



Building Resilient Communities Through Issues Management

AKBLG Convention | April 17, 2026
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Who We Are

Since 2019, Catalyst Communications has worked in specialized areas of local government communications and strategy development, including:

- Crisis, Reputation, and Issues Management
- Communications Audits and Reviews
- Communications, Engagement, Issues, and Crisis Communications Planning
- Organizational Strategy Development and Reviews
- Public Engagement
- Emergency Communications
- Process Streamlining and Efficiency Design
- Administration and Council Workshops
- Strategic Advisory Services





Current State

Forces Reshaping Municipal Risk

1

Declining
Institutional Trust

2

Heightened Public
Expectations

3

Compressed
Escalation
Timelines

4

Polarized Public
Discourse

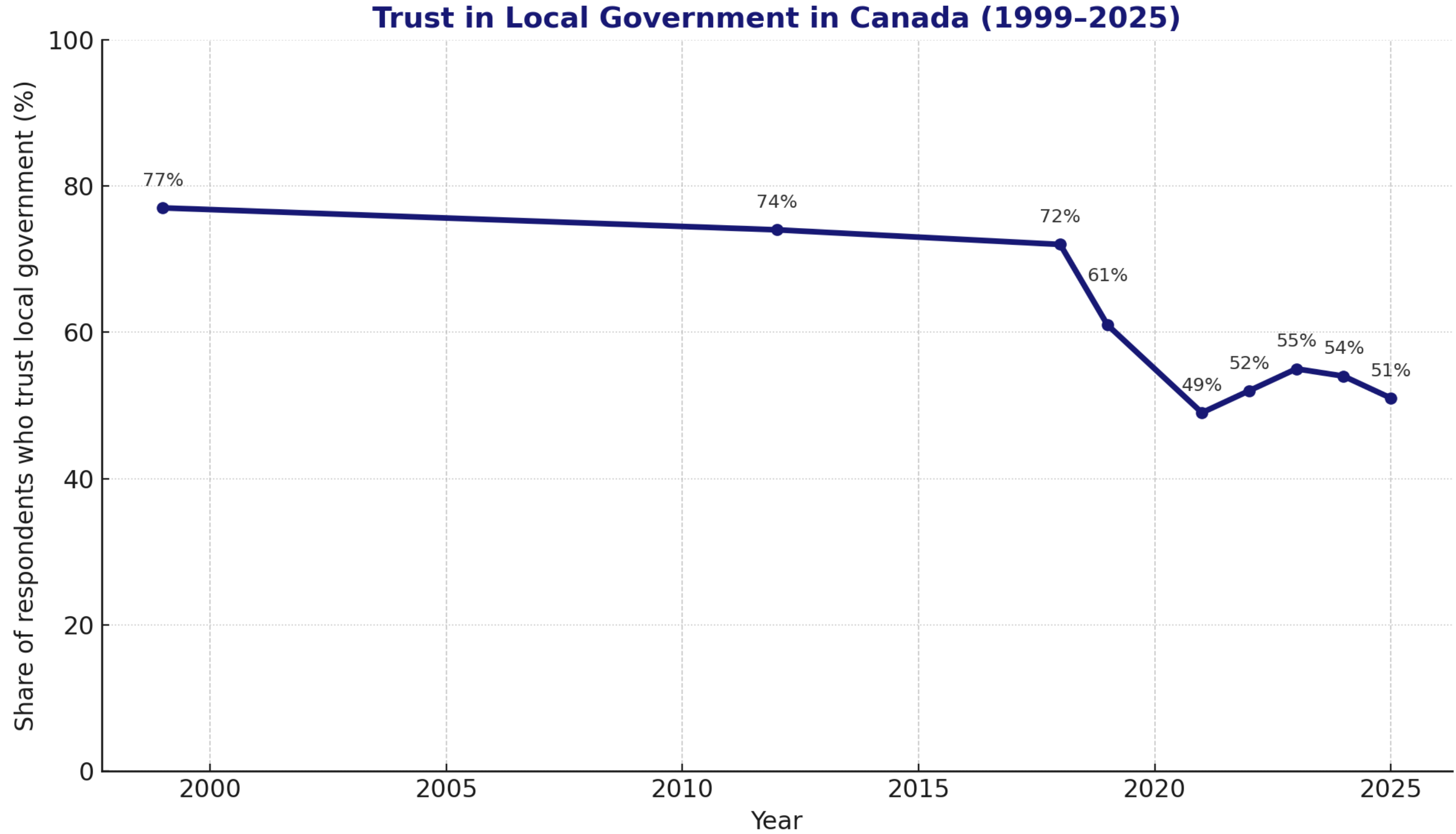
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Climate &
Emergency
Exposure

6

Broadening
Municipal Scope

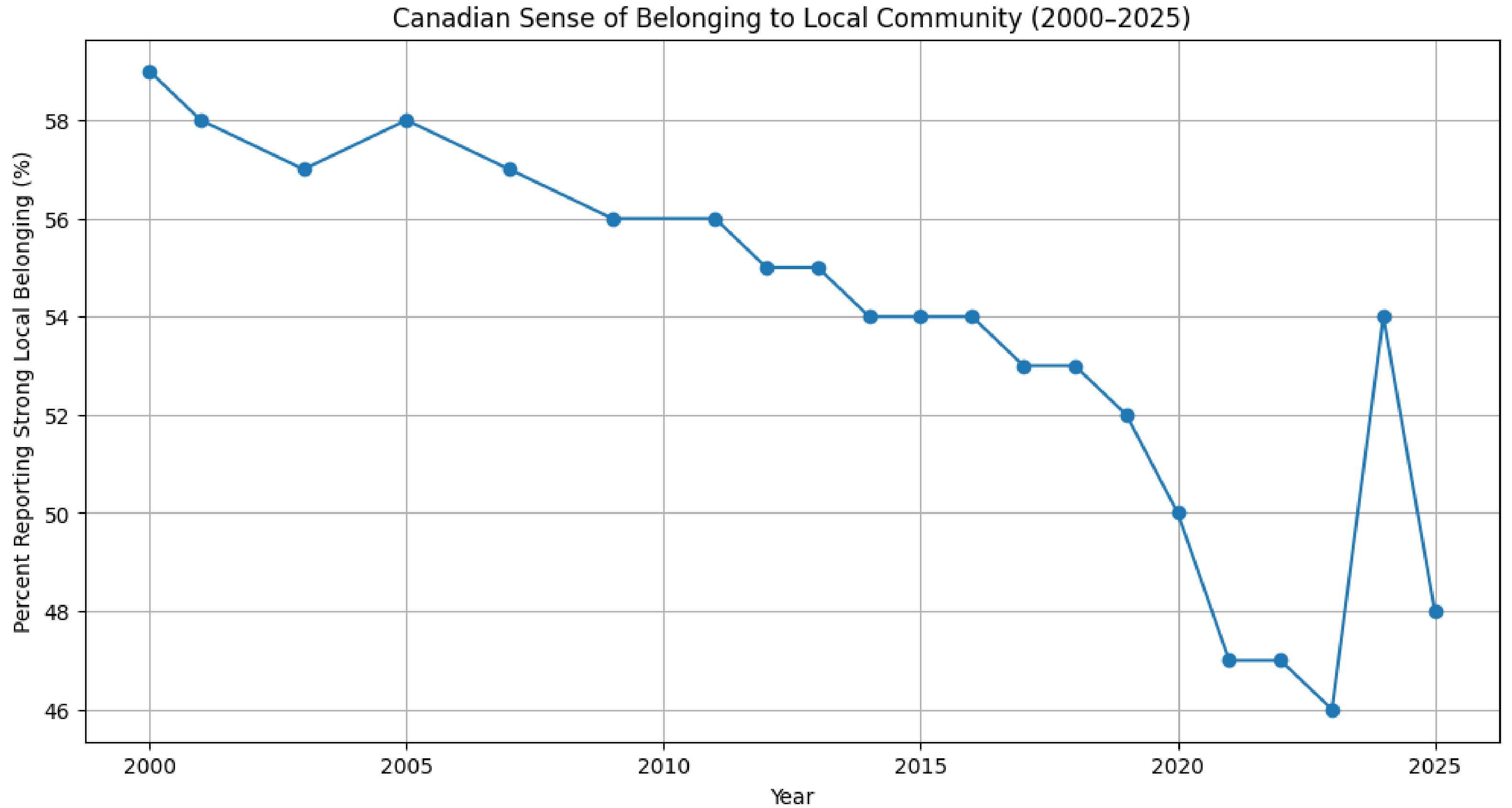
The Trust Deficit



Catalyst Communications © 2026

Sources: Gallup (1999-2018), FCM/Abacus (2019), OECD (2021, 2024), University of Waterloo (2022-2023), Léger (2025)

Place Attachment



Catalyst Communications © 2026

Sources: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey (2000, 2003, 2007, 2009), Canadian Social Survey (2020-2025); Canadian Community Health Survey (2011-2019)

Evolving Expectations

Area of Local Government Focus	2000 Benchmark	2023-2025 Data	Expectation Change
Expect faster service delivery	55%	74%	▲ 19%
Expect gov't to solve complex societal issues	48%	68%	▲ 20%
Expect proactive communication	50%	72%	▲ 22%
Expect digital-level service access	40%	79%	▲ 39%
Expected to lead housing affordability	45%	78%	▲ 33%
Expect to effect climate action leadership	40%	72%	▲ 32%
Expect to lead community safety solutions	55%	83%	▲ 28%
Expect digital convenience	32%	82%	▲ 50%
Importance of customer service	78%	92%	▲ 14%
Importance of transparency	71%	90%	▲ 19%
Importance of communication	69%	91%	▲ 22%
Overall service level satisfaction	70%	71%	Neutral

Misinformation's Evolution

1

Misinformation

Unintentionally
incorrect

2

Disinformation

Intentionally
incorrect

3

Malinformation

Intentionally
misleading

Local Government Per Person Spending Up Almost \$1,200 Since 2000 and Near Record Highs

Have Municipal Services Increased or Improved?



Information?
Misinformation?
Disinformation?
Malinformation?

Inflation
2000-2023:
64.93%

2000: \$4,673
2023: \$7,707.29



Modern Issues Management

Issue vs. Crisis



Emerging issue: Early signals, manageable



Developing issue: Gaining attention, mitigation planning



Acute issue: High visibility, immediate response



Crisis: Significant threat to operations or reputation

Issue vs. Crisis



Emerging issue



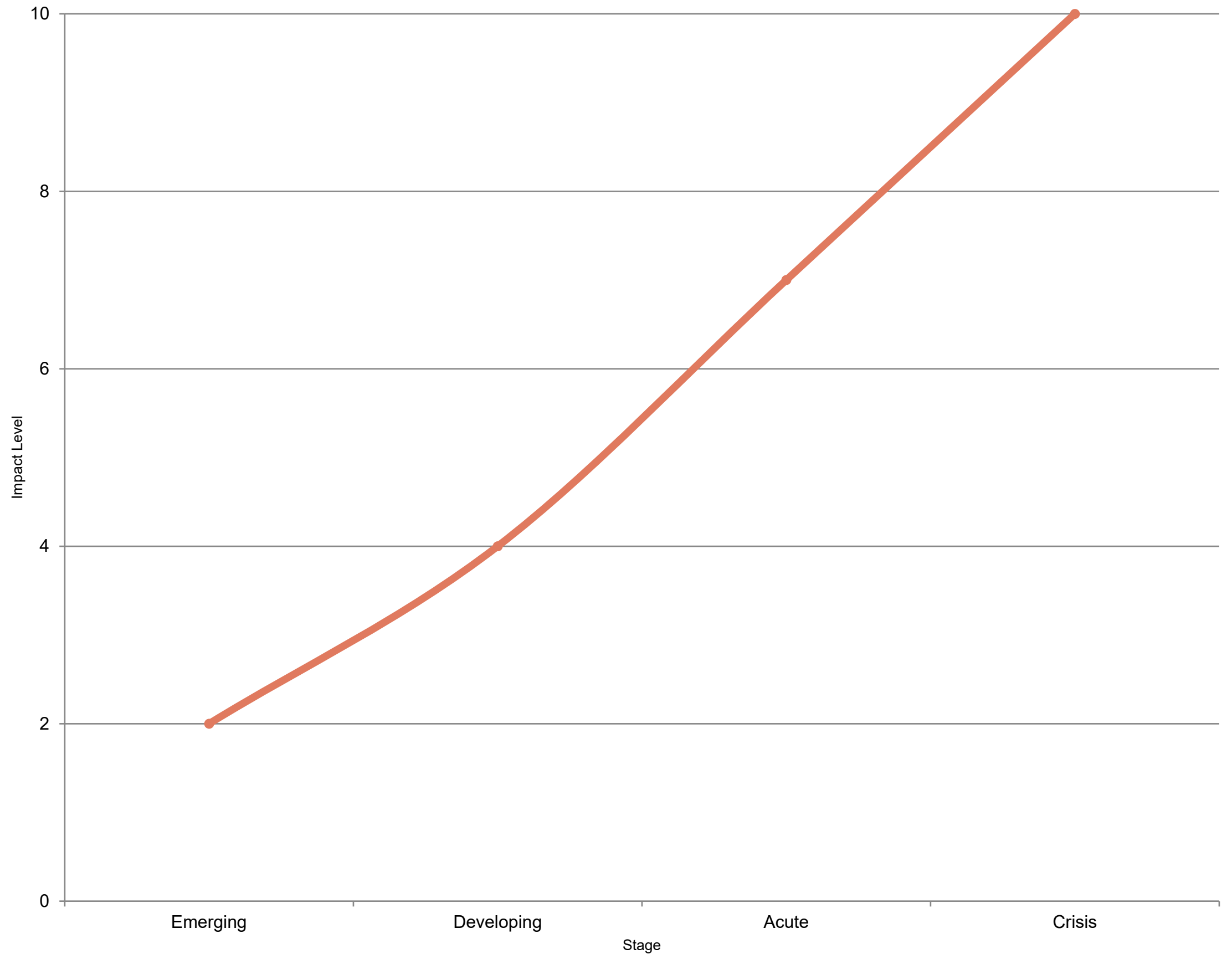
Developing issue



Acute issue



Crisis



Reactive vs. Strategic

Reactive Posture

What it feels like in the moment:

- Crisis management instead of prevention.
- Resources pulled off strategic priorities.
- Trust erodes with every delayed response.
- Council term defined by what went wrong.

Strategic Posture

What it enables over time:

- Issues identified before they escalate.
- Relationships strengthened through clarity.
- Resources allocated to priorities, not fires.
- Council term defined by what got built.

Anatomy of an Issue



Reputation

How people perceive and think of your community and your organization



Leg & Legal

Arising from actual or potential violations of legislation, regulations, bylaws, or court rulings



Safety

The health, well-being, and security of your community, employees, and environment



Financial

A municipality's financial health, budget stability, or ability to fund essential services.



Service Disruption

The infrastructure, service delivery, and programs provided to your community.

Where an Issue Emerges

Internal Sources

Frontline staff feedback
Council insights & discussions
Department planning
Service complaint tracking

External Sources

Media monitoring
Social media monitoring
Community feedback
Resident concerns

Environmental Scanning

Legislative changes
Economic trends
Demographic shifts
Technology changes

Where an Issue Emerges

Internal
Sources

'It's about time:' Council's decision on secondary suites widely praised

By [Annalise Klingbeil](#)

Published Dec 12, 2017 Last updated Dec 13, 2017 5 minute read [Join the conversation](#)

- Contentious public and political battle over secondary suites
- Identified via:
 - **Frontline Staff Feedback:** Bylaw and inspection staff reporting backlog of illegal suites
 - **CSR Report Tracking:** Persistent complaints, geographic clustering
 - **Council Insights:** High volume of resident feedback, recognition of political implications

Where an Issue Emerges

External Sources

Toronto resident at encampment clearing seen in photo of apparent choking by officer speaks out



By **Nick Westoll** • Global News

Posted July 24, 2021 7:30 am · Updated July 26, 2021 6:40 am · 8 min read

- Public backlash over homeless encampment clearing
- Identified via:
 - **Social Media Monitoring:** Increasing posts from residents, advocates, community groups
 - **Media Monitoring:** First, stories on rising homelessness. Second, shelter capacity constraints. Third, enforcement-based approaches. Fourth, systemic failures.
 - **Community Feedback:** Advocacy organizations publicly organizing, issuing statements, coordinating resistance

Where an Issue Emerges

Environmental Scanning

City of Vancouver cracks down on 820 short-term rentals

'Egregious' property owners continue to operate despite legal action taken against them, inspector says

[Jon Hernandez](#) · CBC News · Posted: Mar 14, 2019 2:31 PM MDT | Last Updated: March 14, 2019

- Short-term rental platforms created significant pressure on housing market
- Identified via:
 - **Technology changes:** Airbnb disrupting traditional housing and hospitality markets
 - **Market trends:** Low vacancy rates, rising housing costs
 - **Legislative gaps:** Little legislation, low enforceability; other jurisdictions creating legislation
 - **Demographic shifts:** Increased tourism demand, investor-owned properties

The Issues Management Cycle



Issue Identification
& Tracking



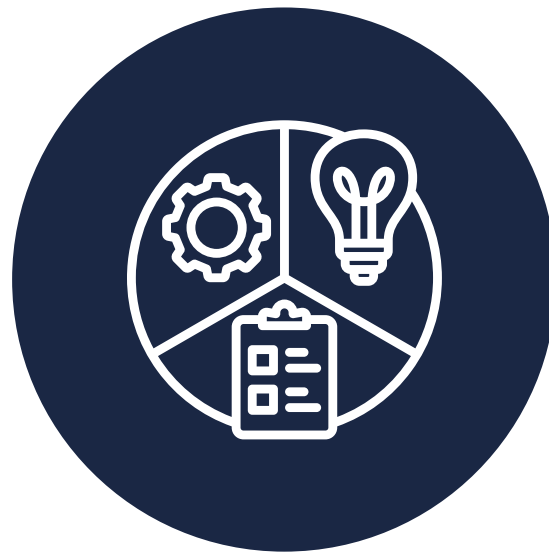
Risk Assessment
& Analysis



Decision-
making



Mitigation
Steps



Continued Monitoring
& Planning



Evaluation &
Adjustment



Monitoring &
Assessment



Issue Identification & Tracking

#1	Transit Route Changes — Accessibility Concerns Public Works · Sarah Mitchell · 24 days ago	Active	High
#2	Downtown Construction Noise Complaints Public Works · Mike Thompson · 26 days ago	Active	Medium
#3	New Recreation Centre Opposition — Ward 3 Parks & Recreation · Sarah Mitchell · 28 days ago	Active	Medium
#4	Pothole Response Time Criticism Public Works · Mike Thompson · about a month ago	Monitoring	Medium
#5	Water Rate Increase Public Opposition Communications · Sarah Mitchell · about a month ago	Active	High



Issue Identification & Tracking

Budget Overspend Rumour on Social Media

Escalate

⚡ Crisis Mode

Active

Description

A local blog is claiming the municipality has overspent its annual budget by 30%. Finance confirms this is inaccurate. Need a factual public response.

Details

Status Active

Severity High

⚠ Category Financial

Sarah Mitchell

Updated scope: Conversation on Rant n' R Reporter, Coun. Adams asked about it at the

Media Monitoring

Coverage (0)

Keywords (1)

Feeds (0)

Social

Keywords added here are specific to this issue and are also monitored globally in the main Media Monitor.

Add keyword...

Add

Town Budget



Risk Analysis & Assessment

Risk & Impact Assessment

3 high risk

6 groups impacted

Risk Factors (6/7)

Impact Mapping (6/6)

Media Attention

Low

Moderate

High

Severe



Political Sensitivity

Low

Moderate

High

Severe



Legal Implications

Low

Moderate

High

Severe



Safety Implications

Low

Moderate

High

Severe



Public Opposition

Low

Moderate

High

Severe



Service Disruption

Low

Moderate

High

Severe



Financial Implications

Low

Moderate

High

Severe






Risk Analysis & Assessment




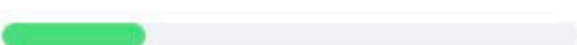


Risk & Impact Assessment

3 high risk

6 groups impacted

 Risk Factors (6/7)

 Impact Mapping (6/6)

Public / Residents	Low	Moderate	High	Severe		▼
Media	Low	Moderate	High	Severe		▼
Council / Officials	Low	Moderate	High	Severe		▼
Staff / Employees	Low	Moderate	High	Severe		▼
Partners / Agencies	Low	Moderate	High	Severe		▼
Business Community	Low	Moderate	High	Severe		▼

Tip: Click the arrow to create and view notes.



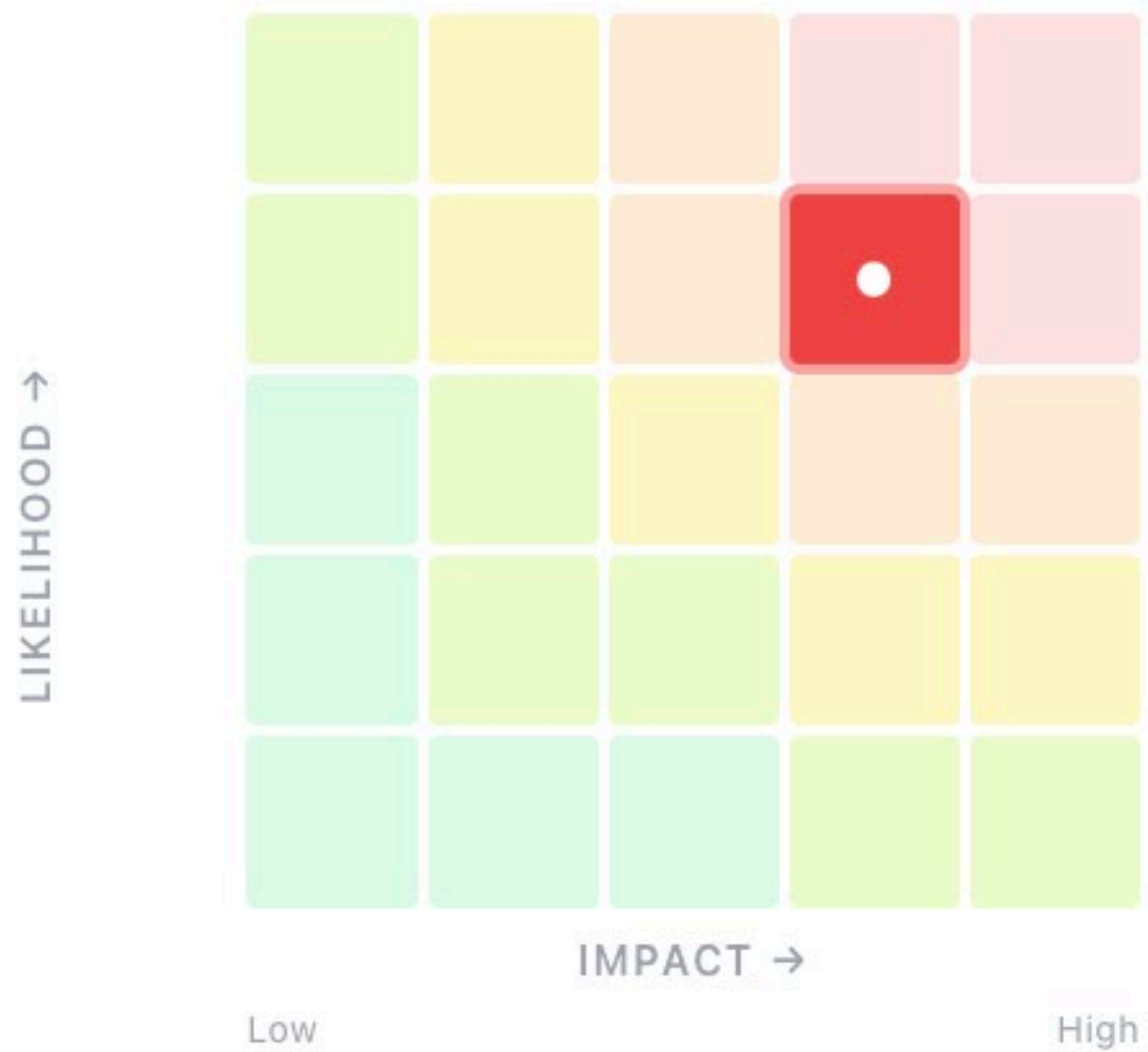
Risk Analysis & Assessment

Risk Heatmap

Critical

Comms AI

Manual



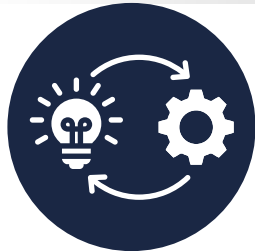
Likelihood: Likely

Impact: Major

Proactive & Responsive Actions



Decision-making: Where do we stand? What do we need to do?



Mitigation steps: How do we get ahead of this? How do we control the narrative?

Define Objectives

What outcomes are you seeking?

Control the narrative?

Preventing escalation?

Building community support?

Identify Actions

Communications tactics?

Policy adjustments?

Public engagement?

Service level changes?

Assign Ownership

Who leads?

Who supports?

Who is informed?

What's the timeline?

Proactive & Responsive Actions



Mitigation steps: How do we get ahead of this? How do we control the narrative?



Monitor & assess / evaluate & adjust: Is the narrative changing? Do we need to change our approach? Is what we're doing working? What are our next steps?

Execute the Plan

Deploy communications.
Engage community members.
Implement operational changes.

Measure & Adjust

Track sentiment & feedback
Assess effectiveness
Adjust tactics as needed
Document lessons learned

Issues Management to Decision-Making

How do you ensure issues management informs SLT and Council decisions?

Regular Reporting

Develop an issues dashboard that provides key insights, timelines, tracking, actions taken, etc.

Decision Filters

Build issues considerations into decision-making templates and processes.

Scenario Planning

Present “What if?” scenarios to help leadership anticipate consequences.

Building Issues Management Systems

1. Monitoring Infrastructure

Media scans, social media monitoring, public sentiment tracking, etc.

2. Assessment Tools

Risk matrix, audience impact mapping, tracking templates, etc.

3. Response Protocols

Escalation pathways, decision-making frameworks, approval matrix, templates, etc.

4. Learning Mechanisms

Post-issue reviews, trend analysis, improvement opportunities, etc.

Key Takeaways



Issues management is critical infrastructure, not administrative burden.



Most crises are preventable issues that weren't caught early enough.



Resilience is built across departments — not in any single desk.



Structure survives turnover; individual knowledge doesn't.



The next council inherits what you codify — or what you leave unwritten.



Questions?

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Welcome Reception

6:00 – 8:00pm

Please wear your name badge