made that has created an improvement or efficiency that will remain post-pandemic?

Brenda Orchard

Like every municipality, we have embraced ZOOM meetings and truly appreciate the efficiency and cost savings that technology provides. Our provincial legislation has been adapted to allow for virtual Council meetings and hybrid meetings. I am in a County that has a mix of urban and rural and it can take two hours to drive from end to end so the time and travel cost savings is substantial.

In Ontario we are responsible for administering provincial offenses court and had to quickly create a virtual court platform at the onset of Covid. With virtual court we can process more cases and respondents do not have to travel to our location to attend in person. As most of the cases are traffic ticket related and our County borders the 401 highway, many of our clients live outside our local area and sometimes in other provinces. We are hoping that virtual court remains an option after the pandemic ends as it is much more convenient for the public and for staff.

What has been one skill in your role as CAO/City manager that you have learned by experience versus formal education?

Bev Hendry

When you join as a CAO and you haven't worked in one of the municipal service areas, which was my circumstance, for me it was very important to listen and understand the business processes and challenges of the line businesses so that I could support staff and be better able to help facilitate resident concerns. This is certainly learned from on-the-job experience and not from formal education.

Local government leaders come from a variety of different professional backgrounds. In your opinion, what is one skill set/speciality that is essential for every CAO to possess or acquire?

Dawn Chaplin

When I commenced my CAO journey some fifteen years ago, most of my counterparts had either engineering or accounting backgrounds. I have an economic development background, with an undergraduate degree in science. Different education backgrounds bring different skillsets and strengths to the CAO role. I am a strong believer in lifelong learning – that your educational journey is never complete. You want to serve, be innovative and lead. That will require ongoing professional development and networking.

If there is one specialty that all CAO's need - it is the ability to develop and deliver plans. Council sets the directive, staff implements. We need to formalize how the Council vision will be operationalized and achieved. This ranges from identifying the required resources – human, financial and time, developing partnerships – within and across Departments, with other organizations, community groups or levels of government, developing contingency plans, how and when to communicate project updates to Council and the public, monitoring and evaluation. This continues into perpetuity to ensure a sustainable organization and community.

Communication between different levels of government is crucial when it comes to great service delivery to constituents. What advice would you give about building good partnerships between municipal-regional/provincial-territorial/federal governments?

Gary Kent

Be responsive to requests for benchmarking and questions of curiosity about how your organization is tackling issues. Turn up and visibly be present at strategic venues, such as CAMA and Provincial conferences and webinars and show that you and your organization are open to collaboration.

In your opinion, what are the top three most significant issues facing local governments in the next decade?

Mike Dolter

- ***Dealing effectively with the infrastructure and fiscal deficits.*** Our continued reliance on property tax as our main source of revenue and the insufficient fiscal flexibility within most provincial government acts provides us with a constrained ability to deal with our ever aging infrastructure. The fiscal relationship with the provinces and the federal government needs to change to better reflect how services are delivered at the local level. Fiscal capacity and responsibility must be reconciled if municipalities are going to provide the services being demanded of them.
- ***Attracting and retaining talent.*** Municipalities will be increasingly competing for a limited pool of professional talent. We must address how we become employers of choice for new graduates. This will require a greater focus on identifying and marketing the great careers that exist throughout Canada at the municipal level.
- ***Balancing power and authority with provincial and federal governments.*** We need clarification of the power and responsibility of modern municipalities. We need the resources, autonomy, and institutions appropriate to deliver on our shifting roles.

CAMA currently has seven (7) toolkits available for members. If you could choose the next toolkit topic, what would it be? Explain.

Tony Kulbisky

“How to build a socially inclusive community.” It’s about learning how to have difficult conversations with marginalized and unrepresented demographics in your community to get to the real needs. It’s learning how not to be afraid of the hard work which will develop in very rewarding results in the end.

Performance evaluation is a key component in professional growth. What piece of feedback have you received that has helped you in your career?

Jake Rudolph

Toolkits aside, it is not always easy to get honest/cohesive feedback from Council. Receiving positive feedback is always helpful and motivating.

What is your best advice for dealing with an adversarial councillor, committee member, or constituent?

Jake Rudolph

There was a famous football coach in the US who was asked “how do you deal with all those personalities”. His answer was “I deal with them all differently”. I am respectful and professional and attempt to treat all elected officials equally. Generally, this is rewarded with a return of respect for me and the administration.

Vincent Lalonde

Always stay professional, don’t lose your poise, seek ways to reach them and bring them back to having a constructive dialogue with you.

What is your best advice for managing conflict within your senior management team?

Jack Benzaquen

- Meet with each of the senior managers individually to best understand the dispute between them and to precisely define it. Agree with each of them on this definition. Equally, note the points of rapprochement (in common). Inform them that a joint meeting will be set up to discuss the point of dispute.
- At the meeting, begin by announcing the point of dispute as jointly defined, then continue by announcing the points in common and give everyone the floor while giving everyone the opportunity to respond. Listen carefully to find other points of agreement and, as the conversation evolves, establish a plan of action that everyone agrees to.

Is there one professional development experience that you have had that you would recommend?

Jack Benzaquen. CAO/Council Relations with Dr. Gordon McIntosh and Tracey Lorenson

What are you most looking forward to as CAMA returns to in-person meetings and Conferences?

Jack Benzaquen

The opportunity to meet old friends and new colleagues from different parts of Canada and learn more about their reality and exchange best practices.

What is your best advice for handling negative public opinion or criticism in social or news media?

Cory Bellmore

Not to respond to the negative and just supply the facts of a situation. Facts without opinion.

As the saying goes, “It can be lonely at the top”. How do you engage the senior leaders in your own organization to be a cohesive team?

Marc Melanson

Success is achieved through a solid and competent team. It is important to:

- Bring the vision and purpose of the organization to life;
- Have clear objectives and expectations;
- Have meetings individually and as a team;
- Have a mentor-like approach;
- Have team building activities;
- Have a humanly approach;
- But most importantly, celebrate success as a team.

If you could pick a theme song for CAMA, what song would you choose?

Vincent Lalonde

Instrumental Theme for [Great Cities by Simple Minds](#) • In the City, by Joe Walsh

Bev Hendry

[Carol King's – “You Got a Friend”](#) – Being a CAO is a lonely job and knowing there is a network out there that understands your issue within one minute, means the world to me.

What is your favourite overall CAMA memory?

Mike Dolter

It comes from the 2015 Conference in Jasper. For the Casual Night Out, we were down on the beach with a bunch of activities going on and the feeling of camaraderie and sharing the experience with all my colleagues really has stayed with me through the years. The annual Conferences all have that type of impact on me as they really remind me why I joined CAMA in 2005 and why I was so interested in being part of the Board of this great Association.

What is the best thing about working in local government?

Cory Bellmore

You can make and see immediate results in a community. Although we can all get bogged down in our own red tape, it is easier to resolve that and create opportunities locally.