8/8

DISCUSSION PAPER

JANUARY 2020

GOVERNANCE AND COLLABORATION

PROJECT
LUNENBURG

Navigating the
Future, Together.
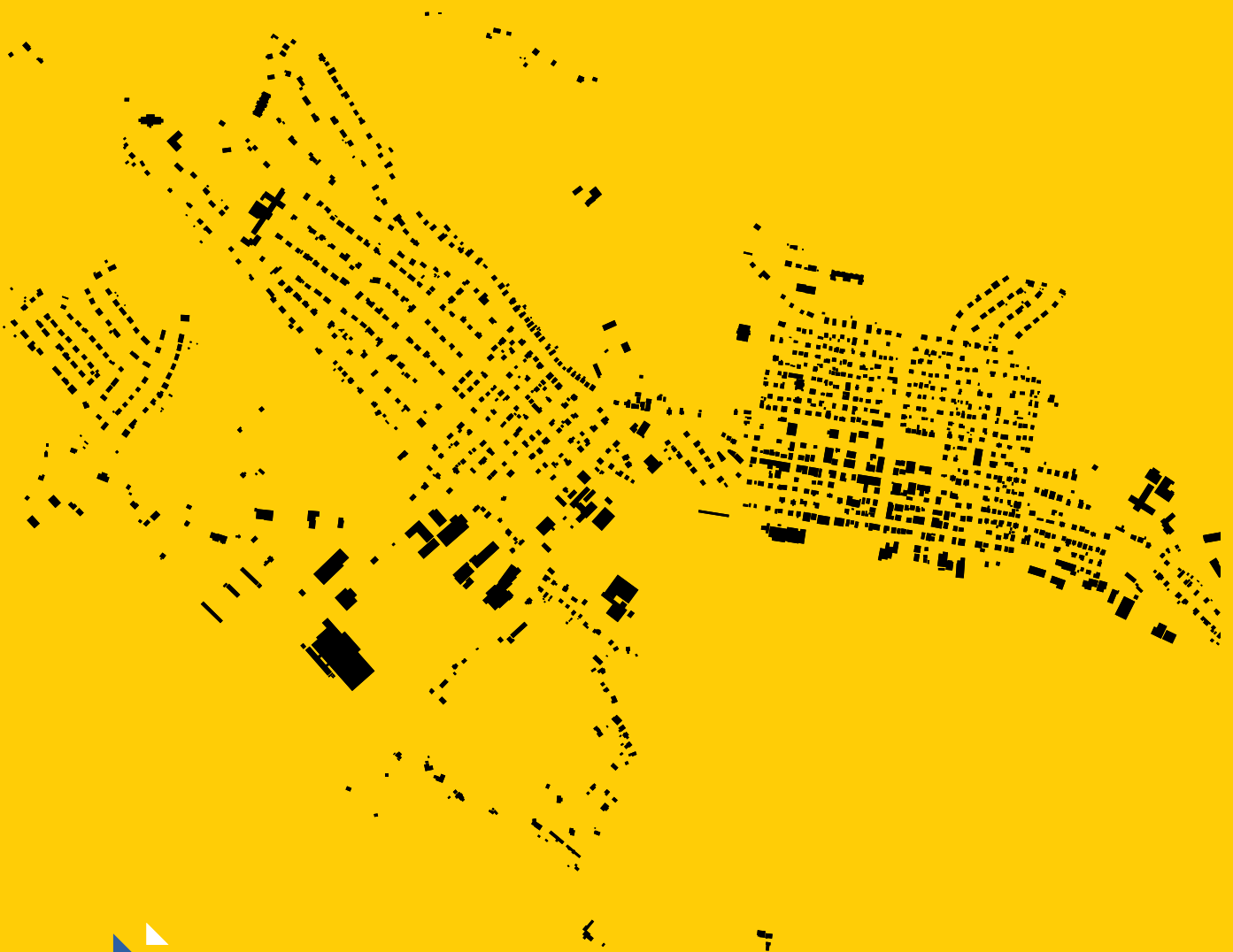
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Discussion Paper 8/8
Governance and Collaboration

January 2020

Project Lunenburg
Town of Lunenburg Comprehensive Plan

This report was prepared by Upland Planning and Design.

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The Town of Lunenburg was incorporated in 1888 and is one of several municipalities along Nova Scotia's South Shore. The Town is surrounded by the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg and is in close proximity to the Town of Bridgewater and Town of Mahone Bay. Independently, these municipalities operate as individual units, developing plans, policies, and regulations for their communities. Together, they represent a regional centre in Nova Scotia, where the economy, services, and culture are shared extensively between communities.

This is the eighth and final Discussion Paper for Project Lunenburg that provides context for the governance structure of the Town of Lunenburg. It reviews the legislation that provides governing power to municipalities, the division of power between levels of government, and how the town works with surrounding municipalities and the province. The Discussion Paper also identifies how municipal governance has changed and considers how it may change in the future. Finally, collaboration, at a broad level, will be discussed for its importance to all facets of community building and governance in Lunenburg.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE

Before exploring the future of municipal governance and cooperation, it is important to understand the framework within which decisions are made. What are the responsibilities of municipal governments? What role do provincial and federal governments play?

Federal Government

Provincial/Territorial Governments

Municipal Governments
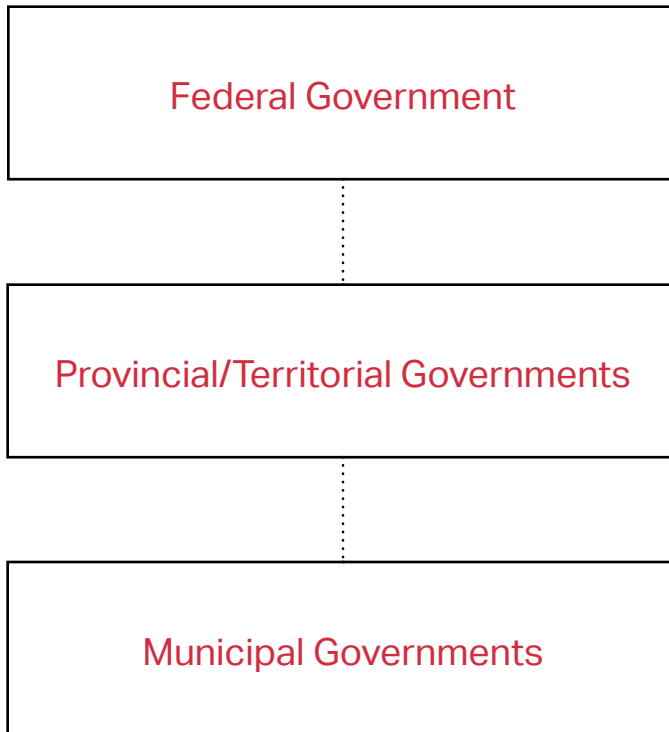
Division of powers in Canadian governance.

Within Canada, there are three levels of government: federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal. Under the *Constitution Act, 1867*, legislative powers are distributed between the federal government and provincial governments. The federal government is primarily responsible for matters of national interest, including national defence, banking, and trade/commerce while provincial/territorial governments have authority over matters such as hospitals, prisons, and education. Under the *Constitution Act, 1867*, municipalities are not given authority to make laws, rather, municipalities are created under provincial/territorial legislation.

In Nova Scotia, the legislation governing municipalities includes the *Municipal Government Act, 1998, Municipal Elections Act, 1989,* among others. Under the *Municipal Government Act, 1998*, municipal governments, like the Town of Lunenburg, are given authority to pass by-laws, govern within their jurisdiction, and to respond to present and future issues. Governing powers within municipalities are directed through councillors and mayors. In Lunenburg, Town Council has six members plus the Mayor. Council and the Mayor, who is the chair representative of Council, is elected at large once every four years.

Through the *Municipal Government Act, 1998* municipalities are also given the authority to make expenditures on a range of items during the fiscal year; however, municipalities have few revenue sources, with property taxes representing one of the primary sources for municipal funds.

To help with decision-making in the town, there are also several committees and boards. These committees and boards are made up of council members, citizens, and interested stakeholders to make decisions regarding specific topics such as transportation, planning, and fire protection. Committees make non-binding motions to council, unless otherwise indicated, where it is up to municipal council to accept or reject the motions.

Town of Lunenburg Governance Structure

While the Town's Council make decisions regarding the adoption of plans, policies, and regulations, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is responsible for providing leadership on plans and programs, administering operating and capital budgets, among many other responsibilities. The CAO is accountable to Council and is the direct supervisor of all municipal department heads. Town staff, who are distributed across many departments, conduct the day-to-day operation and administration of the municipality. Town staff also conduct analysis and provide advice to support council decisions.

Residents of the Town of Lunenburg

Town Council

Chief Administrative Officer

Town Staff

Committees of Council
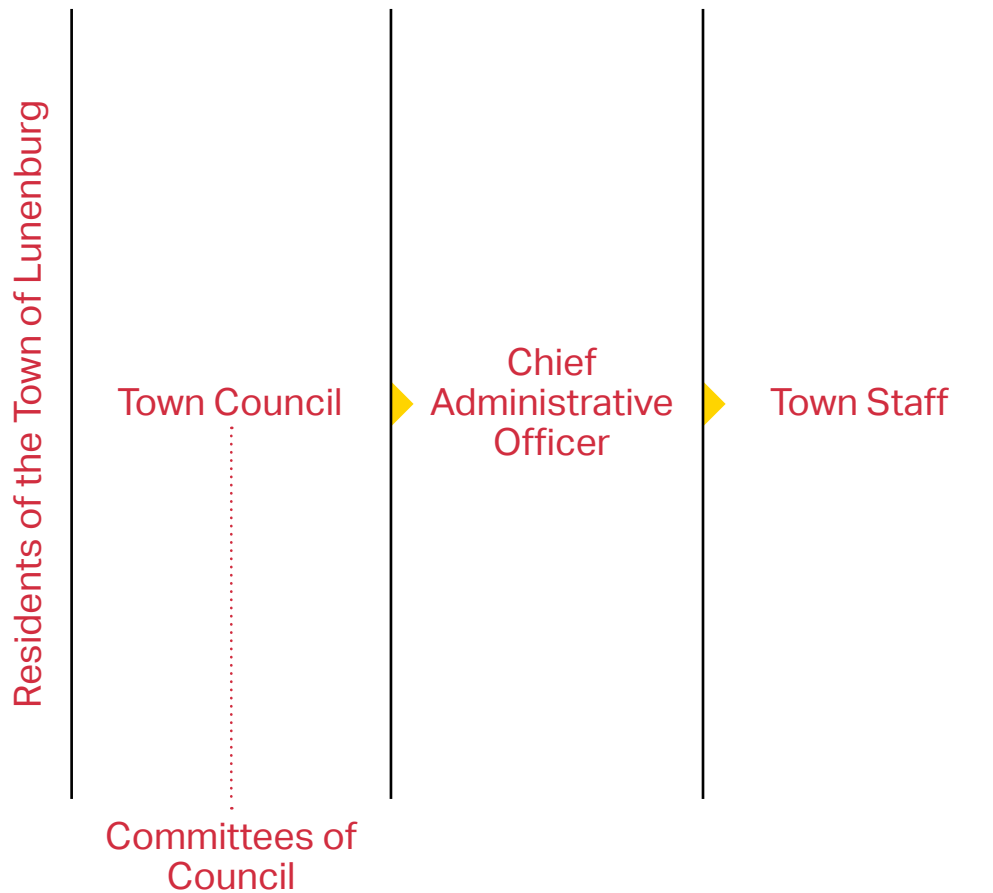
Just as many community members in Lunenburg have assets such as homes, automobiles, and businesses, municipalities can own and purchase assets to meet the service needs of residents. The Canadian Network of Asset Managers describes an 'asset' as anything that delivers value to a municipal organization and stakeholders in the community. Municipal assets can include a vast array of physical infrastructure (such as roads, bridges, and power lines), property, and data (such as GIS mapping), but can also include people, processes, and knowledge.

The Town, like many other municipalities across Nova Scotia, manages, owns, and operates a whole host of assets within Lunenburg. Electrical, water, and sewer infrastructure are all owned and operated by the town in addition to many of the town's recreation facilities.

The town's Community Centre Auditorium is owned and operated by the Town of Lunenburg.

While the specific goals of individual municipalities may vary across jurisdictions, there is a broad set of objectives that should be considered to help frame local government. The following seven goal areas are adopted from The Royal Commission on Municipal Government in Newfoundland and Labrador (1974) and Report of the Commissioner on the Future of Local Governance (2008).

Access: residents should be able to access municipal government and elected officials to share their ideas, concerns, and views.

Service: municipalities should have the capacity to provide facilities and services that residents want and need.

Identity: local government plays a role in how local identity and character are preserved and promoted.

Representation: local government decisions should be 'owned' by the community, and should respond to the needs of community members.

Efficiency: municipal governments should be efficient in its ability to provide services to the public.

Effectiveness: municipalities need the ability to balance service delivery with political processes.

Simplicity: local government should be easy to understand and participate in for residents and stakeholders.

Accountability: the decisions local governments make should be easily identifiable and understood, and the council members responsible for decisions should also be identifiable.

Generally, there are three primary models of municipal governance in Atlantic Canada, each with their strengths and weaknesses. They also differ in their ability to achieve goals and objectives established by a community.

The first model is a **community-based** municipal government. This is the most basic form of government, where a municipality governs a unitary town, city, or village. Each area has a council and services are provided by the local government. This model of local governance followed traditional settlement patterns where limited interactions took place between communities. Decision making within the community based model is almost exclusively made in isolation of surrounding municipalities.

The second model of local government is a **regional** form of governance. Large, regional governments, like the Region of Queens Municipality, govern areas that may include many traditional communities and population centres. Regional governance can reduce externalities which are the spillover impacts from local governments outside of a municipality's jurisdiction. Spillovers can be positive (for example, rural residents benefiting from transportation services in a town), or negative (for example, sewage from one municipality polluting another's drinking water). As transportation and communication technology have increased, traditional barriers to a regional form of governance have been reduced.

The final model of municipal governance is a compromise between community-based and regional governance whereby **intermunicipal cooperation** forms the structure of governance. Although regional governance has been able to solve regional issues and been seen to be more financially and administratively efficient, it has been argued that local decision making and autonomy is lost with regional governance. Intermunicipal cooperation provides one possible solution to maintaining local autonomy all the while providing efficient services. One of the primary ways to cooperate is through the sharing of services such as fire protection, snow removal, among others.

In Nova Scotia, there is relative stability in the structure of municipal governments. This can partially be attributed to the fact that all land in the province is incorporated (governed by a municipal government), as well as the historical ties municipalities have to their communities. However, there are two processes whereby the physical boundaries of a municipality can change - municipal annexation and amalgamation. Annexation is a process where a municipality gains land area from a neighbouring municipality while amalgamation is a process where neighbouring municipalities merge to form a new municipality. Although annexation is not commonly used in Nova Scotia, amalgamation has been utilized several times, and as recently as 2017, there were discussions held between the Towns of Lunenburg, Bridgewater, Mahone Bay and the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg about a proposed amalgamation.

Since the mid 1990s, there have been several municipal amalgamations in Nova Scotia. The regional municipalities of Cape Breton and Halifax were formed in 1995 and 1996, respectively, and more recently in 2016, the Town of Parrsboro amalgamated with the Municipality of the County of Cumberland. Amalgamation can proceed through two processes: through an application to the Utility and Review Board (UARB) as stipulated within *Municipal Government Act, 1998*, or through the creation of specific legislation by the Province for the amalgamation of municipal units.

While not a provincial directive, amalgamation and annexation may be pursued for a variety of reasons. Municipalities may wish to expand but are limited due to boundaries, they may want to combine resources with neighbouring municipalities to build capacity, or they wish to realign a boundary. Additionally, a municipality may choose to restructure to achieve stronger regional representation; administrative, governance, and service efficiencies; and staff/talent attraction. At the heart of any municipal restructuring debate is how local autonomy, identity, and decision making is balanced with service quality, efficiency and cost.

The Town of Liverpool restructured with the Municipality of the County of Queens in 1996.

In addition to the Town of Lunenburg's Mayor and Council, residents in the region are also represented by a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and Member of Parliament (MP). The MLA is a provincially-elected representative that sits in the Nova Scotia Legislature. The MLA for the region represents Mahone Bay, the Town of Lunenburg, the surrounding communities, extending north to Franey Corner and North River.

Federally, the Member of Parliament for the Town of Lunenburg also represents the Region of Queens Municipality, the County of Shelburne, all areas within the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, and parts of Halifax Regional Municipality.

Provincial MLA and Federal MP ridings.

Federal MP Electoral District

Provincial MLA Electoral District
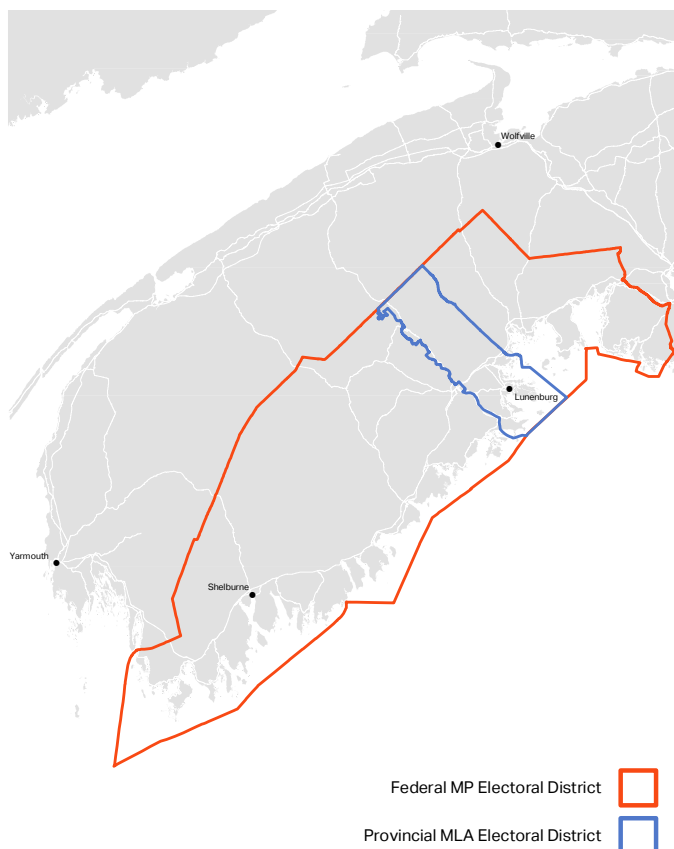
While municipalities are represented by their councils and have their own staff, cooperation among municipalities is growing, especially in non-urban regions. There has been a longstanding tradition of intermunicipal cooperation between jurisdictions in Nova Scotia and along the South Shore. Lunenburg's proximity to other municipalities makes cooperation a valuable tool to improve services and their efficiency in the region. The Town participates in several shared services programs and makes funding available to many local and regional partners.

The Town is partnered with several communities along the South Shore to share fire fighting, emergency first response, emergency managment, and solid waste management, among others. In addition to these services, the Town provides funding to several organizations, including the South Shore Regional Centre of Education, South Shore Regional Housing Authority, and South Shore Regional Library to ensure they can continue providing adequate facilities and services to the community. Municipalities in the region, including the Town, have formed partnerships to provide recreation services, discuss regional economic development issues and opportunities, and other intermunicipal partnerships aimed at improving municipal operations. Finally, the Town works with local organizations such as the Lunenburg Heritage Society, Lunenburg Academy Foundation, Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation, and the Lunenburg Board of Trade on shared initiatives.

Specifically related to municipal planning, intermunicipal cooperation is integral for Lunenburg, as the town's immediate surroundings are unzoned. The Province has introduced changes to the *Municipal Government Act*, whereby municipalities will be required to develop minimum planning standards and consult neighbouring municipalities when adopting/amending a planning document for the efficient use of land in the province. This is an important consideration for the town's water supply at Dares Lake, which sits outside of Town boundaries. The land surrounding the watershed is protected under the provincial *Environment Act*, prohibiting virtually all human activity. However, planning and land use at the edge of the Town's jurisdiction, including Dares Lake, remains unzoned at the local level.

The Town works with surrounding municipalities and communities to share services, including fire fighting (Source: Lighthouse Now).

The legislative relationship between the Province and its municipalities means there is inherently cooperation and dialogue between the two levels of government. Provincial directives can be focused on municipalities through the introduction of new legislation or changes to existing legislation, while municipal councils can pass resolutions of Council which express a concern, idea, or request directed at the Province.

Municipalities within Nova Scotia also interact with the province through the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM). This organization is a collective of mayors, wardens, and councillors from all 50 municipalities within Nova Scotia. NSFM meets annually and discusses several issues that are specifically relevant to municipalities and local government. Following an annual review, the NSFM vote on and pass a list of resolutions that are then given to the province.

Municipal-provincial cooperation is also evident when examining how Nova Scotian communities interact with the ocean. Generally, municipal boundaries extend to the high water mark along the shoreline, whereas provincial jurisdiction along the coastline is between the high water mark and low water mark. Lunenburg's harbour is owned and operated by Transport Canada, the federal institution responsible for transportation policies and programs, ultimately meaning Lunenburg's harbour falls under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. The interplay and interconnectedness of Nova Scotian communities with the ocean means that jurisdictional boundaries are crossed daily for reasons related to the economy, or recreation, among many others. Any planning or decisions made related to the ocean are dependent on municipal, provincial, and federal cooperation and understanding.

The interface of land and ocean represents a change in jurisdictional boundaries.

THE FUTURE OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE

Municipal governments now, more than ever, must consider local, regional, and global issues as they move forward. How might the future of municipal governance change? How might municipal governments function?

How municipal governments operate is changing. Not only do municipal councils have to deal with the local needs of residents such as garbage collection, water and sewer, and community planning, but more and more frequently municipalities are being asked to consider a much wider scope of issues. Municipal councils must understand how provincial, national, and global changes and issues impact their communities. Conversely, just as municipalities are being asked to consider a wider scope of issues there is a growing set of expectations from residents for improved services and facilities. All of this is occurring despite municipal councils being limited by their decision making powers and revenue sources. Because of these competing sets of values - fiscal restraint, decision making, and service expansion - municipalities have begun changing the way they function.

The issues above are not isolated to large cities, but also small towns, including Lunenburg. Along the South Shore, Lunenburg is competing with surrounding communities to attract young families and professionals, find new sources of revenue, and maintain a strong economic base, all the while improving the quality of life in the community. One way in which municipalities are improving services is through a shared-service model with even greater cooperation among surrounding municipalities. However, changes in the function of municipal government will extend past shared services to the way municipal government interact with residents and how the town functions. Gord Hume, a municipal government specialist, highlighted how municipal governance has changed, and where it may be headed, as shown in Table 1 on the following page. In order for municipalities to significantly change in governance purpose and approach, the system in which they operate may also be required to change.

Fundamental shifts in the way an organization operates are accompanied by a movement away from customary and often entrenched practices, attitudes, and procedures. Systems approaches, where the relationship between actions, people, and outcomes are carefully considered, are becoming increasingly adopted and implemented by government. This often means "moving away from traditional linear procedures, strategic planning and the notion of reform as an isolated intervention" (OCED, 2017). Rather, systems approaches rely on elected officials and administrations to build capacity within an organization and the community at large, and to build and maintain close ties with the community to strengthen overall participation in the government process.

Systems approaches focus on outcomes. Fundamental to systems approaches is the ability of leaders (in this context, elected officials, administrations, and community organizers) to establish and articulate a vision for desired outcomes, and advocate for the shared principles in which the future system will operate. The vision and principles are embedded in the structure, operation, and processes of the organization.

New Philanthropy Capital (NPC), an organization that looks to improve the effectiveness of local organizations and charities has identified five rules of thumb for good systems change practise:

1. **Understand Context**: We must know the context we are operating in in order to act on it.

2. **Know Yourself**: What are your strengths? Weaknesses? Assets? How are they related?

3. **Think Systemically**: Understanding that everything in a system is interrelated, composed of individual parts that make up the system.

4. **Learn and Adapt**: Thinking about and applying systems changes requires an appreciation of complexity and uncertainty. Learn throughout the process and adapt as needed.

5. **Recognize Change is Personal**: We may need to change our own values, beliefs, relationships, and feelings as we change the system we operate in.

Table 1.
Past, Current, and Future Approaches to Municipal Government Issues

Issue	Past Approach	Current Approach	Future Approach
Property Taxes	Tax them	Tight budgets, greater demand for services	Three choices: do more with less, more with more, or less with less
Civic Projects and Service Delivery	Tightly controlled	Public-private partnerships	New and outside partnerships with businesses and community groups
Communication	Minimal public outreach	Effort to reach out	Open, honest, two-way conversation
Management structure	Strictly hierarchical	Flattened management structure	Flexible administration system
Economic Development	Fight your neighbours	Regional partners / thinking	Global strategic planning
Revenue Generation	Property Taxes	Property taxes	New, sustainable sources of income
Financial Status of Town	Secure, comfortable	Threats to fiscal sustainability	Greater concern over on-going economic viability
Business Regulation	Tight, inflexible	Transitional between past and future approaches	More open business climate, flexible approach to business needs
Working at Town Hall	Rigid rules for employees	Desire for innovation	No silos, many staff working at home, self-managing, small core staff
Community Building	Narrow focus, protective	Respond to community wants	Building a creative town for the future
Innovation Agenda	Status quo	Community engagement	Constant change and improvement routine at Town Hall
Public Engagement and Outreach	Minimal	Effort to reach out	Develop community partnership approach with residents

Historically, municipal governments fall at the bottom of the constitutional ladder, below provincial and federal governments; however, as globalization continues to shape the way we live, it also presents an opportunity for municipalities to better take charge of their futures. Globalization has increasingly made national borders porous; people, goods, and ideas flow with relative ease across borders. Through cooperation with federal and provincial partners, municipal governments and their communities can create effective action at the local and regional scale.

Municipal governments are also strengthened by their closeness to the residents they serve. Despite municipal governments making decisions regarding provincial, national, and global issues, local government remains the most readily available form of government for residents to interact with. Local government also makes decisions that have the greatest impact on the day-to-day lives of residents. This sets municipal governance apart from provincial/territorial and federal governments as municipal councils can readily respond to the issues and concerns of residents in their communities. However, due to its proximity to local residents, municipal governments can be more readily influenced by the most organized and disproportionately vocal group in, or near, a community.

The future success of Lunenburg will be built upon the involvement and support of residents in the decision-making process. Municipal governments are strengthened when residents are actively involved in decision making. While the task of collaboration can be challenging, there are many theories, methods and tools that can help a community along the way.

Community members engaged in the Project Lunenburg process.

Good Governance and Cooperation Case Studies

▶ **Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework, AB**

As part of the Province of Alberta's Modernized Municipal Government Act, Alberta municipalities that share a common boundary must create an Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF). The purpose of the ICF is to: provide for integrated and strategic planning, delivery and funding of intermunicipal services; to steward scarce resources efficiently in providing local services; and to ensure municipalities contribute funding to services that benefit their residents. Each framework must be accompanied by a bylaw that stipulates how services are currently provided, identifies how services would be best delivered, and outlines how intermunicipal services will be delivered and funded. The framework must address services including transportation, water and wastewater, solid waste, emergency services, recreation, among others. Municipalities are able to establish bilateral and multilateral frameworks to best suit their needs. Municipalities are also required to develop an Intermunicipal Development Plan, which is a statutory land use plan typically prepared at the interface of neighbouring municipalities. Prior to the changes to Alberta's Municipal Government Act, intermunicipal planning and collaboration were voluntary, representing a shift in municipal collaboration in the province.

▶ **Kings Transit, NS**

Kings Transit was founded in 1981, originally operating between the Town of Wolfville and Town of Kentville within Kings County. Since then, the bus network has expanded into Annapolis County and Digby County, making stops in the towns of Middleton, Annapolis Royal, and Digby and several communities in between. Kings Transit is funded by four municipal units: County of Kings and the towns of Berwick, Kentville and Wolfville. These four municipalities entered into a formal agreement, the Kings Transit Authority Agreement, to stipulate the operation of the Transit Authority.

▶ **Asset Management Cohort Program, NL**

Asset management is the "coordinated activities of an organization to realize value from its assets in the achievement of its organizational objectives," and is increasingly becoming important as municipalities are faced with tough spending decisions.

Several small Newfoundland and Labrador municipalities took part in the Atlantic Infrastructure Management (AIM) Network's Cohort Program, and received funding from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Government of Canada to undertake asset management activities. Participating municipalities began developing up to date mapping information, data repositories, and complete lists of assets and equipment. As part of asset management, municipalities assessed future upkeep costs of municipal assets, and the current and future service standards in the municipalities.

The activities undertaken by these municipalities allowed them to asses risk and prioritize infrastructure projects most needed in the community. Municipalities have been able to leverage this knowledge to apply for funding for projects multiple years down the road, not simply projects that need funding immediately. Asset management has also allowed municipal councils to make informed decisions regarding assets as opposed to making funding decisions based on a council's 'wish list'.

BUILDING COLLABORATION

Will the challenges and solutions for the future of
Lunenburg require new ways of working together?
What conditions underlay the potential for deepening
collaboration?

Collaboration Defined

Collaboration, at its essence, is people who are participating in a group, working toward a shared goal with mutual understanding, curiosity in divergent views, open communication, and shared responsibility for outcomes. A collaboration can consist of just two individuals, small groups, and even entire communities. It has some defining characteristics: it involves a shared goal, all people participate equally, and the effort to implement is also shared. Collaboration tends to assume there is a common good that may require compromise to reach, marked by a willingness to let go of privilege, power and control in the interest of more inclusive and sustainable solutions.

Cooperation and partnerships are other ways in which people work together, but they are different from collaboration. People can cooperate without a shared goal; it is a helping and supportive dynamic, but does not require the same mutual effort as collaboration. Partnerships tend to be contractual, with rights and responsibilities between organizations, as well as transactional in nature, with predetermined, equal gains for each party. Collaboration can be a part of partnerships, but not necessarily.

Expanding on the systems approach described on page 13, collaboration should be viewed as a practice. In building capacity for collaboration it is essential to lift the hood on the inner dynamics of how people work together. To begin, this includes:

- ▶ interpersonal patterns and habits
- ▶ how trust is built
- ▶ how information is shared
- ▶ how decision making progresses, especially when there are divergent views
- ▶ the physical spaces where people gather to work together
- ▶ the tools and methods for organizing

For many years, cooperative or partner frameworks worked well as systems for addressing challenges and opportunities faced by businesses, governments, non-profits, communities, and even families. They still do in many cases. However, the situations we face today and into the future (i.e. climate chaos, housing inequity, municipal modernization) are significantly more complex. It is extremely difficult for solutions to complex problems to emerge in conventional group dynamics, while collaborative and participatory relationships have the potential (see Table 2 on the following page).

In the face of these complex situations, it may seem indulgent to put any time, energy or resources toward relationships and invisible dynamics, and not technical solutions. That may be true for maintaining business and usual, but if we are seeking an alternative vision, we will require "ways for humans to practice being in right relationship to our home and to each other, to practice complexity, and grow a compelling future together … changing in ways that grow our capacity to embody the world we long for" (Brown, *Emergent Strategy.* 2017*).*

Table 2
Participatory Groups versus Conventional Groups, excerpted from *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision- Making* by Sam Kaner.

Participatory Groups	Conventional Groups
Everyone participates, not just the vocal few.	The fastest thinkers and most articulate speakers get the most air time.
People give each other room to think and get their thoughts all the way out.	People interrupt each other on a regular basis.
People draw each other out with supportive questions. "Is this what you mean?"	Questions are often perceived as challenges, as if the person being questioned has done something wrong.
Each member makes the effort to pay attention to the person speaking.	Unless the speaker captivates their attention, people space out, doodle or check the clock.
People are able to listen to each other's ideas because they know their own ideas will also be heard.	People have difficulty listening to each other's ideas because they're busy rehearsing what they want to say.
Each member speaks up on matters of controversy. Everyone knows where everyone stands.	Some members remain quiet on controversial matters. No one really knows where everyone stands.
Members can accurately represent each other's point of views - even when they don't agree with them.	People rarely give accurate representations of the opinions and reasoning of those whose opinions are at odds with their own.
People refrain from talking behind each other's backs.	Because they don't feel permission to be direct during the meeting, people talk behind each other's backs outside the meeting.
Even in the face of opposition from the person-in-charge, people are encouraged to stand up for their beliefs.	People with discordant, minority perspectives are commonly discouraged from speaking out.
A problem is not considered solved until everyone who will be affected by the solution understands the reasoning.	A problem is considered solved as soon as the fastest thinkers have reached an answer. Everyone else is then expected to "get on board" regardless of whether they understand the logic of the decision.

Developing and maintaining trusting relationships is a crucial part of creating an environment where collaboration can flourish. Relationships built on mutual trust can facilitate creative problem solving and perseverance in the face of complex and contentious issues. Trust promotes effective knowledge transfer that, in turn, increases the likelihood of good decision-making. Relationships characterized by distrust and misinformation lead, in turn, to tense situations, decreased creativity and inefficient decision-making.

Within organizational management, trust can be defined as a willingness to be vulnerable based on positive expectations about the intentions or actions of another under conditions of uncertainty and interdependence. It involves a positive expectation that any vulnerability will not be exploited. In a strictly professional context trust may refer to an individual's competence in their role; in a broader interpersonal sense, it refers to long-term inter-relational attitudes of mutual respect and esteem. Trust is generous, and does not ask "what's in it for me". In the work of community building and local governance, trust is relevant in both the professional and interpersonal context.

Strong information sharing practices are a critical element of enhancing collaboration. They are necessary not only to mobilize the technical knowledge to develop a viable plan or course of action, but to ensure that it is equitable. In a municipal context, the high workload of elected officials and staff makes it difficult to ensure the right information is shared at the right time. There are often cases of information asymmetry, where information is unequally or incompletely shared between stakeholders. There is also the question of how to best communicate with different entities, such as neighbouring municipalities, community organizations, and the general public.

Strategies for strong information sharing include:

▶ Communicate early and ongoing. Don't wait for a particular issue before sharing information.
▶ Ensure information is easy to locate on websites.
▶ Ensure information is shared with all staff, elected officials and community members.
▶ Develop easy to understand written material and diagrams to help explain complex ideas.
▶ Create opportunities to discuss, workshop and brainstorm complex issues among staff, elected officials and community members, with no expectation of resolutions or decisions.
▶ Communicate simply for the intention of building shared understanding and fostering trust; there need not be an immediate outcome or benefit.
▶ Foster relationships with local journalists to facilitate communication when specific issues arise.

Collaboration and group decision making frequently go hand-in-hand. When a group of people must come together to make a choice, they enter a process that can unfold in a nearly infinite number of ways. There are a wide range of frameworks and protocols for decision making. At the municipal level, the process usually culminates in a vote by Council, kept orderly with Robert's Rules. Negotiations and consensus building are also frequently used processes.

Regardless, many groups in decision making progress through the *Diamond of Participatory Decision Making,* developed by Sam Kaner. This is just one conceptual model that can help to understand the process of transformation among groups of people. It is particularly relevant when an issue is too complex to be solved with familiar opinions and wisdom, and the group needs to generate diverse perspectives. As a starting point it assumes that a group is seeking new people and fresh perspectives, and intends to integrate these points of view into decision making.

The *Diamond of Participatory Decision Making*, illustrated on the next page, can be used to validate or understand a group situation, as a road map, or as a tool for mutual understanding.

There are three main phases. At the begining of decision making, there is an opportunity, issue to solve, a crossroads, or some other type of question. Groups enter a period of divergence, an opening up to the possibilities. Second, is a period of emergence and integration, where people are making sense of the possibilities, synthesizing and finding the shared wisdom. Lastly, the group moves toward a determination or action, a narrowing down to a chosen path.

Divergence	Convergence
Generating ideas	Sorting ideas
Open discussion	Discussing key points
Seeking diverse views	Coming to agreement
Suspending judgement	Exercising judgement

But of course, it is not that simple. The phase of emergence can be a period of confusion and frustration, called the "groan zone". With diverse perspectives, there is usually a struggle to integrate new or different ways of thinking. This is often an unpleasant experience, that can be identified by repetitious, insensitive or defensive conversation or statements ("moaning and groaning"), and feelings of being overwhelmed. At this point, many groups believe this indicates dysfunction, and come to a pseudo-decision, or abandon their goals. But it is actually a sign of a normal collaboration.

Working out confusion and differences must be done to lay the foundation for a sustainable agreement. The way through the groan zone involves careful listening, genuine questions, and focus on the underlying purpose. A group that can tolerate the stress of the groan zone is far more likely to establish authentic common ground and come to an insightful decision.

The Diamond of Participatory Decision Making.
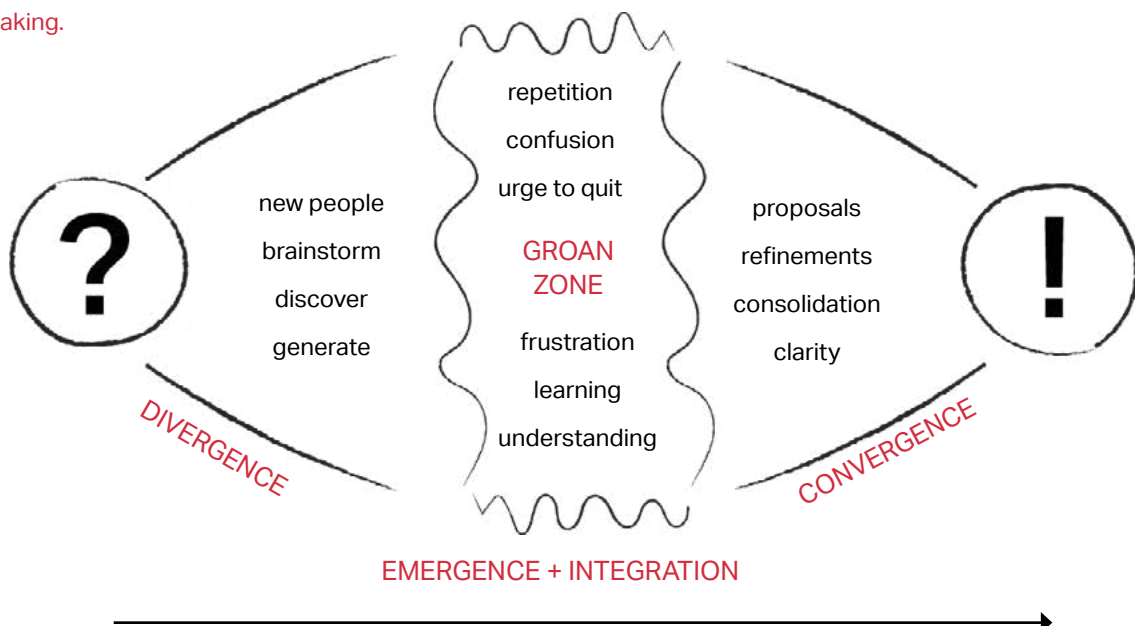
In addition to the intangible dynamics of groups, the spaces people work in can greatly influence their ability to collaborate effectively. The need for rapid innovation in business has propelled the creation of collaborative workspace in the private sector, resulting in tested approaches that are useful for the public sector as well.

Historically, most collaboration occurred through formal, scheduled meetings having many participants. As a result, most organizations (public or private) have conference rooms and other formal meeting spaces. These spaces are good for conveying information by presentation, formal discussion, and decision by movement or vote. But when the broader goal is to foster social interactions, deepen mutual understanding, exchange diverse views, and ideate creative solutions, these spaces fall short.

Collaborative spaces take a wide range of forms, but defining features are adaptability, technology and visual information. Generation of diverse ideas, or brainstorming, is most effectively achieved in an informal setting, which can include comfortable seating, a cafe style atmosphere, art and an ability to play music. The space should be the right size for the group; too big or too small and groups will feel uncomfortable. There must also be visual or auditory privacy in order to ensure people are comfortable having frank discussion. The space should also strike an aesthetic balance between being a forward looking "blank slate" and displaying reference materials, artifacts and other contextual elements.

Completion of a specific project within a relatively short time frame can be achieved with a "scrum room". Originally developed for software development, a scrum room is dedicated to a specific working team who use the room as their primary workspace for the life of their project, while collaborators come and go as needed. Project tasks, working drafts and measures of progress are posted on the walls, so that any team member or interested individual can easily become acquainted with the status of the project. Meetings are held regularly to discuss accomplishments and adjust tasks or goals.

Features of Collaborative Work Spaces

Adaptability	Technology	Visual Info.
Movable tables	Strong wifi	White boards
Variety of tables and chairs	Video conferencing	Pin-up space
Variety of seating types	Sound systems	Shelves
Movable walls	Power / charging stations	Programs for visual info

In the context of governance, institutional buildings have traditionally been designed to make a statement about the impressiveness of a city or agency, and the authority it holds. The intent has been to create a sense of awe, and not an impression of openness to collaboration. As values change, around the world municipal buildings are beginning to evolve into increasingly vital public spaces.

The philosophy toward civic architecture is shifting toward transparency, flexibility and socialization; a common space. While private offices and Council chambers certainly remain, contemporary town hall designs and renovations are introducing features such as plazas, public seating, and multi-use space that can accommodate everything from committee brainstorming sessions to art exhibits. Universal design is also becoming paramount, whereby all spaces are accessible to everyone, regardless of any disability or other factor. Public institutions that physically embrace the presence of the public, bring people together, and incorporate other public functions set a new tone for collaborative approaches to governance.

Renovation of Boston City Hall to include public seating and a coffee shop.

Collaboration often benefits from frameworks or loose structures to guide conversation. For people who are accustomed to free-for-all open dialogue, facilitative tools and methods can feel contrived, but with practice these frameworks become indispensable for having conversations that matter.

The *Art of Hosting (and Harvesting Conversations that Matter)* has emerged as a leading group of approaches and methodologies for facilitating conversations in groups large and small. It is also a practice that helps its proponents respond to the demands of complexity and change, internally as a personal leadership framework, and externally, in how communities and stakeholders are involved in the work at hand. The *Art of Hosting* allows for ongoing feedback, learning and course correction as a natural part of work. It relies on collective intelligence, and provides an approach to leadership that acknowledges no single person has the right answer on their own.

Conversation can be understood as the fiber of collaboration; higher quality conversations create stronger collaborations. There are many practical tools and methods within the *Art of Hosting* and broader facilitation practice that can assist the progress of conversation. Some examples include:

▶ Circle work
▶ World cafe
▶ Open space technology
▶ Participatory budgeting
▶ Seven helpers
▶ Graphic recording
▶ Fish bowl
▶ Jigsaw
▶ Sense making and categorizing

TOWN HALL

LUNENBURG

Lunenburg
Town
Hall

LUNENBURG

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GOVERNANCE AND COLLABORATION

UPLAND