

Enhancing First Nation and Métis Involvement in Land Use Planning in Southern Ontario

The Case of Ontario's Greenbelt Plan Review

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Executive Summary

In light of the direction set by the 2014 Ontario Provincial Policy Statement, the historical lack of involvement of First Nations and Métis peoples in planning decisions in Ontario is a major topic of discussion from both an Indigenous rights and environmental justice perspective. The lands governed by the Greenbelt Plan are both culturally and environmentally significant and range from rural to urban, giving the province an opportunity to set wide precedents for the planning profession with this plan. Using the review of the Greenbelt Plan through the Coordinated Land Use Planning Review as a case study, this research acts to draw a connection between the Crown efforts in relationship building and reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples of Canada and the role of local planning authorities. Though the body of academic work exploring this topic is growing, there remains a lack of case studies that hold government bodies accountable and that adequately incorporate the perspectives of a diversity of players, most importantly those of the affected Indigenous groups. This work aims to contribute to filling that void.

The purpose of this research is to critically analyze the 2005 and 2017 versions of the Ontario Greenbelt Plan in order to (1) determine the extent to which First Nations and Métis peoples are included in the land use planning processes and (2) determine whether improvements are evident in the updated version. This forward-looking process ultimately answers the question: what are the next steps to better involve First Nations and Métis peoples in land use planning in Southern Ontario? Thus, the analysis culminates in the development of clear, specific, and targeted recommendations for three audiences: those responsible for the next Coordinated Land Use Planning Review, the Government of Ontario, and the Municipalities of Ontario, which include:

- Coordinated Land Use Planning Review:
 - 1) Ensure First Nation and Métis representatives are included on the Advisory Panel.
 - 2) Include First Nations and Métis communities more thoroughly and strongly in the policies of the provincial land use plans.
- Province of Ontario:
 - 1) Provide more guidance for municipalities on engaging with First Nations and Métis communities.
 - 2) Facilitate and mandate a training program for provincial and municipal staff.
- Municipalities of Ontario
 - 1) Recognize and use First Nation and Métis consultation policies.
 - 2) Develop ongoing relationships with First Nations and Métis communities.

These recommendations, if embraced, will help to improve the involvement of First Nations and Métis communities in land use planning processes and, ultimately, strengthen the Indigenous-governmental relationships that exist or are being established in Ontario. All of the conclusions and recommendations that have been formed from this work were done so in collaboration with both First Nation, Métis, and non-Indigenous representatives who are involved with or impacted by the Greenbelt Plan.