



50 Questions for #CAMA50

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How has CAMA helped you in your career?

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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

[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.