



CAMA and COVID-19 2020-2022

CAMA's history would not be complete without making mention of the challenges of the past two years.

Officially, the Association's 50th Anniversary was due to be celebrated long before now, but with all the necessary precautions implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we needed to take a different approach. Over the past several months, we have shared stories from CAMA's inception, of the successes and the challenges, and shared the 'secret sauce' that keeps us going after all these years – the people – Board members, the staff and membership alike.

And it is those people who have led our cities and towns, regions, and townships through one of the most challenging eras of our time. COVID not only brought significant health impacts, but also impacted our operations, budgets, infrastructure, and personal mental health.

As city managers and CAOs, you know all too well what it takes to build a great organization; one that is nimble and responsive and can adapt to any situation that gets thrown your way. It is during the tough times that leadership gets tested.

In March 2020, like many other organizations and Associations across Canada, CAMA made the difficult decision to halt in-person meetings and conferences for the safety of our members, partners, and sponsors. Little did we know, it would be two long years before we would see each other again for Board meetings, and now even longer for our annual conference.

For us, networking is a major benefit to our membership, and it is something we have always taken pride in. The annual conference is the premiere professional development and networking opportunity for CAOs in Canada, and despite having to cancel for another year, we are still very committed to bringing it back better than ever.

Despite having to adjust our plans and expectations, like you in your own municipalities, we knew we had to pivot, and continue to provide value to our members and our supporters. The Professional Development Webinar Series was an opportunity to meet virtually on a regular basis, on topics of interest. Our committed partners continued to support new and varied initiatives to connect with members for which we are very grateful. Work continued from the National Office and through the Board of Directors and sub-committees on projects including toolkit development, communications, and fostering partnerships. That commitment was key to sustaining relationships and moving CAMA forward.

A new Strategic Plan was developed that will guide operations and initiatives over the next five years. You will begin to see pieces of the plan come to fruition over the next couple of months, with a continued focus on the core values that members are accustomed to, as well as new and exciting initiatives to build on the successes of the past 50 years.

We would be remiss not to mention the hard work and resilience of each and every one of you. Over the course of the last two years, we have witnessed great leadership and adaptability as you guided your organizations through the pandemic. We saw innovation in how you connected with your teams and your residents, and how you responded to the varying mandates legislated by the provincial and federal governments.

You have made processes for efficiencies; you have streamlined operations to respond to financial pressures. You have remained nimble to keep your staff and your clients safe and healthy, all while managing the risks associated with decision-making.

And while we all continue to navigate our way out of the pandemic and – hopefully – into a post-COVID era, the most innovative of changes will likely stay with us, as we adapt to a ‘new normal’.

The CAMA Board remains committed to supporting our members, building strong partnerships, and producing useful programs and resources. We are excited for the new and exciting opportunities that lie ahead and for the projects planned by our Executive Director and her team.

We are inspired by the work that has been done through this Association over the past 50 years and are humbled by the continued support of the membership, Board and committee members, and the partners and sponsors that help build our ideas into reality. We are excited for the next chapter of the CAMA story, and hope you will come along for the journey.