

Strategic Planning: First Steps on a Shared Journey to Yes!



Comox Valley Regional District
October 17, 2019
George Abbott, Ph.D.

“You like it now
But you’ll learn to
love it later”

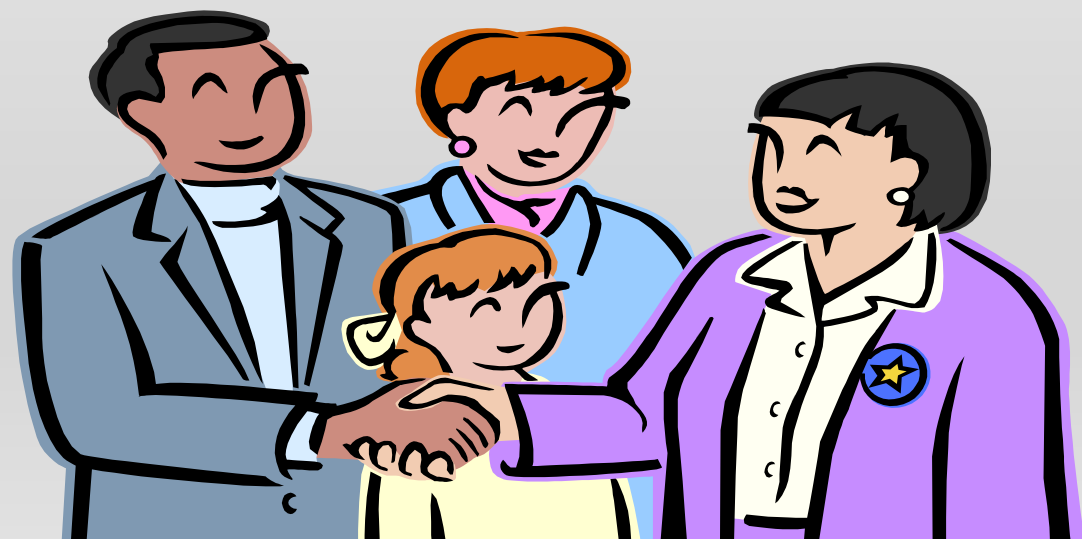
• Robbie Robertson



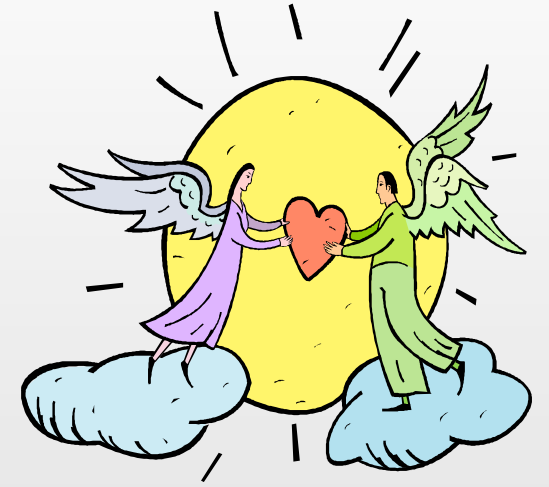
Relationships
are not
important in
politics...



Relationships
are everything
in politics!



“This could be heaven or this could be hell”



- Eagles

Administration

Media

Family



Elected
Colleagues

Voters

Stayin' alive, stayin' alive...

Finding and keeping your
balance in a world where
the cup can never be filled



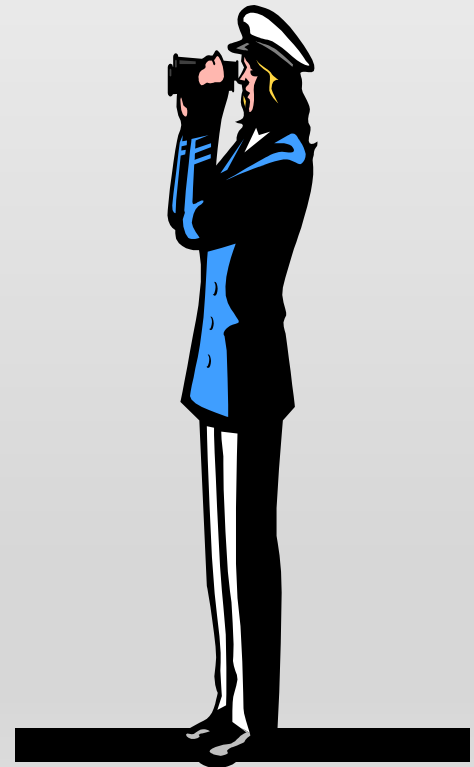
Erich Segal famously observed:

“Being in love is never
having to say you’re
sorry.”

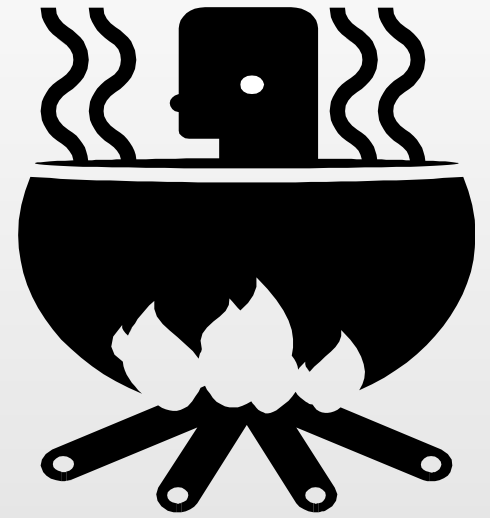
- Love Story (1970)



Being in politics is
never having to go
look for trouble...



Trouble has all your
contact
information...trouble
will even recognize
you at the
supermarket!



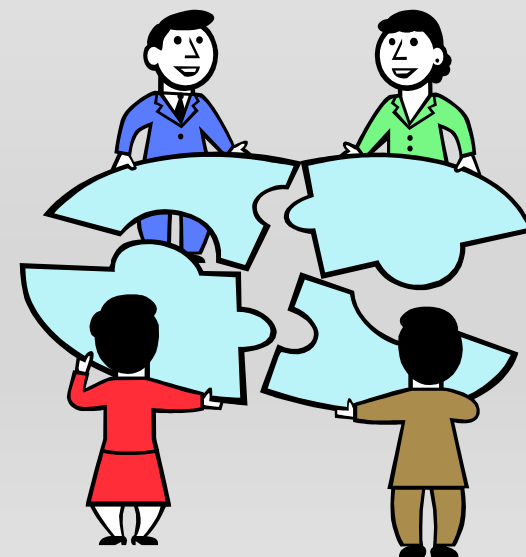
Your role as an elected official is to make wise, constructive, and sometimes exceedingly difficult public policy decisions...it is not to take over the day-to-day management and operations!



Don't personalize the
many challenges you
encounter...view them
as puzzles to be solved



Most puzzles are solved through collaborative efforts, not solo efforts...never hesitate to quietly call on the experience of your administrative team



Sometimes there are no good
(as in happy or easy) choices...

Sometimes you will only get to pick
your poison...make sure citizens
understand that your
alternatives are even
more repugnant!



Why do governments
make the decisions that
they do, when they do?



All things being equal...

Government will do today
and tomorrow what it did
yesterday...we survived
yesterday!



But all things are not equal...

- Things go boom
- The Supreme Court renders decisions
- New governments are elected
- Economies (and revenues) shift unexpectedly...



Harmonize Sales Taxes?
What was that all
about?





Governments
have both
explicit and
implicit goals...

Those goals can be
identified in Throne and
Budget speeches,
campaign documents,
media comments....

Attempting to convince
government that their
goals are wrong may be
fun, but not very
productive

Alignment
of goals doesn't
guarantee success...

But misalignment
certainly guarantees
failure!



Ask not what your
government can do for
you, but what you can
do for your government!



Are there points of convergence between your needs and goals, and government's needs and goals?

Lay out your common challenge clearly and explicitly!





As demonstrated
by the Comox
Valley water
treatment
project...

Sometimes moving great
initiatives forward requires
partnerships with other
levels of government



Why Do Governments (sometimes) Love Partnerships?

- Dollars go further
- Demonstrates broad commitment (suggests wise investment)
- Shows government can work with others

What kinds of
partnerships
might be
attractive to
current
fed/prov
gov'ts?

- Partnerships that include or embrace Indigenous communities...
- Innovative housing, carbon-friendly transport links, community health and volunteer support networks...
- Projects and programs that foster community safety amid threats from climate change.

As they say
in Scrabble
world...



Governments also have
unplanned agenda
items...

To paraphrase John
Lennon, “Politics and
gov’t are what happen
to you while you’re
busy completing other
strategic plans!”



The Challenge (Auditor General 2018):

CLIMATE CHANGE IS one of the greatest challenges the world is facing. Over the past months, natural disasters have made headlines across the globe. Here in B.C., we too, are already feeling the impacts of climate change. The summer of 2017 saw wildfires burning across the province, breaking records for the greatest number of hectares burned. This past spring, heavy rains combined with the snowmelt and flooded the Okanagan.

These events highlight the environmental, economic and social threats that climate change poses to the province. From 1900 to 2013, B.C.'s average temperature has increased faster than the global average. Scientists predict that the province will face increases in extreme weather, rising sea levels, increasing risk of wildfire and flooding, as well as a change in the location of ecosystems and species that live there.

A Report for Government
and British Columbians

Addressing the New Normal: 21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia



So what's the problem?

- From 1900 to 2013, BC's average temperature has increased by 1.4 degrees Celsius, faster than the global average (AG and MoE)
- Lightning storms more common with higher temperatures
- More frequent and severe summer drought

What's the problem (2)...

- More frequent and severe insect outbreaks/tree mortality
- Precipitation levels relatively stable on average, but more intense and concentrated
- Elements interact, expose dangers

Not everyone agrees
with this bleak
assessment....



For example....



On climate change...

“One of the problems that a lot of people like myself – we have very high levels of intelligence, but we’re not necessarily such believers...And when you are talking about an atmosphere, oceans are very small. And it blows over and it sails over.”

But avoid Green's Law...

“Anything is possible if
you have no idea what
you are talking about”



Despite 2019, challenges are ongoing...

- Very complex file for government; policy left constrained
- Issue is not going away, may intensify
- Where/when is the next **Kelowna fire**/**Grand Forks flood** going to be?

Community Safety



Mutual Aid

Plans, Partnerships,
Agreements:

Canada, BC, LGs, FNs

Landscape Risk Mitigation

Interface Risk Mitigation

Homeowner Risk Mitigation

Local gov't pivotal on almost every aspect of the safety triangle....

- Where people build from fire and flood perspectives
- How homeowners help protect themselves
- Creation of mutual aid agreements
- Other partnerships with FNs/other gov'ts

Some great examples to build on!

- Logan Lake: community forest (CF) encompasses townsite, ongoing brushing, grazing + prescribed burn program funded by CF, major public buy-in for FireSmart
- Cranbrook, RDEK, Aq'am FN partnership: joint planning, mutual aid agreements, large and effective prescribed burns (with BCWS)
- Quesnel and others generate community, licensee and FN partnerships

The Four Pillars of Successful Partnership Proposals:

- Understanding context
- Astute framing
- Resonant content
- Effective delivery

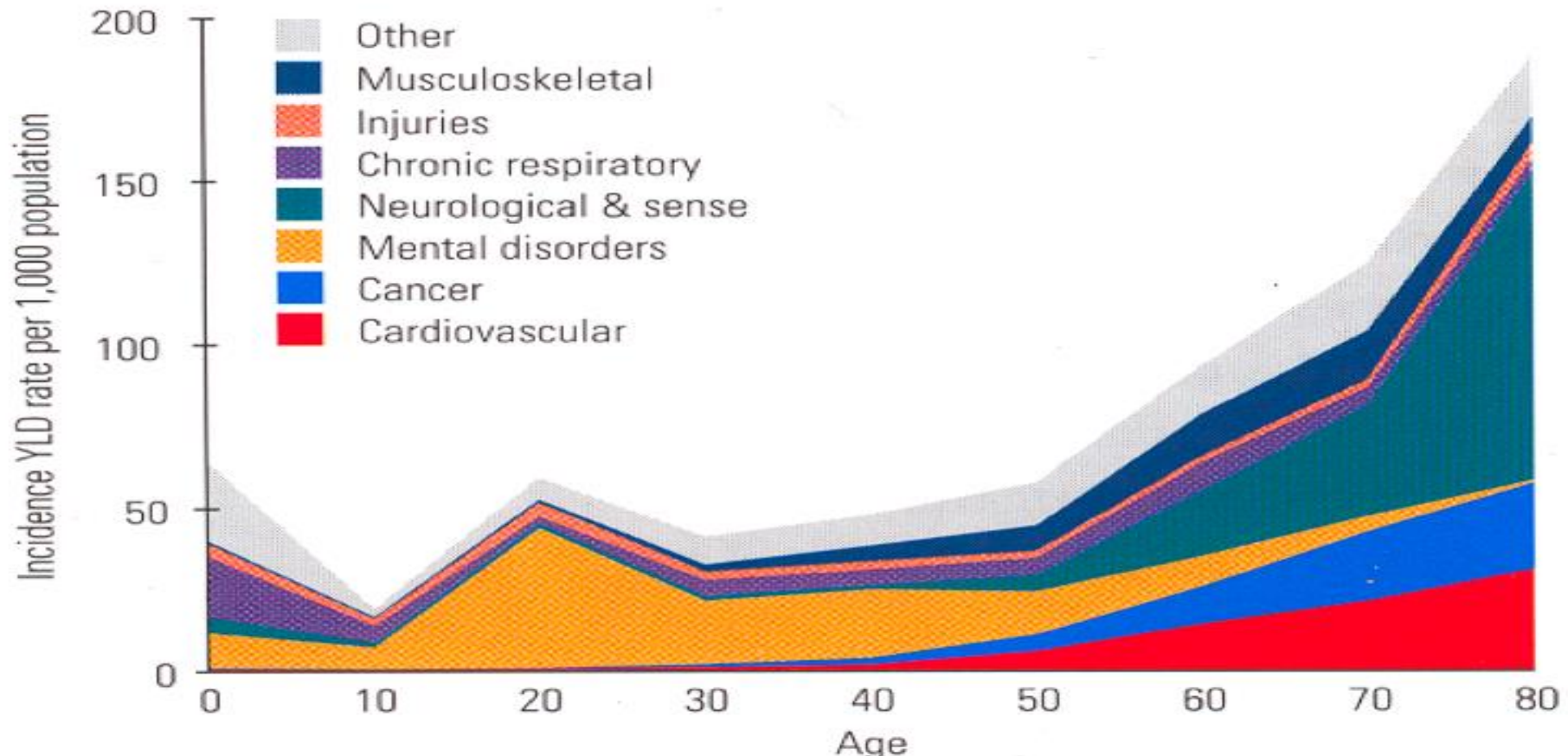


UTILIZE LESSON LEARNING AND POLICY TRANSFER!

If the resolution of a comparable problem in Cranbrook, Kelowna or California offers lessons in Comox, build that experience into your presentation!

Chronic disease of the young

Figure 6 Incident YLD Rates per 1,000 Population by Age and Broad Disease Grouping, Victoria 1996



Who should you talk to?

Everyone who will talk to you!

- Colleagues
- Your Minister
- Public servants of all rank
- MLAs!!!



Abbott's Iron Law of Politics:

Any gap in understanding about what's going on will always be filled by the worst assumptions about what going on!

Why do even the most brilliant proposals sometimes fail?

- Scarce or non-existent resources
- Out of sync with government priorities
- Crowded out by other elements on the government's agenda
- “Ask” is poorly structured or presented



Should we ever feel discouraged?

- No! When dealing with government the absence of success on a worthy project should never be considered failure!
- There are numerous reasons why an excellent proposal may be unsuccessful at a certain point in time



As Bonnie Raitt once said:

“Let’s give them
something to talk
about....”



Strategic Planning provides...

a very special opportunity to identify, share, discuss, debate and develop ideas, proposals and plans that can make your communities better and safer places to live and work...Best wishes for success on your journey!



THANKS AGAIN!



QUESTIONS?