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Building a Culture of Collaboration:
Internal collaboration as a tool for coordinating plans

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Building a Culture of Collaboration:
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Coordinating plans is necessary for avoiding conflicts when implementing policies. However, it has become challenging to coordinate plans due to an increasing number of plans in Canadian city-regions. Regional governments have traditionally experienced departmental siloing, meaning departments work towards their own goals and are often unaware of other departments' projects or how their work might affect others. Collaborative planning theorists Patsy Healey, Judith Innes, and David Booher argued that the inclusive and consensus-based approach of collaborative planning leads to more sustainable plans and acceptance from the affected community. While collaborative planning is typically used to engage the public for projects and policy creation, planners from across Canada suggested that collaboration should be used within regional governments in order to combat siloing, in ways that increase awareness of other projects and plans and allows for better plan coordination. Interviews with 92 planning professionals from across Canada indicate that many planners believed coordination is more likely to occur when staff work in a culture that encourages collaborative practices. Staff want to feel empowered to communicate with other departments and with senior staff. Staff must also have the will to collaborate. This can be a challenge to overcome when staff have worked in silos for decades, but planners reported that strong leadership that empowers them to take ownership of the plans and citywide vision encourages staff to embody and promote collaboration in their daily work. Planners believed that having a citywide vision achieved through consensus with all levels of governments and departments assists in building a culture of collaboration, where departments no longer work towards their individual goals but consider what is best for the whole city-region.

Keywords: collaboration, coordination, planning practice, regional government, Canada, empowerment, will, leadership

INTRODUCTION

The number of plans across Canadian communities is increasing due to emerging concerns (e.g., climate change) and new planning theories being widely used (e.g., smart growth and sustainability) (Burns, 2013). It is becoming increasingly difficult for communities to coordinate their various plans from different departments and levels of government (Filion & McSpurren 2007; Grant, 2013). This allows for potential policy conflicts and inconsistencies, which can make it difficult for some policy mandates to be enforced when other policies contradict or work against them.

Traditionally, city-region government departments have tended to work in silos so they could achieve their individual mandates (Grant, 2013). However, most planners taking part in this study believed individualistic behaviour is less efficient and more expensive for the whole government system and leads to less positive work environments and less plan coordination.

Interview data with 92 planning professionals from Metro Vancouver, Edmonton Capital Region, the Greater Toronto Area, Halifax Regional Municipality, and the St. John's Metropolitan Area, indicated that internal collaboration within governance systems was perceived as the most successful way of coordinating plans, as staff took pride and ownership in policies and projects. While infusing collaborative practices into daily work in regional governments allows for a better work environment and greater awareness of other departments' projects, collaboration itself does not coordinate plans. However, planners perceived that having a more communicative and healthy work environment and greater awareness would indirectly lead to more coordinated plans. The participants also expressed many challenges to achieving collaboration in their work environment: it can be difficult to change old habits of siloing, some organizations struggle with tight finances and timelines, and some government staff do not see the value in collaboration or plan coordination. Based on the responses of 92 planners, it appears that transforming a culture of siloing and a strict hierarchy into a culture of collaboration requires will from staff and leaders and empowerment of staff to take initiative to communicate and work together.

Collaborative practices that use consensus, consultation of those affected by a project or policy, and a team-oriented approach have risen in the field of planning as a more holistic, inclusive, and successful way of creating policies stakeholders are pleased with. This research demonstrates how planners believe collaboration can achieve plan coordination, sheds light on which practices and cultural structures help and hinder internal collaboration, and reveals that most planners desire collaborative work environments.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

This project, which started in 2013, is part of a multi-year research project led by Dr. Jill Grant of Dalhousie University. The overarching objective is to acquire qualitative and quantitative data from practicing planners to understand their perceptions on the state of proliferating plans, the strategies and challenges to coordinating so many emerging plans, and to determine the impact of structural arrangements and planning cultures on coordinating plans.

COLLABORATION IN GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

While there is not a great deal of literature on strategies for coordinating plans and planning practice, there is research describing how successful work environments, efficient use of resources, competitive advantages, and successful projects come from interdepartmental communication, knowledge sharing, and teamwork. Much of that research also describes the challenges to using those practices.

Physical structures play a role in how well departments can coordinate policies and practice. Geographic proximity to each other in organizations affects coordination efforts. As Nilsson and Mattes (2013) and Storper and Venables (2004) explain, being able to communicate in a face-to-face manner often allows for informal relationships to form and therefore greater trust between coworkers.

Argote et al. (2000) and Willem and Buelens (2007) explain how important knowledge transfer is to an organization's success, use of resources, and connections for better marketing. Argote et al. explain that knowledge transfer may not occur because of favouritism and divisions within organizations. Jones and George (1998) argue trust is needed to achieve cooperation and teamwork in organizations. Trust and cooperation can be gained through informal relationships, asking for assistance from others, sharing knowledge, and the removal of ego. Cooperation and teamwork allow the organization to be more competitive. Partnerships and the practice of reaching out to other organizations is increasing and leads to more success than authoritarian led processes (Seymoar, Mullard, and Winstanley, 2009; Edgar, 2006). Edgar defines a successful partnership as one that "values and openly acknowledges the different types of power that each individual or organization brings" (4). Thompson (1965) researched the most effective ways of achieving creativity and innovation in organizations and suggested a loose structure, decentralization of power, free communication, groups, and cycling of projects to others are all needed. Innes (1996) argues gaining consensus across an organization helps in achieving coordination. Consensus building creates "social, intellectual, and political capital" (466), meaning trusting relationships and informal communication practices were established, knowledge and information was shared with all, and consensus led to more political buy-in and alliances allowing for greater influence in political action and policy.

All of these characteristics needed for more effective, more efficient, and more creative work within governments and other organizations are forms of collaboration. Healey (2006, 61) defines collaboration as: "building up links across disparate networks, to forge new relational capacity across the diversity of relations which co-exist these days in places." Collaboration involves consensus building, consultation, communication, common goals and objectives, inclusion of all those affected, and facilitation and mediation around discussion. Collaborative efforts must ultimately work towards consensus with all those involved. Innes and Booher (2000, 5) argue collaborative planning must involve "a variety of stakeholders in long-term, face-to-face discussions." Collaborative planning is good practice for creating plans because when those involved in a plan-making process or project begin to understand others' cultural differences and work towards consensus, policies are more legitimate and those affected by the policy feel a sense of ownership over the policy (Healey 2006).

Most articles reporting on collaborative practices used to achieve better work environments also demonstrate how collaboration gives organizations a competitive advantage. Innes and Booher (2000) argue that collaboration is the new brute force or power beyond capitalism for organizations to get ahead of others: "power is no longer concentrated in institutions… Instead, power is diffused throughout global networks of wealth, information, and images" (10). They argue that in the information age, collaboration is the most powerful tool for public and private organizations to achieve success. Collaboration is not a selfless act of one side trying to help the other, but a way of getting more information to be on the cutting edge in whatever the organization is trying to achieve.

In *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies* (2006), Healey unpacks theories on structure and agency, analyzing the works of Karl Marx, Jürgen Habermas, and Anthony Giddens. She argues there should not be too much weight on structural forces that Marx argues negatively affect agency, and in this context, the planner's ability to work towards

collaboration. Healey sees Habermas and Giddens as more realistic, as they believe structure (empowerment) and agency (will) both play a role. Planners do have some power to make changes.

There are several examples in the Canadian and American context of how collaboration was used to achieve coordination in plans and projects. The following four case studies demonstrate what the most common trends were in successful collaborative efforts as well as the challenges that can arise in using collaboration. Consensus building, sharing information, teamwork, leadership encouraging collaboration, interdepartmental communication, having one common vision, and having the will to collaborate were all essential to the success of collaboration. These case studies also demonstrated how those involved believe it made the project or plan creation more cost effective and efficient.

Bergeron and Lévesque (2012) analyze how an active community design plan was completed by collaboration between five departments in the Ontario Provincial Government. They found coordination across the different levels of government was lacking. Another challenge was that the departments had different mandates: some pushing for more sport while others were concerned about trail creation and maintenance. Formal and informal mechanisms were used such as regularly meeting committees, sharing information, and having regular communication with other departments. Ultimately, Bergeron and Lévesque believed interdepartmental coordination should improve across the province.

Prime et al. (2013) reported on a waterfront restoration project in Toronto where several organizations formed a partnership to complete the project. The multi-agency partnership required that all regulatory bodies reach a consensus on what developers must do to in order to maintain the health of the ecosystem before beginning development on the waterfront. Several agencies devoted their time and staff expertise to the project, and the collaborative nature gave each agency involved a sense of ownership over the project. The multi-agency approach also made the project more efficient and cost-effective than if there was only one group working on the project.

Kittel (2012) analyzed the collaborative approach used to create the North Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy. The success of the collaborative process came from consensus building, good communication, data, and the devotion of time and resources to collaboration in the first place. Without the will to create a collaborative process, as one interviewee from Kittel's project said, the process would be started "off the side of a planner's desk" resulting in inconsistent progress and less efficient use of resources (24).

Porter (2006) analyzed efforts to coordinate transportation and land use planning in the Denver area. He argues consensus, a common vision, leadership committed to coordination, and partnerships were all essential to the coordination of land use and transportation. Challenges to coordination were departments' hesitation to get involved in mandates they were typically not responsible for. Lack of interaction amongst the various departments also hindered coordination.

While collaborative practices are an emerging trend in the context of coordinating plans, the concept of collaborative planning is often described as a process that includes extensive public

engagement (Healey 2006). While the general public usually can participate in the creation of individual plans, the coordination of plans and policies and the thorough understanding of how policies relate, conflict, and overlap is the responsibility of planning professionals and those in related departments. Although we know collaborative planning is a practice that is growing in popularity because it is more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable, there is no research on the practice of collaborative planning internally within governments.

While Healey (2006) argues planners have more agency to work towards collaboration than theorists like Marx suggest, her arguments are not based on conversations with planners. This research will help shed light on the perspectives of planners themselves who will demonstrate if they feel empowered or powerless in achieving collaborative planning internally.

While collaboration gives organizations a competitive advantage and leads to more equitable planning involving the public and respecting different cultures, there is no research demonstrating the effect of collaboration on the level of coordination between plans and in internal planning practice generally. In this context, I am using the concept of collaborative planning to describe the use of collaborative tools within the government and partnered agencies. Although the concept of collaborative planning uses tools such as consultation, teamwork, involving stakeholders, and gaining consensus with the public, I am thinking of how those tools are used in the same way but only within the government and external agencies working with the government.

This study draws on rich data from planning professionals themselves who have first-hand experience of how collaboration can lead to coordination or how a lack of collaboration can lead to poor work environments and less likelihood for policy coordination.

OBJECTIVES

This comparative study using interviews with planners from Vancouver, Edmonton, Greater Toronto Area, Halifax, and St. John's will:
- Develop a comparative analysis of how and to what extent planners from the five city-regions across Canada use principles of collaborative planning as a way of working together as one organization to achieve plan coordination
- Report how collaborative efforts are used, what hinders and helps collaboration, and how empowered planners feel in working towards collaboration
- Identify practices and structural arrangements that participants believe lead to better policy and project coordination and create a more effective, creative, efficient, and pleasant work environment

METHODS

This research project uses qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews with 92 practicing planners and professionals in related fields. Researchers from Dalhousie University and University of Waterloo conducted the interviews in 2014. Consequently, the evidence from this dataset is only a snapshot from that time. Planners' perceptions, their job roles, leadership, and the structures they work within may have changed since 2014. The interviews were semi-

structured and held in person, by telephone, or by video chat. They lasted from 20 minutes to an hour and a half. All but one participant gave consent to be audio recorded. The audio files were then transcribed verbatim by an outside source. Names were removed from the transcripts so as to maintain the participants' confidentiality.

Table 1: Participants Interviewed in Each City-Region					
City-region	Vancouver	Edmonton	Greater Toronto Area	Halifax	St. John's
Participants	**15**	**18**	**31**	**15**	**13**
By gender					
Female	3	10	11	4	6
Male	12	8	20	11	7

Several forms of content analysis were used to identify trends in the data. Researchers previously conducted a broad thematic analysis of the transcripts. They identified any repeating trends in the data and categorized them (e.g., challenges to planning, emotional responses from participants). Next, I conducted a more focused thematic analysis of the data. The transcripts were coded for anything planners perceived to be a strategy or good practice for achieving coordination. The next level of thematic analysis was to pick out the more common themes. Some interpretive analysis was used to determine what planners perceived as strategies. Some participants expressed a great deal of frustration or excitement around certain practices, so those moments were interpreted for how strongly the participants felt about those practices. Comparative analysis was also used to identify differences and similarities between the five city-regions examined. This required systematically identifying the most common trends in each city and then determining if those trends were shared in the other city-regions or if different or even contrasting trends appeared in the other city-regions.

GENERAL TRENDS FROM ALL FIVE CITY-REGIONS

Generally, when participants discussed efforts and challenges to coordination in planning, collaboration was a major theme across all five city-regions, with such terms as "working together," "getting everyone to the table," and "internal consultation" arising frequently.

In the evidence banks I created that compiled anything planners perceived to be good practices for achieving coordination, the saying "working together" or "work together" emerged 17 times in Edmonton, 31 times in the GTA (though the GTA dataset is double the size of the other city-regions), 9 times in Vancouver, 8 times in Halifax, and only 2 times in St. John's. Sentiments such as the following were common among planners:

> *The other piece that's really important is having a corporate culture where people are seriously invested in kind of a one-city approach to doing business. So that seems a bit cheesy to say that but it's all about the human relationships when it comes to implementing plans and prioritizing actions and working together to get things done. Because there's a million things that could get done, and nothing will get done if everybody is working alone on their own thing. ... But at the end of the day, it's how actual humans are working together all the time, and if they're actually open, if they're actually collaborating. And*

when that's happening, we see great success. (EDM02f)

I think another unique aspect of Vancouver is engineers and planners and the finance planning and capital planning groups, and parks and recreation, we all work together very closely. (VAN02m)

So I think, you know, our strategy I guess is to get everybody on the same wavelength in terms of we're all headed in the same direction. We're all rolling together, I think, to meet the timelines and the goals that have been set. So I think just all working together and having the same messaging is key. (GTA09m)

Participants from Halifax and St. John's used the concept of working together less frequently and generally in the context of it lacking or needing to be strengthened. When asked if a lack of expertise is a problem for coordinating plans, a participant stated that the amount of expertise is good, but "[t]he gap is more getting them to work together than what they know" (HRM04f). Participants from St. John's used the concept of working together infrequently, and in the context of how it is lacking.

Internal consultation was a concept that came up fairly frequently in the dataset, where one department working on a plan or project gave other departments opportunities to be involved from the outset and voice their opinions and concerns. A participant from Edmonton proudly stated that interdepartmental collaboration and consultation is becoming the norm:

So I think over time I've seen our meetings on these types of projects go from, as an example, transportation telling sustainable development, "Here's what's in the plan," to very much taking steps back right to the beginning of the process to create the plan and saying, "Let's all get together in a room for a day or two, or whatever it takes and work out how our plan is going to fit with your plan." They are very interactive. They're called workshops because we actually make people work. It's not just listening. Typically we have facilitators for these who are not necessarily subject matter experts but are actually experts in facilitation. ... So the days when the engineers used to lead the process for the transportation department and create a transportation master plan are past us now. And then very much we look to facilitators and experts in consultation to drive both our processes with the external stakeholders but also internally. (EDM05f)

A participant from the GTA said internal consultation is used regularly when creating and changing plans and policies:

Like we've got an external consultation process and internal. So certain applications like this one which is redevelopment, all new construction. So we'll talk with the Community Services about do you need a library, do you need a fire station? You know, anything special here outside their normal, we would consult with them, what their needs are. We will also consult with the school board – Do you need school sites? (GTA15m)

However, the same participant expressed frustration with the internal consultation process, stating, "It's time consuming and it is not cheap."

While planners from St. John's did not explicitly use the term 'internal consultation', they did address an internal referral practice called the Interdepartmental Land Use Committee that is used frequently by provincial departments. It essentially allows for internal consultation on policies affecting public and Crown Land before they are approved.

Planners commonly used the phrase of "getting everyone to the table" as a way of describing how departments need to work together on plans and projects. They also emphasized that communicating in a face-to-face manner is best:

> *And I'll tell you, one of the methods that are used in preparing these things is that we sit at each other's tables. And so part of that process as we're intermingling at the plan preparation staff level is when we identify, we sort of say, hold on a second, if you guys are going to do that then this other thing has got to happen. And that's sort of, if you like, the very first stages of the ensuring that there's a level of integration between these plans. And that's, if you like, the integration of a policy.* (EDM11m)

> *I think good relationships and understanding of what everybody brings to the table. So again, it's really being aware broadly across the organization about who's doing what, why, how, how it relates to what you're doing. So really understanding each other's mandates. And having again that culture where integration is at the forefront. And we're really looking for those kinds of opportunities to deepen the work that you're doing by building those kinds of connections and bridges. (VAN03f)*

Generally, these snapshots of perspectives from planners across Canada demonstrate a common practice or at least a desire to improve collaborative efforts, as most of the planners discussed how important it is to work with other departments, understand where each other is coming from, respect each other's expertise, and include everyone from the outset. While the concepts came up frequently throughout the data, planners from St. John's and Halifax seemed less familiar, less able, or even less keen to work towards improving collaboration.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES

Edmonton

Coordinating plans is something Edmonton has experience with as seen through The Ways plans that were worked on simultaneously and through a great deal of teamwork. The plans are consistent with one another, not overlapping, and are even formatted in the same way. Interviews with participants from Edmonton demonstrate the strides Edmonton has taken to create a culture where the staff (everyone from on the ground to the Council members) share one vision. In order to achieve that vision, staff have made collaboration a daily workplace practice. Edmonton has a culture of openly sharing information and most planners perceived their managers to be supportive and encouraging of collaboration.

Collaborative Practices

Good practices that arose in the interview data with Edmonton participants were the use of committees, working groups, teams, face-to-face meetings, sharing information, giving opportunities for input, considering other departments concerns and respecting their expertise, working on projects simultaneously, and vertical and horizontal communication. The following are just a few of the many examples of how planners in Edmonton responded to questions around how to best achieve coordination:

> *There's always competing interests. Again, I think in general as a team, the departments that we have to deal with as planners, we have a good understanding of where everyone is coming from. And so, you know, we might not always agree 100% but we need to move forward and get things done. So I don't know, it sounds like I'm just describing this big hippie commune and everyone gets along. [laughs] But you know, yeah, we negotiate and work together.* (EDM08f)

> *And we had a series of these workshops over time. And at the end of it we came up with 21 or 22, I can't remember, cross sections. But everybody was involved in the development of it, they know how the cross sections originated, they know how they were modified through discussion and hearing the perspectives of all the other people around the tables. And at the end of the day we came out with a good product because everybody has been involved.* (EMD05f)

> *...pretty much all city work groups just get together in-person to try and discuss what they're doing to make sure that people from different departments better understand the work done by their colleagues from different departments.* (EDM04f)

> *...when plans are developed, of course they're sent to… We do the internal kind of circulation to other departments and work together on those plans*. (EDM12f)

Culture of Collaboration

Participants spoke about collaborative practices and how they make up the typical government culture in Edmonton. Many participants also addressed the fact that Edmonton has a "one city" common vision that is crucial to building a collaborative culture. As one participant stated, "One City isn't about all getting along and feeling great. It's about making good decisions collectively and coordinating" (EDM10f). When answering questions about how to best achieve coordination or collaboration, participants spoke about the one city vision as the reason for why so many collaborative practices are used. The one city vision inherently encourages a more collaborative culture.

> *...the city manager, when he came, instituted, yeah, just a really proactive cultural shift in our organization. So we have 5 leadership principles. And one of them is we are one city. And so there's a huge emphasis on breaking down silos, on working collaboratively.* (EDM10f)

> *The other piece that's really important is having a corporate culture where people are seriously invested in kind of a one city approach to doing business. So that seems a bit cheesy to say that but it's all about the human relationships when it comes to implementing plans and prioritizing actions and working together to get things done. Because there's a million things that could get done, and nothing will get done if everybody is working alone on their own thing.* (EDM02f)

> *Well, again, I think the degree to which you've got… You've got a vision that sets up where we want to head. You've got a culture of shared oversight, of shared leadership, of shared vision obviously, and collaboration. You've got a structure which is not necessarily hierarchical or siloed. If you've got that basis inside your organization where you can freely communicate and perhaps share responsibilities and also share some leadership, you've got the right foundation for getting around the problem of having projects that are shared interdepartmentally or inter-branch.* (EDM09m)

Leadership, Empowerment, and Will

According to one participant from Edmonton, in 2014, the city had about 200 to 300 cultural ambassadors. A video of staff from Edmonton's Corporate Culture Department (Urban Video, 2016) suggests that cultural ambassadors are trained by the program to represent their branches and encourage their peers to work towards the corporate culture the led by the Edmonton City Council. The program is a way of further strengthening the idea that Edmonton is "one city" with one collective vision. Cultural ambassadors help strengthen the corporate culture by sharing their knowledge about projects and plans with other departments and asking for feedback from the various departments. They are supposed to act as role models by instilling a more team-oriented attitude in the workplace. Participants spoke highly of the cultural ambassador program. They also talked about it in a context that demonstrates a great level of acceptance of the program.

> *So the cultural ambassadors, we get some training and then it's really about just like taking the principles out into the workforce and engaging our colleagues more directly. And I feel like I have the Kumbaya group. Like everyone in my section has very much bought into this. You know, it's a very accepted thing.* (EDM10f)

The concept of cultural ambassadors is empowering staff to be leaders and take ownership of the one-city vision. It is giving staff the ability and responsibility to further encourage teamwork and a positive work environment with the many various departments working together.

Planners' perceptions suggest that administrative leaders are instilling a culture of collaboration. Managers in Edmonton seemed to encourage greater collaboration and a culture of working together. They also embodied the culture of collaboration themselves. Several participants spoke about an interdepartmental corporate leadership team for the senior staff that meets on a regular basis. They explained how it further instils a culture of working together. One participant said that his leaders work together and do not discourage their staff to collaborate and communicate across departments:

> *And I think if it has to be across the board or across the organization where involvement needs to occur, there is the senior leadership team that meets. And that's kind of a cross section between all of the departments. And so that can sort of... That area can be sort of where the project kind of starts. And then that will allow the rest of the group to kind of work together. But for the most part, if anybody in this organization needs to meet with somebody, I don't think there's a lot of red tape and there's not a lot of... Maybe we are a hippie community. I had a meeting with Finance today about some other things, and, you know, nobody asked any questions. We just all started working on it.* (EDM08m)

Few participants from Edmonton expressed challenges with collaboration or a lack of encouragement to communicate with other departments or staff from different levels of government. For the most part, Edmonton planners spoke about their city as one where collaborative practices are used to achieve coordination and with the will and empowerment to use those collaborative practices.

Vancouver

Planners from Vancouver reported that collaborative planning is the norm in the city-region. Vancouver has been coordinating plans for decades. The planners spoke very favorably about collaborative practices between departments but also between levels of government. Consensus building arose as extremely important to the city-region and the planners demonstrated that consensus and respect for each other's departments and levels of government promotes more acceptance, buy-in, and ownership over policies. In a similar fashion to those in Edmonton, Vancouver planners expressed how managers instill a culture of collaboration and teamwork, but also addressed how the political representatives push for collaboration, meaning there is more buy-in to utilize collaborative practices.

History of Coordinating Plans

While Vancouver's plans may not be as consistently formatted and purposely completed around the same time as Edmonton's *The Ways*, Vancouver planners described the long history of coordinating plans in the city, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s.

> *In fact, probably this region maybe more than others has had a long history of trying to coordinate municipal planning processes and regional planning processes from a land use and then trying to tie the transportation in as well. From a policy perspective, [VAN04m2] 's got a bunch of the plans here. So our governance structure and our sort of agency are supposed to work to complement each other in that regard. So since like the '70s really that the region has kind of been on the vanguard of that. (VAN04m1)*

One planner believed a move to using more collaborative practices only began in the late 1980s. He experienced departmental siloing and other barriers to coordinating with other departments then, but became part of a move to change the practices.

> *By the late '80s, we had started breaking that down and we started going to a more matrix management approach. A matrix management approach is where people from various departments come together to work on a particular project in a multidisciplinary way… In the '90s, we also established that all transportation planning would be done jointly by the engineering and planning department in Vancouver. (VAN13m)*

Culture of Collaboration

Vancouver does not have an explicit program enforcing collaboration like Edmonton's cultural ambassadors, but planners did discuss a general culture of collaboration and suggest that several collaborative practices are used regularly. One participant explained how the engineers working for the municipalities and region are called "plan-gineers" because they realize how integrated planning and engineering are (VAN01m). Most planners spoke as though they could not see any other way of creating plans and working on projects.

> *We do the same with a lot of external agencies too. So we'll work really closely with the agriculture land commission or with the port or with YVR and others again to ensure that we're aligned in our policies as much as possible. So strong working relationships with other agencies. I think that there's a real corporate culture here as well around building the plan collaboratively.* (VAN03f)

> *In some parts of the organization, it's definitely second nature to think how do I involve those guys, or I wonder what they're up to on this, or making sure you're checking that you're not duplicating efforts, and so on. So it really has become part of the culture. From a social perspective, there's lots of great kind of engagement amongst departments and so on.* (VAN03f)

Collaborative Practices

Participants from Vancouver emphasized several collaborative practices that are used regularly in order to collaborate plans. These included regular interdepartmental meetings, interdepartmental committees and teams, working on plans and projects with other departments, giving other departments opportunities to provide feedback and advice on policies and projects that may affect them, informal cross-departmental communication, sharing information, and building relationships. As one person stated, "Another way to interpret coordination would be relationship" (VAN02m). The same planner gave an example of how integrated the departments in Vancouver are:

> *Vancouver is a pretty unique city because there is a lot of planning going on. I think another unique aspect of Vancouver is engineers and planners and the finance planning and capital planning groups, and parks and recreation, we all work together very closely. Back when I started in the '80s when I started, sometimes I would be drafting 10, 12 reports to council a year. And now I would draft only a handful. And every one involves me immediately putting together a technical committee of the key people from the different departments. And right up front, if you look at a report going to council, is the list of council policies. So that's the coordination. (VAN02m)*

Leadership, Empowerment, and Will

The municipalities and region have worked tirelessly to get consensus on overarching regional plans. One participant described the need for "good administrative procedures in place, [and] the governance that requires the coordination is in place" (VAN04m2). Vancouver, like Edmonton, also has great internal administrative support for collaborative planning efforts internally, with managers encouraging team-oriented environments, similarly to Edmonton, and using collaborative practices amongst themselves to share information and consult one another.

> *Well, I think one of the main challenges is at the staff level, you know, you have to have respect for the different disciplines and you have to have a team-oriented attitude. And management have to build that team-oriented attitude. Like you don't dismiss engineers because they think about things differently or something. We actually have to take all the views into consideration. (VAN02m)*

> *So first of all, it's having a city administration that says, no, you have to work together on a team basis. Secondly, it's having administration that's headed by a city manager that wants the big picture figured out. We don't just want to hear about your world that you're responsible for. (VAN02m)*

> *And finally to the corporate management team which is the formal meeting of all the various managers, and includes Park Board, Library, Police and all of the key players to bring these initiatives forward and ensure they align with corporate objectives and with existing policy. So as you start what appears to be a simple planning process, and think about the community and what you're going to do out there, there's a whole level of consultation that also takes place inside the organization to ensure that we're aligned. (VAN01m)*

Vancouver has inter-governmental relationships that promote collaboration. The regional level of government representing the municipalities within Metro Vancouver instills a culture of collaboration and respect for the lower levels of government and an attitude of having to work together to deal with conflicts:

> *...[W]e all at the end of the day have one political master. And so council at the end of the day is the arbitrator of that. At the regional level, I think we've got pretty good structures in place to make sure that as each of the municipalities and agencies does their planning work, there is a way of ensuring at least kind of loose coordination. It doesn't mean it's always perfect. Sometimes Delta might grumble at what Surrey does. But there is a way of ensuring that where those plans impact another municipality, there is a forum at Metro Vancouver for working out those conflicts. (VAN07m)*

> *The municipalities have quite a bit of autonomy. The regional governance here is much more oriented around consensus building as opposed to sort of control and command or issuing policy statements from higher levels of government, whether it's provincial or regional like in Ontario. So as a result, the plan documents themselves become really*

central focal points as opposed to just sort of government policy that needs to be followed. It's actually this represents the sweat, blood and tears of actually literally 10 years of coordination and consensus building with all the local governments including TransLink. And then as a result, I think it has quite a bit more standing status. (VAN04m2)

When asked what factors influence the success of interdepartmental policy and plan coordination one participant (VAN10m) explained there are various factors that must all exist together, including a personal attitude and will to coordinate, but also leadership that works towards a common vision. Another participant reiterated that will, leadership, and a common vision are needed to achieve plan coordination:

I think one thing is a clear corporate direction. And if you know that listen, guys, this is the direction of the city, this is what's important, and we're all going to row together on it, that really helps. Without that, you're left with kind of goodwill. But I think a clear corporate direction, a set of priorities reinforced by those in the highest most senior positions saying it's important that we do this together, and living that out. Nothing is as important as that. Nothing. So I think clear corporate direction and saying we are one city, we have one objective. It's not about different departments scraping for their piece of the pie or getting their oar in the water. There's no substitute for that kind of leadership from the senior management team. And of course that's facilitated by a council that has a clear and consistent direction. (VAN07m)

The administrative and political leadership in Vancouver encourages a culture of collaboration. However, individuals also need the will to collaborate. The quotes from participants in Vancouver demonstrate a will to collaborate simply in the way they describe collaboration efforts to coordinate plans as such a normalcy in their daily work. For collaboration to become a typical practice in a government, it may take time. Participants reported that Vancouver has a long history now with using collaborative efforts and coordinating plans, which may be why it is so embedded into the daily work culture.

STRUGGLING WITH COLLABORATION: GTA, HALIFAX, AND ST. JOHN'S

While planners from Edmonton and Vancouver expressed a great deal of success with collaborative practices as a way for achieving plan coordination and the many useful tools to support that, planners from the GTA, Halifax, and St. John's reported many more challenges from ineffective collaboration. These three city-regions demonstrated which practices are not working to achieve collaboration and why collaboration is not occurring in some places. These three city-regions also demonstrated that, for the most part, planners have a will and desire to collaborate, but that some do not feel empowered to collaborate.

Greater Toronto Area (GTA)

The GTA represents a mixed bag of opinions surrounding collaboration as a tool for achieving coordination. Some planners have used collaboration and have seen success with it while others expressed frustration that it does not exist, believe it takes too long, or give up on trying to

achieve consensus or compromises. Planners from the GTA also reported a lack of leadership that encourages collaboration.

Some Collaborative Practices

While planners from the Greater Toronto Area expressed many challenges and frustrations around collaboration, most of the planners also had positive experiences using collaborative practices to coordinate plans and projects. Many spoke about the importance of interdepartmental communication. Communication, understanding where other departments are coming from, and respecting how a policy may impact other departments arose as crucial factors for achieving collaboration:

> *But there is a lot of emphasis in the last few years on interrelations between departments and information. So if a plan is going to secondary plans and planning, you know, have the departments that when this plan is finally approved and implemented, they've had input into it. (GTA03f)*

> *Well, to me, a key is communication. I mean if you don't have a structure in place where you have the opportunity to regularly discuss key priorities within your division and the impacts that they might have on other divisions then you're not going to have that opportunity for the coordination and benefit*. (GTA04f)

Many planners addressed that regular interdepartmental coordination meetings are important for increasing awareness of the projects other departments are working on and for sharing information:

> *I think a lot of it deals with just having regular communication at the staff level or even at senior management level. But you know, the more we share experiences and talk, the easier it is to know what each other is doing. So there's a lot of, I think, liaison or forums GTA-wide, the Greater Toronto Area. We have certain liaison committees and regular sharing of information. So I think that definitely helps to coordinate. And even with our adjacent municipalities, whether it's Peel on our west side or Durham on our east side, and Toronto on our south side, we do have good rapport with our colleagues and our counterparts. So I think that makes a lot of difference because, you know, we can share a lot of our experiences and challenges.* (GTA09m)

> *We don't actually have any real resources. Like our resources are our staff. So in order to make changes in neighbourhoods, we have to rely very heavily on other divisions. Which means we have to bring them to the table and work with them. And part of that is around figuring out how their strategies and what they're trying to do works with what we would like to do as well. So in terms of our own strategies. So you know, those kinds of meetings and discussions are really the primary way we do…we identify overlaps and potential conflicts.* (GTA02f)

In order to have the most effective communication with other departments, many participants noted that interdepartmental communication must happen face-to-face. One participant stated, "if

you're meeting face-to-face with people, obviously you're going to have a better understanding of different perspectives" (GTA07m).

Challenges

Several planners argued interdepartmental collaboration is important but expressed frustration with how much time it takes and how costly it is. One planner stated that interdepartmental meetings are important and "the right thing to do" but also said he attend those meetings grudgingly because there are so many to attend (GTA08m). When asked about what impacts efforts to increase interdepartmental collaboration, a planner from Markham stated:

> *I know in the case of Markham we have never been fully staffed when you look at our annual operational requirements. We are a low tax, high prosperity community that is predicated on having a modest level of staff resources. And so every time you add an initiative that requires staff time, that time has to be either taken away from something else or given incremental contribution, which is not always possible.* (GTA08m)

Another planner expressed the view that collaboration is too costly and time consuming:

> *And then we'll involve the other commissions, departments as we think they should be involved. I.e., if there's an issue with, you know, we need a park or a recreational centre. Where do you want it? What type? How big? And we'll try to get their input into it… It's time consuming and it is not cheap. And that's when the developer is saying, "Why is it taking 2 years to deal with some of these applications?" Because that's the process.* (GTA15m)

Some planners said it is challenging to collaborate with other departments because each department has its own goals and may not prioritize the greater vision for the whole community:

> *I'd say one on slightly more of the negative side or the challenging side is that although we do like to collaborate a lot with different departments and we often do, each other department also has their own sort of policies and initiatives and guidelines. And sometimes they produce their own sets of plans relating to their specific need. Like let's say a wet weather flow master plan for the whole city, and something like that. So often each department will have their own sets of plans that get produced. And so it's our challenge… And one of our goals is to integrate all those plans together.* (GTA06m)

> *[T]he disconnect between provincial agencies and what… Each one has their little kingdom. And the Ministry of Transportation does not care about the Ministry of Housing and whatever their policy for growth and accommodating growth and immigration. They don't care. Then a lot of times they don't cooperate. So sometimes we have to go to the political bodies. Or it used to be a provincial facilitator to help resolve issues amongst agencies. Which is time consuming… The mayor calls the ministry and says, "Hey, come on, guys, you guys need to smarten up. And we'd like a meeting with the concerned ministries. You guys got to get your acts together." So that's probably our biggest issue, is*

> *provincial agencies. Internally, we've got good cooperation amongst the various departments.* (GTA15m)

Participants from Edmonton and Vancouver discussed how planners and other government staff took ownership of the common vision and were constantly reinforcing it. The visions in these two city-regions also inherently reinforced collaboration. When planners from the GTA discussed common visions, the vision did not inherently reinforce collaboration. The common visions were more about planning concepts and timelines rather than creating a team-oriented governmental culture.

> *All of our computers have an automatic little generated screensaver which just popped up on my computer as I was sitting here, for that Vision 2057. So it's having that umbrella also that helps pull everything together.* (GTA24f)

> *Promoting and messaging. So again, something as simple as calling it our downtown, we're now calling it the city centre. Develop tag lines that all of a sudden, people see an area being talked about, plans underway. It gives you an opportunity to talk about what the new vision would be and then sort of reinforce that messaging about what your priority is for the community. So you want to create a downtown that's urban and active and has jobs and people living in it, and is walkable and bike-able. You have to keep messaging that.* (GTA22f)

Some planners also expressed frustration with how many departments and people they have to coordinate with. They find it difficult to collaborate with so many people:

> *Well, I think that's part of the challenge as well, is the intent of coordinating all the effort is important but if you go from having 5 people at the table to having 30 people at the table to ensure that each position is put forward, again that's a challenge* (GTA24f)

> *So even for the infrastructure, we have to collaborate with so many different agencies, so many different departments. That's why we do not generally have to conduct interdepartmental meetings. Within the city, we used to conduct this type of meeting but it's really difficult. So the collaboration under the different interdepartmental meetings is very difficult.* (GTA19m)

There are many other challenges planners experienced with achieving collaborative planning as a means to coordinating plans. Some planners expressed frustration at departments forgetting to include other relevant departments in discussions around new policies or projects (GTA17m). Another planner explained that departments do not want to be told what to do by other departments and are lacking the will to cooperate (GTA20m).

Planners' Desired Collaborative Practices

While many addressed the challenges to achieving interdepartmental collaboration, most ultimately felt that although it may be difficult, it leads to better policies and greater buy-in from all the departments.

The challenge with being more inclusive, it definitely takes longer to get there. It takes longer to get the buy-in from all the parties who have those competing views. Do you end up with a better plan at the end? I'd like to think that you do. But it definitely takes time then to get there and to get that buy-in from others. (GTA17m)

Leadership, Empowerment, and Will

Many of the planners from the GTA perceived senior leadership, administratively and politically, as crucial to the success of creating a culture of collaboration in order to achieve plan coordination. Staff placed responsibility of achieving collaboration on senior staff and Municipal Council:

Political leadership is also key. You know, if from a political standpoint it is a priority. Let's take a mayor. If it's a mayor's priority or council has articulated something is a priority, and there's leadership being shown in the particular area, obviously there's going to be great inter-divisional coordination. (GTA04f)

I would say the biggest one really is about leadership, I would think. And what I mean by that is that you really need, especially in a large organization like Toronto… It's not like you're in a smaller municipality or a smaller town where, you know, to get all the people in the room in a small town, it could be 3 people or 5 people. And between the 5 of them, as long as they can make a decision together, it's easy to get agreement or discussion between 5 people. But between 25 people is very difficult. And so it starts with leadership at all the different levels of those different groups. So those departments, I guess, if you want to call them that, they all need to have excellent leadership in order to work together well and communicate effectively together, and to coordinate that work. (GTA06m)

But I think more important than that is corporate leadership. So quite frankly if you don't have a strong, respected and committed CAO, you're not going to get any of this. And obviously there needs to be a connection to, in our case, the chairman's office and alignment there. We've got that in spades. We have… I can't speak enough about the support and direction we get from the very highest levels here in terms of not only allowing the coordination to happen but insisting the coordination happen, and doing whatever needs to be done to facilitate that… I guess it's a culture. The culture of, you know, cooperation, collaboration, getting together, sharing, it runs through the corporation and it starts at the senior management level. And if you don't have that, this interdepartmental policy and plan coordination would never happen. It starts culturally and it starts at the top. (GTA13m)

Planners in the GTA may have perceived leadership to be crucial to the success of collaboration, but some have experienced challenges with leadership. Some have experienced challenges to maintaining strong leadership that promotes collaboration and others believe their department heads take on all of the responsibility of encouraging collaborative practices while directors and other senior staff do not work to achieve collaboration:

Our past CAO, he had actual focus groups, I guess you could call it for lack of a better word, of different persons throughout the organization. All the different departments, we met on a monthly basis as a sounding board as to, you know, what the feelings are and what the needs are. So this was a way for our CAO to be more educated as to what's happening within the organization. I was actually part of that. But that didn't carry over into our current CAO because he has a different leadership personality. I think the more communication that you have with an organization, like anywhere, it definitely helps. (GTA01m)

No. I think the directors aren't quite as there as the department heads, unfortunately. Because they're so driven to deliver on their own mandate, it's hard to get them to see that bigger picture that senior management sees all the time. So it's not quite as… Although we're getting better, I think we are, it's… One of the things I felt coming from a different environment was that. That in other organizations I've worked in, there's the senior management coordination, all moving…and then the director level is on the same page, going in the same way, and there's give and take between directors and departments. I don't see that as much here. But the mandates are much bigger here too. (GTA27f)

A few planners expressed the view that planners need to be empowered in order to collaborate. It is important to make other departments feel valued in the policy creation process. If departments feel empowered to express their opinions and give feedback, they will take ownership over the plans and there will be a wider acceptance of the plans being created:

The second thing is allowing people who you're inviting into the process to feel a sense of ownership and being able to…make sure their voice is heard, not just recorded and filed away somewhere. So they need to know that what they say and what advice they're giving will make a difference. It may not always be adopted but it will make a difference. (GTA08m)

Planners cannot just be empowered to collaborate, however. They must also have the will and desire to collaborate. A planner from Markham explained that planners need a "willingness to meet and discuss and keep others up-to-date on what you're doing" (GTA12f). Many of those planners, however, also discussed how the will to collaborate is lacking due to individual personalities (especially from those in leadership positions) or from a culture of siloing or departments not wanting to work with other departments. This all makes it more difficult to achieve collaboration.

Even though your department has a mandate, you have to be willing to share your staff resources and make sure that your staff are available to assist with coordination of everything else. Hypothetically, if you have one senior leader who was so focused on their own mandate and said, "No, no, you can't work on that. You've got to be doing this," that would certainly impact the success of the coordination. (GTA23f)

So some of it is personalities actually. And particularly so sort of at the senior level, to what degree people feel they need to… Not just at the senior level but to what degree people feel they need to manage their own turf and have their own turf, and to what degree

they are willing to share the space in the sandbox kind of thing. Whether there's political support for interdepartmental plan and policy coordination. So you know, if council really wanted to know how all of these plans were working together and directed staff to let them know, we would do it. I think it also depends on, you know, the senior management's desire to do so. I mean as I say, there are lots of us that try stuff like what is on my wall but I haven't seen a lot of interest in the division I work in in figuring that out at a higher level. So in this particular division, I don't see leadership around that issue. So I think there has to be some kind of senior management… (GTA02f)

So I could see cases where someone is not aware of a plan or there are cases I've seen where folks don't want to see it as their jurisdiction and don't want to be told what to do by another section or department. So I think that's the main thing, is the willingness to cooperate, is the first thing. (GTA20m)

While the planners from the GTA discussed many collaborative practices that they use for achieving plan coordination, almost all of the planners also expressed frustration with trying to achieve collaboration and a lack of will to collaborate. Compared to the planners' perspectives from Vancouver and Edmonton, planners from the GTA demonstrate less of culture of collaboration. However, many of the planners demonstrated how collaborative practices are beginning to increase in the GTA and also expressed a desire to improve collaboration with hopes of better leadership that encourages a culture of collaboration.

Halifax

Halifax demonstrates a stark contrast with the culture of respectful relationships and enforcement of collaboration and consensus seen in Vancouver and Edmonton. Halifax planners reported the greatest frustration when it came to desire or efforts to achieve collaborative planning internally. While the participants explained that collaborative practices are lacking and discussed factors hindering the success of collaboration, most of the planners also expressed a desire to improve collaboration internally.

Some Collaborative Practices

Participants from Halifax did address some collaborative practices currently in use. Participants spoke about some minor organizational restructuring that has helped increase informal communication and thus the ability to use collaborative practices. Most of the planning sections were grouped under the leadership of one director. Some respondents believed interdepartmental coordination and inclusion of relevant departments in policy-creation was beginning to improve, but also expressed frustration with how long it took to work this way. Some explained that sharing information across departments is crucial to coordinating plans, even if it can be more time consuming:

I think, yes, you have to. As well as you can. I mean collaboration is the best way forward in my mind. I know it can be harder working with a lot of people and it can take longer but you usually get a better result at the end of the day. And there's so much knowledge in a

communal sort of sense. The knowledge of a large group is obviously greater than the knowledge of one person. So knowing how to tap into that is really important. (HRM05f)

Planners' Desired Collaborative Practices

Planners from Halifax reported few collaborative practices currently in use. Most strategies expressed in the data from Halifax planners are collaborative practices participants believed would help deal with their current challenges negatively affecting the coordination of plans. Many believed interdepartmental communication (formally and informally) needed to improve. When one participant was asked about challenges to coordinating multiple plans and policies, she explained that it is difficult and often not done well. She thought that interdepartmental communication needs to improve:

> *Just making sure everybody knows about them* [new policies]*, really. So you know… And that does happen. A report will go forward, and a department will say, "Oh my god, how come they're doing this when we have this plan that says we don't support those types of actions but here we are doing this?" So really internally, our internal communication is very…that can be a challenge… So making sure there's that cross communication is really important. And making sure that all of the plans that each department creates gets applied.* (HRM05f)

Many participants believed, however, that better informal communication across departments is needed on a regular basis. Some participants said that more opportunities to have face-to-face conversations or simply learning "how to just pick up the phone and call each other" (HRM11m) would improve collaboration. Participants who expressed a desire for informal communication believe it is lacking.

> *So I would hope that there would be continued sort of informal* [communication?]*. But I don't think there's a lot. Like the person that just left the position in planning, there wasn't a lot of informal interaction with them. I think there could be more and it could serve the municipality better if there was more of that.* (HRM14m)

Another challenge that participants identified as hindering collaboration with other departments was departmental siloing, where departments are focused on their own mandates and not willing to work with other departments as well as having general differences of opinions between departments. This makes it almost impossible to achieve consensus or even compromise. Many participants believed siloing is still rampant in Halifax. Siloing does not only exist across departments but across different levels of government and agencies working with government. Physical proximity between departments plays a role in siloing. The various departments are in different locations across the City, making it difficult to communicate and physically get to each other's offices.

> *Even that was difficult. So there's the silos, right. And the city has a long way to go breaking down silos between departments. But then also the community in which there are 3 levels of government and there are NGOs, and there are the hospitals, and there's the school board, and there's the Port, and there's Waterfront Development, and there's…*

> *Those are all silos too. And traditionally in Halifax, it's been a very guarded... There hasn't been a lot of horizontal trust and sharing. It's been sort of very siloed.* (HRM09m)

> *But the problem there is that the departments still tend to be in silos. It's not quite as bad as it was. For example, to try to get... Metro Transit, for example, are in another office way out in Burnside Industrial Park. And that physical distance makes a big difference. It's difficult to get there and so you tend to just not go.* (HRM11m)

Planners spoke with great frustration about trying to get consensus with other departments. Several planners attributed the problem to general differences of opinion as well as ways of thinking amongst departments only concerned about their individual mandates, rather than what is best for the Municipality:

> *I guess we're not always in synch, for example, with the engineering department. But they're less much of an issue, I think now. Halifax Water, our water utility, sometimes there's a difference of opinion. And also the CRS, which is Community Recreation Service, sometimes they want to put their recreation facilities, and we're kind of saying the priority should be regional centre. And sometimes they'll, even though they're supposed to serve the regional centre, because there's a piece of property that's much cheaper a kilometre away, they'll put it outside.* (HRM02m)

> *I often say half-jokingly that our job is to be a constructive nuisance in everybody else's job because we're generalists and they're specialists. So we're always annoying the engineers and the architects and the landscape architects and the finance people. You know, where their thinking is logical and linear, our thinking is lateral and interdisciplinary. Both are important. But you often get clashes not just between priorities but even between ways of thinking.* (HRM11m)

> *People come to the table with different expectations, different objectives, a particular position. Gaining consensus can be a real challenge. So you'll have some groups who are very strong advocates of a certain plan but that advocacy may not be shared by people within the same municipality in a different department. So what one person sees as priority may not be a priority for someone else. And so just even trying to understand priorities in order to effectively coordinate can be a challenge. And so coming up again with a process for getting consensus is one of those things that can be difficult and really challenging. And sometimes people just throw up their arms and give up in exasperation. Because you know what it's like. It's like herding cats sometimes. Trying to get people to agree on things, it can be difficult.* (HRM08m)

Planners from Halifax explained that the municipality can sometimes be a toxic environment to work in. Participants talked about rumors being spread about coworkers and that departments express jealousy and want control over their information and mandate. Some also spoke about a general trend of discouraging interdepartmental collaboration. Others spoke about a culture of "maleness" where those who can speak the loudest are more likely to get their way (HRM09m). These factors impact the daily working environment in the municipal government. This further hinders Halifax from having a culture of respectful relationships and a desire to collaborate

across departments.

> *I've worked with people who have reputations of being those people. I've only found 1 or 2 in the entire HRM who are like that. The majority of people I've met, and I've heard sometimes quite horrendous things about, by the time you sit down with them, those are just all conjecture and rumour. And the professional one-on-one, when there's an openness… If you bring an openness, again, and allowing yourself to… You explain to me what's your concerns and interests, and I'll explain what my concerns and interests are. If we can put ourselves in a really frank discussion and be open to collaboration as professional planner to professional planner, I find 8 times out of 10 that that results in efficiencies being looked for.* (HRM06m)

> *Every director has their priorities. They need to report success and accomplishment on their basket of objectives. And if an employee from another department is asking this department for information and help, well then that employee is being drawn away from helping that director meet their objectives. So it's sort of a jealously guarded, and oftentimes actively discouraged for that reason, horizontal sharing between departments. That's also toxic. That's a brutal, brutal thing, but I think also beginning to change… HRM needs to let go of the command and control mentality, like militaristic, top down, vertically aligned reporting structure, and foster instead horizontal sharing of information and resources across.* (HRM09m)

> *Yes. And there's, and I'll say this… How will I say this? There's a tradition of maleness in certain departments like transit and public works. And not a good tradition of maleness. It's like the loudest voice, the person who bangs the table first, who over-talks the other folks in the room, that's always the same departments. So that's a cultural, a corporate culture issue. Imagine if it was the people who were doing the enlightened work that were pounding the table and over-talking. That would be fun.* (HRM09m)

While Vancouver demonstrated strong inter-governmental collaboration efforts, HRM respondents indicated a disjointed inter-governmental relationship. Two interview participants were from the Province of Nova Scotia. One of those participants said he hesitates to force plan coordination on municipalities because the municipalities are usually unhappy with being told what to do by the Province.

> *[I]s it our role to force municipalities to coordinate plans or do they come at it voluntarily? Right? This is always a question that we play. So there's several approaches. Our approach always is first of all to offer something up as voluntary and say, well, here's a best practice and here's a guide on how to do it, and here's the benefit and here's a template. But you know, as they say, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink. All the best made efforts that you can make will sometimes still not influence or change behaviour, it doesn't matter how hard you try... Our experience is that municipalities don't like to have things forced on them no matter what. So we take a softer approach.* (HRM08m)

Planners from the municipality and other external agencies expressed a general sentiment of

wanting the Province to give municipalities more autonomy to do their work and not micromanage.

> *I think as a general statement, I think anything that the province can do to step back from the kind of...the role of parent to the cities and to the municipalities, to get their fingers out of the municipal works. There's an expression about how to be a good board member at a corporation or an organization. And that is to be a good board member, it's about not micromanaging, right. Nose in, fingers out. Nose in. Like you have to pay attention but don't mess, don't interfere with the workings of the staff, let's say. So I think in NS, there's been a tradition of nose in, fingers in, feet in, elbows in. [laughs] You know, into the municipal business.* (HRM09m)

One planner even expressed frustration with the Province, as he believed the Province sometimes plans without thinking about the municipal mandate. That negatively affects municipal planning goals.

> *[W]e also have to relate to the province and to the federal government. And the province is the agency that plans the freeways, most of them. And the province is not bound by our plans. We are bound by the province but the province isn't bound by us. And as a result of that, freeways are sometimes planned and built which could have profound regional growth implications in terms of where development is going to happen. But we don't have control over those decisions.* (HRM11m)

Leadership, Empowerment, and Will

Many participants spoke about administrative and political leadership needing to embody, support, and encourage collaborative practices in order to obtain better plan coordination. Collaboration amongst leaders is also needed. Many participants believed a common vision amongst the City and Councillors would assist in achieving better collaboration and plan coordination. Leaders also need to enforce and instill collaboration in their workplace culture, but, as many participants stressed, leaders need to give staff more autonomy to take initiative to collaborate with other departments and levels throughout the hierarchy in municipal government.

As in Vancouver and Edmonton, many Halifax participants saw having a common vision as a potentially helpful initiative to obtaining more interdepartmental and inter-governmental collaboration. However, participants sometimes noted that, although a common vision would help, it is too difficult to achieve in Halifax because of the form of representation in local government. Councillors are elected to represent one district within the municipality instead of an at-large system, where all Councillors represent the whole municipality. Participants expressed frustration with how political leaders are not willing to work together under one common vision due to their mandates to represent what they think are unique communities that should not be tied under plans that represent other communities with different needs and wants:

> *When the politicians are being elected from their community, of course, they usually have a strong sense of community too and a strong sense of the uniqueness of the community. That uniqueness isn't always accurate but they believe it and the community believes*

there's uniqueness. I mean you can go to Ecum Secum, Sheet Harbour, Ketch Harbour, and you're seeing communities that are very, very similar and really do not need different requirements. But the communities have always wanted different requirements for their communities. Politically I don't think there's the support there to homogenize the bylaw. (HRM13m)

In the staff's mind, there is a priority. But in terms of councillors and the public, not so much. It varies. And it tends to be each councillor wants their area done faster… I think the priority should be the regional centre, then the suburban, then the rural areas, and kind of plan out like that. And I think that most staff and the direction of the leadership of the municipality, that's where they think it should happen. But then when you talk to councillors, it's always I represent Beaverbank, and I think Beaverbank should be a priority. I think all the growth should happen in Beaverbank. (HRM02m)

While some expressed the opinion that their managers have done well to encourage interdepartmental coordination, more expressed a lack of administrative leadership that embodies and encourages collaboration. The dataset shows planners perceived little administrative collaboration at the high level, with little effort to get together in a formal setting or share information. When asked what factors influence the success of interdepartmental coordination, one participant stated:

A lot of times it's personality-driven. It depends on who heads the department… I mean sometimes people have good intentions but I think unless you create a mechanism that is a policy and priority committee or something that gets people in higher management together on a regular basis to kind of make sure that the effort doesn't slip, that the work continues, and is carried out to its end, I think then the chance of success would be reduced. (HRM02m)

Another participant addressed how managers are not using interdepartmental communication, as there have been times where managers had no idea a particular project or policy was going on that could be affecting their department:

How come I didn't know this other project was going on? I don't really have a… Again, I feel that that's something that management really needs to kind of work on improving their dialogue. I know that the directors all meet, and that's part of what's supposed to happen at the directors' meetings, is to make sure that everyone is kind of working together. (HRM05f)

One participant expressed frustration because some of their managers do not share information or communicate with staff. This participant wished managers would have regular meetings with staff to communicate and share information:

[T]here's a lack of communication between the managers and staff. In our own business unit, I think there's a lot of lack of communication between the managers and staff. But that may be just us specific to HRM, right. I can't say generally. But I think there's been… For whatever reason, there's been… I think staff planners, you're not quite sure… The manager

is not communicating with the staff, I guess. So communication is a problem. So that would be a barrier or a challenge for sure. Even amongst staff. Like even amongst planners, there are not regular meetings. Which is very frustrating. So there would be, depending on who your supervisor is, the supervisor may want to have regular meetings. And then you've got another supervisor, and that person doesn't want regular meetings. So it's very… It's inconsistent. (HRM03f)

In order to use collaborative practices in the workplace, staff must be empowered to do so. Some participants expressed a lack of empowerment from managers to take initiative and have horizontal and vertical communication with other departments and other levels of government, although they believed it would be helpful to achieving coordination. One participant expressed fear of getting reprimanded for communicating with other departments or with other levels of government. He identified a culture of managers discouraging interdepartmental communication or vertical communication with those above a staff person's level.

I think communication is really important between departments. It's not always easy to do in a formal way. We have sort of developed a sort of silo mentality here where it's not always seen favourably to be communicating across departments. I think the management prefer that be done sort of through them rather than on a staff basis. I guess they want to avoid sort of the tail wagging the dog scenario as much as possible. They want decisions to come from the top down as much as possible. Preferably from regional council right down through the administration or from the CAO down through. And using the horizontal communication creates a culture where we begin to take the initiative. (HRM14m)

In order to achieve coordination, individuals need to have the will to collaborate with other departments, levels of government, and external agencies. Some participants believed that even if other departments were willing to collaborate, structural forces negatively affect how empowered they are to collaborate because they are dealing with tight timelines and few resources to do work outside of their own projects and mandates.

It can be a challenge when you're leading a project and you're in one department, and you need resources and people to come to the table from other departments because it's not their project, and they have all different kinds of things that they're working on. So they're coming kind of as a favour, as a courtesy. But it's not a priority for them, right. So sometimes getting information out of people can be a struggle because, you know, they have their own things that they're working on. (HRM05f)

St John's

Value of Planning and Coordinating Plans

Planners from St. John's region reported only some collaborative practices that they use regularly. These included some sharing of data and information, interdepartmental teams and committees, an interdepartmental referral process for developments and policies affecting Crown Land, and interdepartmental communication. However, compared to the other city-regions across

Canada, these practices were not discussed often, and if they were discussed, it was often in the context of those practices lacking or not always being useful. The problem may stem from municipalities having few staff and few resources and, as some planners explained, a general lack of value for planning. Many planners expressed frustration about being left out of projects or for only being considered when projects do not succeed:

> *It seems to me that there's a reliance totally on the planner or Planning department to come up with all of the answers. And that's not what planning is all about. It's a matter of an interdisciplinary approach by a group of departments that have knowledge about what their areas of expertise are to develop a plan. And we're not quite there yet, at least in my experience – in all the years I've been in municipal government in Newfoundland it's always been that way. I always find that's a real problem. And that's a fact that it's always the Planning department that 'didn't do enough open space' or 'the road's not big enough', 'Oh, it's the Planning department!' 'Well, guys, you're the engineers. You should have helped me with that.'* (SJ04m)

> *When is our park being built? Why is this commercial piece of property in this specific location as opposed to the central area of the subdivision?" Couldn't tell you because planning hasn't seen it. So that's kind of one of the issues that has been occurring and probably is not going to be fixed by this new structure unfortunately. But again that stems back to, I think, how planning in general is viewed within the city. It's kind of depressing.* (SJ12f)

Respondents often explained that other departments were not concerned with coordinating plans and did not even see the importance of doing so; coordination fell solely on the planning departments:

> *One thing I would say, and I'm not sure if [SJ04m] finds this, but because of the general role that the planning departments take on, I find that the coordination of these things generally falls to us and the importance of it is usually, I guess, both monitored by us and tried to be policed by us. Because often times I find the other departments inside our own town, they know that there are things there, but it's not on top of their burner. Same with Council. If something's been adopted and a new Council comes in, they might say "well that's not really what we wanted to do". The plans are still there, the plan's adopted, so it will fall to the planning department to govern that.* (SJ03m)

One Collaborative Practice

The only collaborative effort that comes up several times in the data set from St. John's is the provincial Interdepartmental Land Use Committee (ILUC). According to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2016), the ILUC began in 1983 as a directive from the Provincial Cabinet. The committee includes representatives from all of the provincial departments. This would allow any legislation, policy, or plan affecting Crown Lands or public lands to be shared with representatives from each department, so they could be aware of the project, give feedback, and work together to come to a compromise across the departments on what should be done with the land. If the committee could not reach a compromise, the Minister of Government Services

or the Provincial Cabinet would make the final decision. The ILUC is a collaborative practice working towards coordinated planning. As one participant stated, it gives departments a chance to voice where plans may conflict:

> *Like I said, it's to ensure that what Land Branch may propose is referred to everyone else so that we don't start a project for cottage development and find out afterwards that it's within a designated forestry area. So it's a fairly simple example there but nevertheless, that's the kind of thing that it looks out for, to make sure.* (SJ08m)

A few participants spoke about the ILUC as being a useful and simple practice:

> *And this is something as I said that's been in place for 30 years and it's worked really well… It was done as a result of a cabinet directive. But before that, applications would come in to Crown Lands but it was hit and miss as to what you were…who would comment on them or what departments would see. But when this committee was set up, it was done in such a way that there's an automatic referral procedure.* (SJ06m)

However, many participants also addressed the ILUC's shortcomings. Some reported annoyance with how long the referral process takes, which then frustrates developers who are trying to go ahead with their projects.

> *In our case, when you're dealing with a Crown lands application, nothing happens until all agencies and departments have replied with either a) here's why we don't want it approved or b) we could see it approved but here are the conditions we want to see attached to the approval. And unfortunately sometimes it takes longer to get all that, you know, because you're dealing with multiple agencies, multiple departments. You know, the answer's got to come back. People get frustrated because their application has been delayed. They'll blame it on us.* (SJ06m)

Another participant (SJ02m) explained how the ILUC only encourages collaborative and coordinated efforts in one aspect of planning: when plans impact Crown or public lands. The committee is not used to coordinate and give departments opportunities for input on municipal plans and projects. However, this participant explained a process similar to the ILUC would be useful for municipal planning, but then thought municipalities would not welcome that process, as it would add time to planning.

Barriers to Collaboration

A common theme from planners in the St. John's region is that collaboration is lacking when it comes to sharing information and data. Some planners believed St John's does not have a culture of sharing information. Planners explained that unless they are aware of current projects, they often do not know what is taking place.

> *With regards to information being shared, unless you know what you're looking for when you go to talk to someone else, there's nothing volunteered. There's nothing coming out saying here's a new policy from whatever government department regarding whatever.*

> *They just put it in place and have it. We'll end up with, like I said, an application or a proposal that we're doing, and all of a sudden, okay, when did this change? "Last year." Okay, that's great, we didn't know.* (SJ06m)

Some participants even reported that some departments and levels of government do not want to share information. Some said this may be because departments are wary of giving away their control of what the information is used for and how much power the department can maintain generally.

> *I have heard people say, well, you know, we can't get any data, they won't tell us anything. But that's an organizational thing, right. It depends on who's running it and who understands. But information is power, right. Information is always power. So there always is tendency, if you've got information, to keep it close to your chest and not share because people have to come to you for information.* (SJ01f)

> *And in some cases there are no policies on things. Or the department, you try to create a policy and, for instance with them, they're not so forthcoming with information, I guess, a lot of times. So you get into that challenge of working between, I guess, regional cooperation… You have the same issues with provincial departments and you have the same issues with other municipal governments, and even internally. They set their boundaries of this is what I look after, and there tends to be resistance in some cases of sharing information because it's almost like "If I send you this document I am giving you information and then it's out of my control because you have it." So there is nothing to say once you have this information you're going to come back to me and ask me for my thoughts on it anymore. And it seems like if people share information then they are almost giving up control over the situation.* (SJ12f)

Reaching compromises across departments, provincially and municipally, on a general basis also proved a challenge to planners in the St. John's region. One participant (SJ02m) explained he experienced failed policy-creation processes because those involved "couldn't get their way" and went home. He believed this happens so often in St. John's because there is no good decision-making model. Another participant (SJ01f) relayed her experience working in the provincial government, where it took two and a-half years to create a plan because departments and players within departments could not come to a compromise. The departments ultimately gave a Deputy Minister the power to make a decision because they just wanted a decision to be made. As the participant stated, "sometimes a bad decision is better than no decision." This suggests a lack of will to compromise and work together, at the expense of the Province and its citizens.

Frustration with departmental siloing and an attitude of being "stuck in their ways" was a comment sentiment. One participant (SJ04m) expressed irritation with a particular department, who, as he reported, "wants to control everything." He explained how that is problematic, especially for coordinating plans. One participant explained how he is not informed about meetings for projects they have worked on and suggested there is a general culture of siloing in St. John's and with the Province:

> *There's meetings that go with other municipalities like trail ways that connect St. John's with other surrounding municipalities that I'm working on the file but they meet with other municipalities but I'm not invited too. And then they will… My powers that be will say, "I want an update." I'll start calling around to consultants to try to get to know where everything is, and I'll find out that they met last month that I wasn't invited to. So there's a disconnect between who sits on one side of the hall and who sits on the other, let alone other municipalities. The province, we have virtually no contact with them. We do their song and dance in terms of approving memos and whatnot. You know, we write them cover letters and get our municipal plan amendments and zoning amendments done according to their specifications. And we'll get a letter in the mail saying that everything is approved. So it's very rare that we have ongoing communication with the province. So that's a huge issue. Silos. Everyone is in silos.* (SJ07m)

Planners from Vancouver and Edmonton made it clear that interdepartmental meetings and regular communication were cultural norms for the city-regions. Although planners from St. John's noted that is lacking, some do not seem concerned by it. When a provincial planner was asked if she has meetings with the municipalities and if the Province works closely with the municipalities, she (SJ09f) stated, "No, no… Well, they'll send in their plan to us – a hard copy and electric copy. But we don't actually sit with them to go over those processes." Another participant (SJ06m) explained that government employees in St. John's are more likely to individually ask for opinions from contacts that they have made over the years and that formal meetings are a rare occurrence.

Planners' Desired Collaborative Practices

Planners from St. John's and the Province reported lacking collaborative practices. However, some of the planners expressed desire for more collaborative practices and thought it would be helpful to coordinating plans and to the general work environment. One participant (SJ01f) explained that departments need further education on the importance of planning and coordinating plans. She thought professional development could be used as an opportunity to do this. When talking about how to break down silos between engineering and planning, she noted that learning about each other's ways of working, while it may be out of a department's comfort zone, is necessary to breaking down silos. She then stated how beneficial it is for departments to take part and be involved in each other's work, as it allows them "to see how their input can shape a plan that helps them achieve their own objectives."

Two participants expressed frustration with how planners themselves and political representatives have a hard time sticking with the overarching vision for the region. One planner explained that planners change the vision any time a project or plan does not work, which, according to him, "has the effect of watering down the whole planning process" (SJ02m). Another planner thought the St. John's city-region has a clear vision, but the Province will not coordinate or get on board with the vision, so the implementation of the vision never occurs (SJ05f).

Leadership, Empowerment, and Will

As in Halifax, several participants in St. John's stated they think good leadership from managers and Council is needed to encourage and reinforce interdepartmental collaboration. One participant (SJ04m) argued that the politicians do not care about coordination or collaboration; they just want the final product. Another participant (SJ07m) said the governmental culture in St. John's is "top heavy" and hierarchical. One participant (SJ04m) perceived a need for the government to create a structure that "forces interdepartmental coordination." One participant had experience with a leader who encouraged collaboration amongst the several communities within the St. John's region in order to complete a new regional plan that had been started before but never completed:

> *Last fall our minister of Municipal Affairs said, okay, this is something we need to get back on the table. So he brought all the mayors of those 15 municipalities together and reinvigorated the idea to develop a new regional plan for the northeast Avalon. A big part of that process was to make sure that we had a good decision-making process. So we've actually just now started that process a little while ago. The committee which is comprised of the minister of Municipal Affairs, along with the 15 mayors, along with their necessary support staff, are now working on development of an RFP to actually engage a planning consultant to do a new regional plan.* (SJ02m)

Planners from St. John's rarely spoke about feeling empowered to collaborate with other departments and other levels of government. The planners from the area suggested a culture of collaboration is lacking. According to the participants, the only department that sees a need to coordinate plans is the planning department and the other departments do not seem concerned; therefore, they tend to not include collaboration as part of their everyday work. As in Halifax, the general work environment is not supportive of teamwork. Planners explained several times that some departments are not trusting of sharing information with other departments and want to maintain their power by being the only department to hold certain information. Without trusting relationships, it will be difficult for St. John's to work collaboratively to achieve plan coordination. Lastly, unlike Vancouver, the relationship between the City of St. John's and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador does not seem to be closely knit. Planners reported a disconnect between objectives from the City and objectives from the Province, making it difficult to stick to one vision and implement any plans. This disconnect may exist because, as city planners explained, they get little face-to-face contact with planners from the Province. All of these barriers to collaboration in the St. John's city-region may exist because of what many planners perceived as a general lack of value for planning, making it impossible for planners to take initiative to collaborate with other departments and levels of government.

DISCUSSIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

How the size of a community affects its ability to coordinate plans and work collaboratively was a trend that arose in the data. Many participants claimed that because they work in a larger community or their level of government has so many staff, it is more difficult to collaborate with

other staff than in smaller communities with fewer staff and departments. As one participant from the GTA claimed:

> *...in a large organization like Toronto... It's not like you're in a smaller municipality or a smaller town where, you know, to get all the people in the room in a small town, it could be 3 people or 5 people. And between the 5 of them, as long as they can make a decision together, it's easy to get agreement or discussion between 5 people. But between 25 people is very difficult. And so it starts with leadership at all the different levels of those different groups. So those departments, I guess, if you want to call them that, they all need to have excellent leadership in order to work together well and communicate effectively together, and to coordinate that work.* (GTA06m)

By contrast, most participants from the smaller city-regions reported that because they are so small, their communities lack the resources (financial and time) to be able to collaborate. As a planner from Pickering explained:

> *Planning profession is a multidisciplinary aspect. Sometimes we as an engineer or as an architect or an urban designer, they like sometimes the expertise of the social planner or economic planner or the infrastructure expertise. So basically it is team work. And that is actually the thing, the professional side lacking within the small government like Pickering. We are a very small organization. We do not have the expertise of various social planners or even the infrastructure planners or transportation planners. Planning is really dependent on so many different expertise... And that is lacking. Local government, we have 3 or 4 planners within the planning department.* (GTA19m)

A planner from Halifax explained that resources are too tight for most planners to get beyond their top priority tasks, like getting through applications; therefore, they do not have the time to work on coordinating plans:

> *And so here in Halifax, we still, as an example, are trying to balance our budget, and I would argue staff capacity, make it very difficult for them to even have that moment. They're having difficulty catching their breath just to get the 15 to 20 files that they're processing cared for in an 11-month time.* (HRM06m)

While some city-regions demonstrate a lack of resources to work on coordinating plans and improving collaboration internally, other city-regions demonstrate a lack of will to spend resources on those practices, as one participant from Markham explained: *I know in the case of Markham we have never been fully staffed when you look at our annual operational requirements.* (GTA08m)

Participants from Vancouver spoke confidently and proudly about their efforts to collaborate. Participants from Edmonton, while proud of their new efforts to collaborate, spoke about their new practices as being strange or atypical. Perhaps participants from Vancouver spoke about collaboration more confidently because they have such a long history with using these practices. Edmonton's light-hearted and mocking tone when speaking about their collaborative practices may demonstrate that most governments perceive collaboration to be strange and abnormal.

Planners from Edmonton jokingly called their staff (including themselves) a "hippie commune" and a "Kumbaya group":

> *There's always competing interests. Again, I think in general as a team, the departments that we have to deal with as planners, we have a good understanding of where everyone is coming from. And so, you know, we might not always agree 100% but we need to move forward and get things done. So I don't know, it sounds like I'm just describing this big hippie commune and everyone gets along. [laughs] But you know, yeah, we negotiate and work together.* (EDM08f)

> *So the cultural ambassadors, we get some training and then it's really about just like taking the principles out into the workforce and engaging our colleagues more directly. And I feel like I have the Kumbaya group. Like everyone in my section has very much bought into this. You know, it's a very accepted thing.* (EDM10f)

LESSONS: GOOD PRACTICES AND STRUCTURAL ARRANGEMENTS

Collaboration in the forms of sharing information and horizontal and vertical communication is lacking because of what participants explained as lack of will to give up control and fear of overstepping boundaries resulting in reprimanding of staff. For the most part, participants from the GTA, Halifax, and St. John's demonstrated frustration surrounding a lack of collaboration, but many expressed beliefs that improving collaboration would improve their ability to coordinate plans and the general work environment.

Planners interviewed suggested that collaborative practices are the most widely used or desired practices for achieving plan coordination. As Healey (2006) argued, when collaborative practices are used in policy creation or projects, stakeholders believe the policies are more legitimate and also feel a sense of ownership over them. Planners from Vancouver and Edmonton reported a sense of ownership over their policies and work generally. Edmonton and Vancouver reported the most common use of collaborative practices and also the fewest challenges to coordinating plans and collaborating generally.

Planners from across Canada shared experiences with using collaborative practices as a means to achieving coordinated plans that were in line with the academic literature on practices for coordinating plans and creating collaborative environments. Consensus was a prominent concept in the literature and proved to be difficult for some city-regions to achieve. Vancouver represented the highest use of consensus building in policy-making, where the region got one hundred per cent agreement from municipalities on regional plans. The GTA, Halifax, and St. John's were frustrated by the prospect of achieving consensus or even compromise. Many of the planners from those city-regions explained that if they could not reach an interdepartmental consensus or compromise, they would have their manager or minister decide for them.

The academic literature repeatedly described the importance of trusting and informal relationships and the will of staff to work together and respect each other's backgrounds. Planners from Halifax and St. John's demonstrated a lack of trusting relationships. Departments were hesitant to share information because they did not want to lose power or control over how

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information is used. There was also a lack of will to collaborate in St. John's, Halifax, and the GTA, where planners grudgingly attended meetings, felt there were too many to attend, or did not even have meetings at all.

Empowerment was another trend rising from the literature and interview data that seemed to affect the success of collaboration. Edmonton's cultural ambassador program exemplified giving staff the power to act as leaders promoting teamwork and instilling a culture of collaboration across the government. Leadership positively and negatively affected planners' empowerment to collaborate. In Halifax, management discouraged staff from communicating across departments or beyond their mandate, as they would rather do it themselves. This may be why planners from Halifax reported departmental siloing to be a major problem.

Healey (2006) downplayed the importance of structural forces on planners' ability to work towards collaboration, but this dataset from across Canada suggests that there must be structural forces that encourage collaboration, such as leaders creating that culture. Leaders in Edmonton and Vancouver created a workplace culture where collaboration could flourish and embodied collaboration in their own work. Planners from Halifax and St. John's believed they did not have the structure needed to collaborate, with managers discouraging horizontal and vertical communication, a culture of siloing, and in the case of St. John's, few face-to-face interdepartmental or inter-governmental meetings.

City-regions having a common vision arose in the data as a factor that has a positive impact on the extent of collaboration taking place. Vancouver and Edmonton both had strong common visions that staff and Council agreed with and were determined to work towards. The GTA had some communities within it that had strong common visions, but no planners mentioned a strong region-wide common vision. Halifax and St. John's struggled to achieve a common vision. Planners from Halifax believed the political representation made it difficult to have one region-wide vision because Councillors may prioritize their local communities' mandates over the mandate of the whole city. The Halifax Regional Municipality includes distant rural communities that have differing needs than the metropolitan area of Halifax. Planners from St. John's reported that Council would often change the region-wide vision if it was not working as expected, making it difficult for staff to have one overarching goal to work towards. As Vancouver and Edmonton demonstrate, having a Council and administrative leaders that embody and support collaboration empowers staff to collaborate. Healey (2006) mentioned that common goals were an important part of collaborating, and this seems to hold true in the Canadian context. Without a common goal, staff may be less likely to work together and more likely to silo and focus on departments' individual mandates.

Ultimately, coordinating plans is not something that can be done by systematically going through each plan to make sure they align. Very few planners suggested that as a way to achieve plan coordination. The majority believed coordination came down to the people having the will and empowerment to collaborate from the outset to avoid conflicting and overlapping plans. As the planners from Edmonton and Vancouver demonstrated, however, building a collaborative culture takes time and commitment. Even if building consensus, reaching compromise, attending other departments' meetings, and giving input on other departments' projects and policies may seem

time consuming and costly, planners see it as leading to a better work environment and plans and projects that are well coordinated and agreed upon.

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