



MUNICIPAL INNOVATORS COMMUNITY 2017 Conference September 27–28 • Guelph, Ontario

Accelerating Into Action

This year's theme for the Municipal Innovator Community Conference was collaborate, create and accelerate. While all three themes were interwoven in the fabric of the presentations from the collaboration described by Dr. Martha Lenio's eight month simulation of life on Mars to the creation of a 2035 vision for the Region of Peel, for me it was the third theme that really propelled me to action. Accelerate. When you think of that word and government, they can seem diametrically opposed. Yet some of the concepts described were truly about accelerating growth and expanding the realm of possibility. For instance, Ashley Good's presentation about failure reminded me that it's best to fail quickly, cheaply and often and that when we learn from our mistakes, this can propel us into huge growth and opportunity. Rick Boersma's exercise using a World Café format, was a technique that can be used to create a more expansive list of ideas and ultimately lead to the potential to accelerate solving them.

Another way to accelerate might be to focus on behavioural insights and modestly try to nudge citizens towards action. I was fascinated and impressed that the use of nudging following a scientific method and approach is being used at the Provincial government level. The idea that even how information is presented can have a determination on the uptake and follow up actions could be used to create more inspiring material that accelerates action.

The only thing I would have enjoyed even more was a greater opportunity to connect with conference participants. The few connections that I did have a chance to make as a result of the tables I sat at, were very energizing. I could tell that attendees were avid change makers and would have loved to have connected with even more people. Overall there was an energizing vibe to the conference and a sense of possibility. After hearing the presenters on their various topics, it motivated me to take action on an idea I had been mulling over in my head. Seeing a room full of public servants eager to make a difference and thirsty for innovation and transformation, nudged me to move forward on a Community of Practice idea. After all, even if it is a failure, my plan is to learn quickly from it and apply the lessons learned to other aspects of my work. Perhaps, if nothing else, it might make for a great story to tell one day.

Melissa Ryan
City of Kitchener