

# Regional Strategic Environmental Assessment: Opportunities and Challenges in northern Ontario and across Canada

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# Emergence of Regional Assessments

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## Constraints of project assessment

- Case-by-case
- wrong context (and process) to assess regional impacts

## Cumulative effects

- appropriate scale and context
- coordinated efforts with land use, policy and planning processes

## Added confidence for decision makers

- whether and in what form effects are acceptable in a region
- setting policy and priorities

## Recognition of limits

- acceptability or maximum tolerable change
- change detection and target setting

## Clearer context for decisions

- context in which development actions can be properly assessed
- setting conditions for development

## Guidance for proponents

- common ToRs, indicators and BMPs for a region
- compliance and process efficiencies



# Nested between policy and project

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# Key questions

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- What are the values and objectives for the region?
- What are the key drivers in the region – past and into the future?
- What are the strategic options and opportunities for the region – including desired conditions?
- What institutional or policy transformations are needed to realize a more sustainable future?



# Methodological Approaches

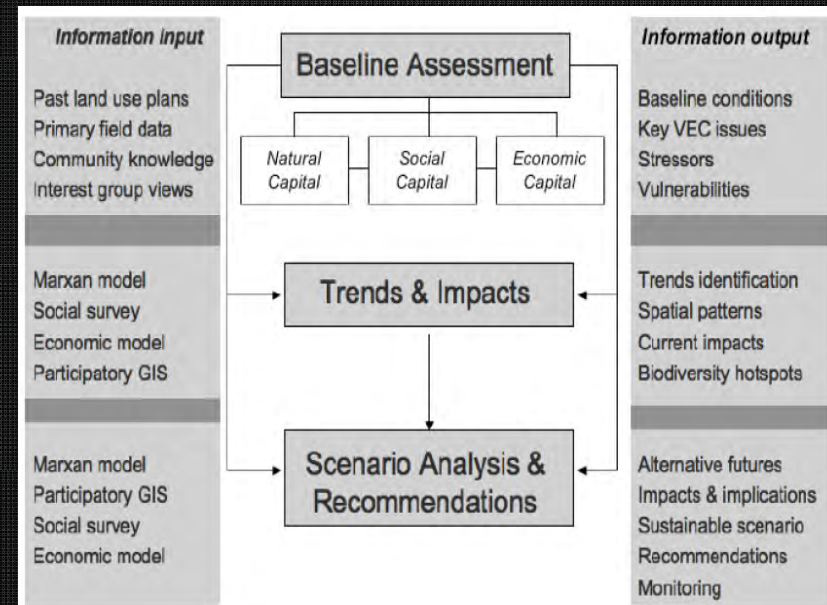
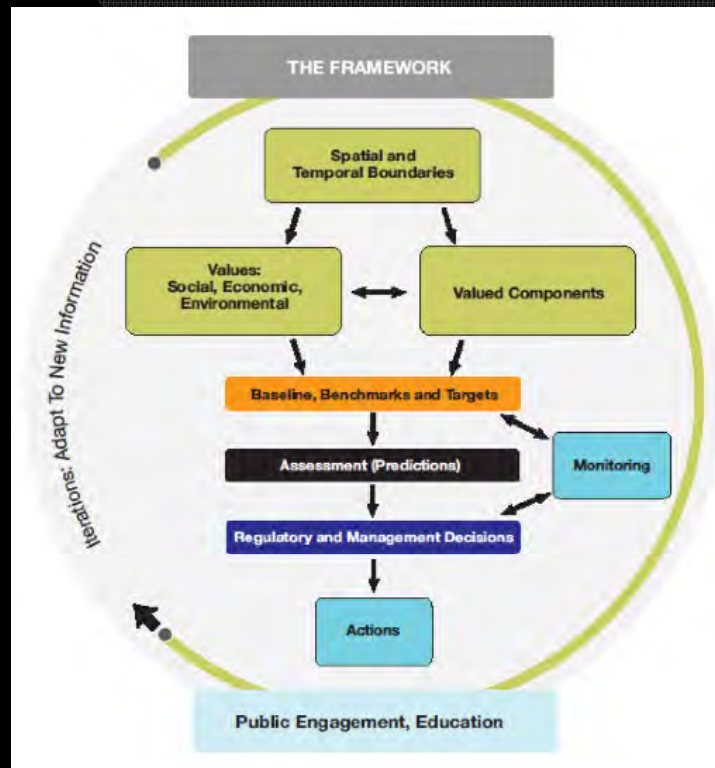
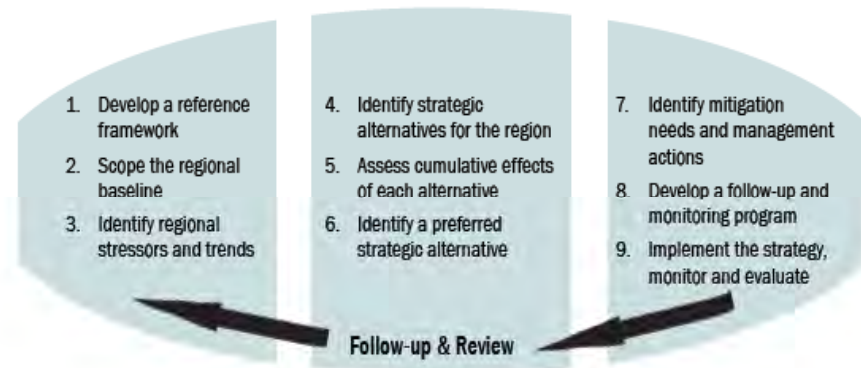


Figure 7. Stages of SEA (from Gunn and Noble 2009, CCME 2009).





# How have they been used?

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- *Assessment Tool*
  - *Assessing the potential effects of cumulative effects, alternative strategic initiatives, and plans or development programs for a particular region*
- *Planning and Visioning Tool*
  - *Identifying where we want to go, the implications of implications of different options, and the governance, policies or other instruments needed to support that vision*
- *Strategic Decision Support Tool*
  - *Facilitating decisions about what development or other actions is appropriate (or needed) when and where and under what conditions*



# Lessons learned

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- More data and more maps  $\neq$  better assessment, management or decisions
- Institutional arrangements and governance (not methods and data) are the primary obstacles/challenges to regional approaches
- Regional assessment is about the future(s) and uncertainties
- Need for clarity in objectives, expectations and understanding?
- Timing and tiering are key to influence
- Collaborative approaches are essential
- Clear mandate and capacity to implement and sustain over the long-term



# Ontario's Far North



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# World class ecosystems





# Stronghold for species





# A homeland





# Valued ecosystem services



## Provisioning Services

- Food
- Fresh water
- Fuel and fibre
- Medicines

## Regulating Services

- Air quality
- Carbon sequestration and storage
- Water treatment
- Erosion control
- Pollination

## Cultural Services

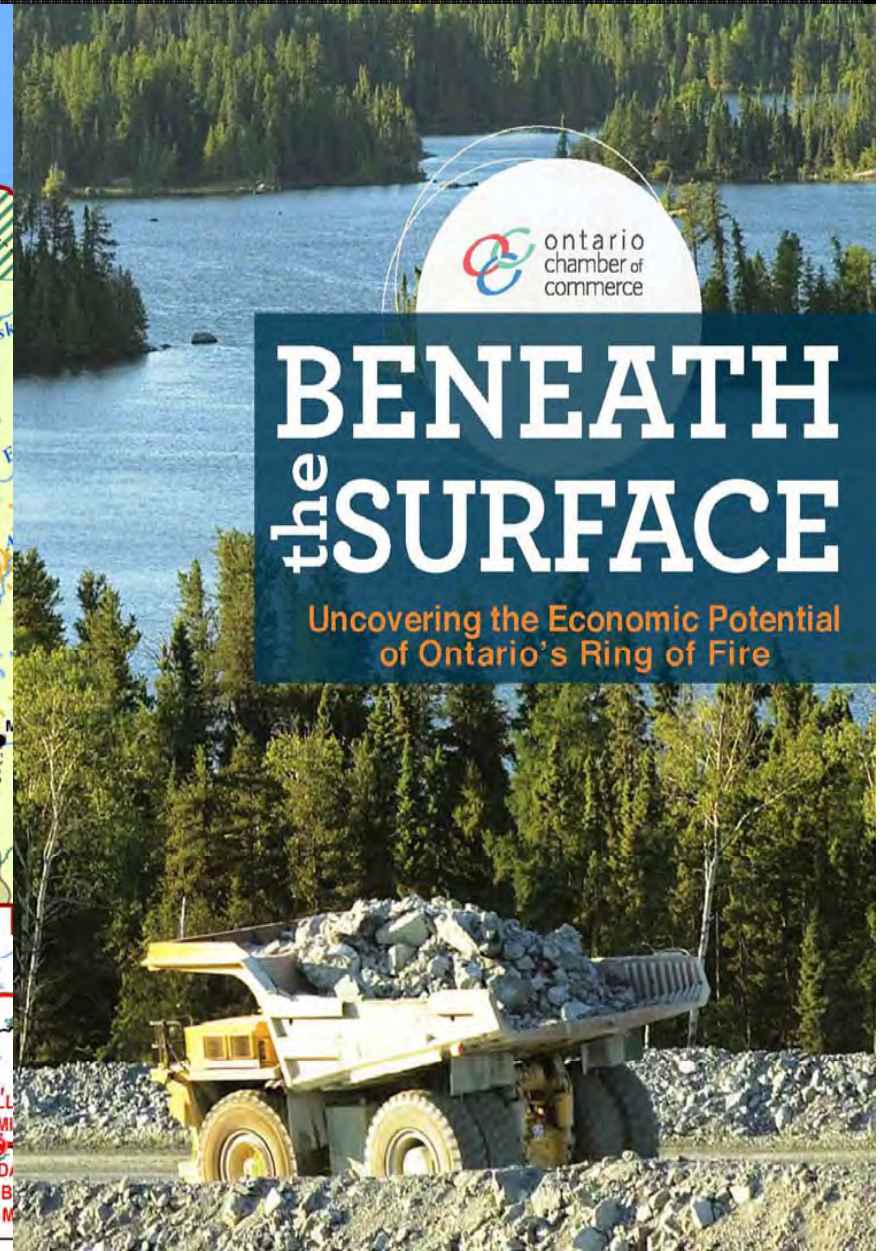
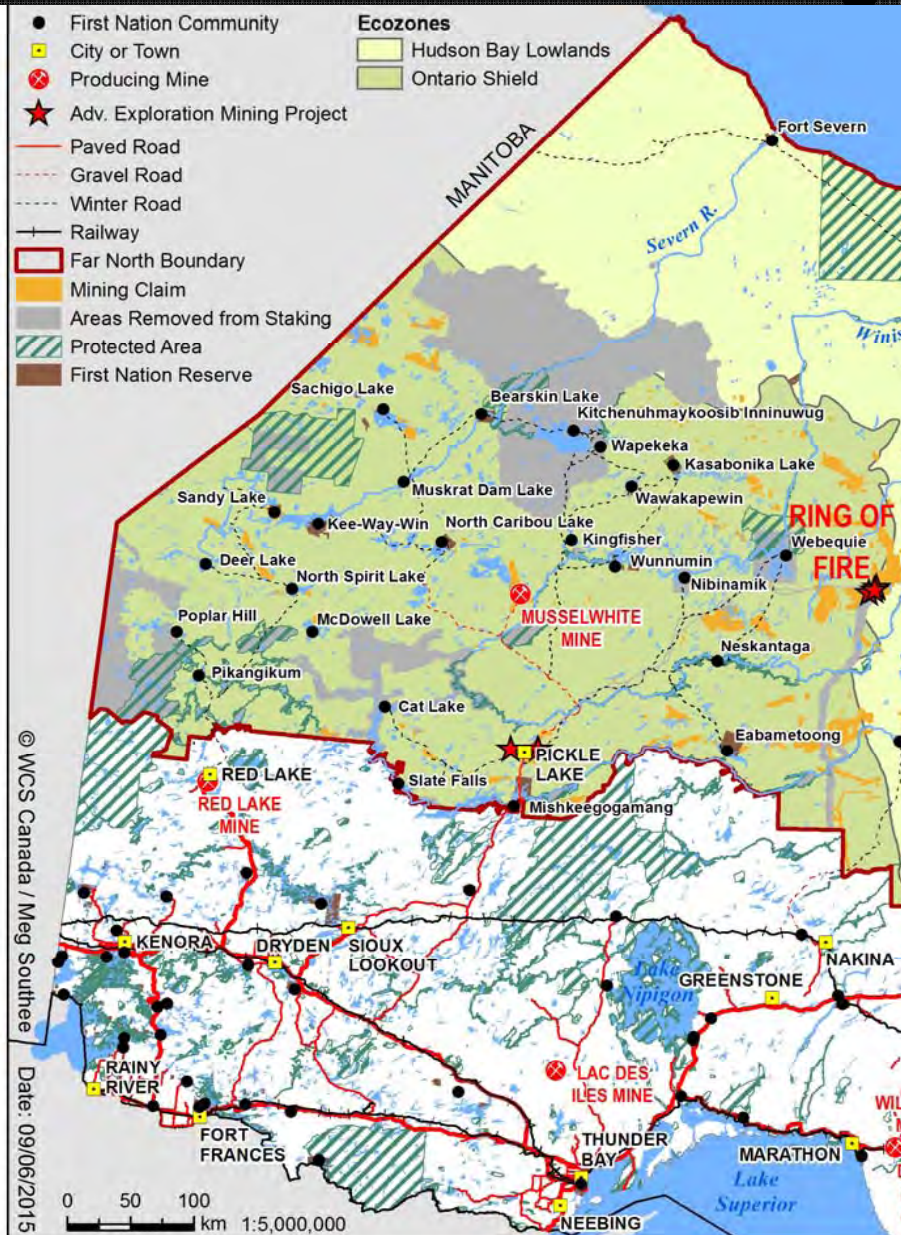
- Language, traditional knowledge, and land use
- Spirituality and sacred sites
- Tourism and recreation

## Supporting Services

- Habitats for species
- Maintenance of genetic diversity



# A changing landscape





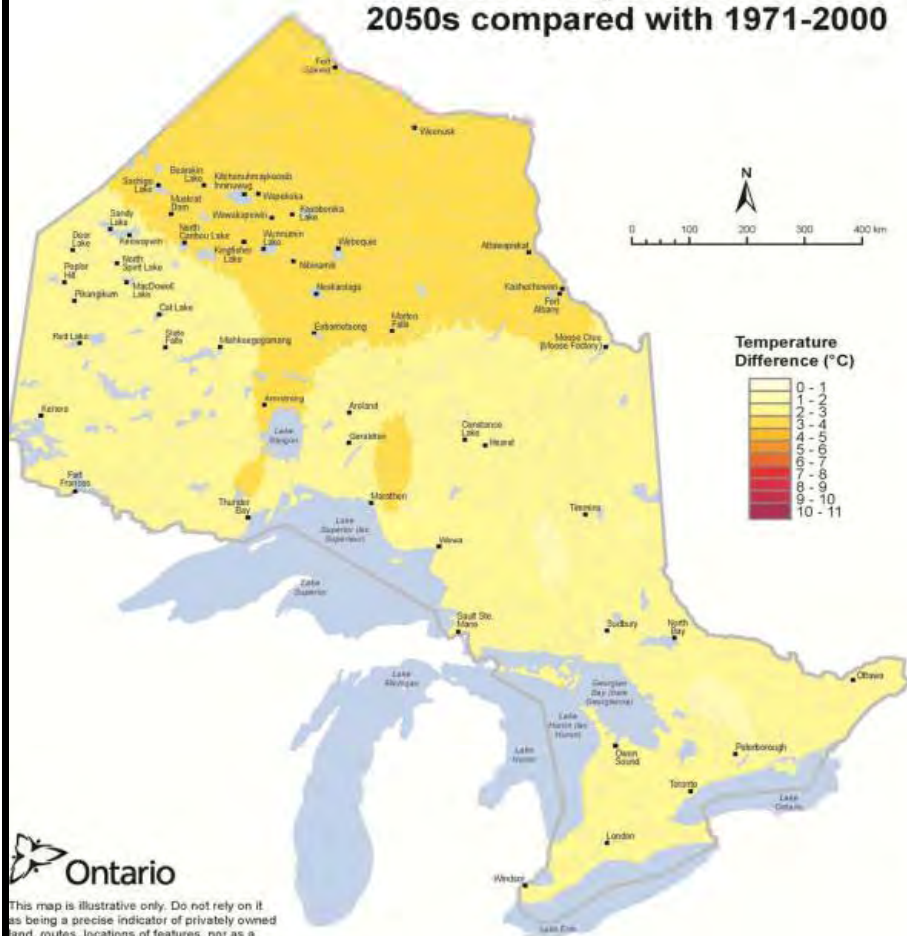
# A changing landscape





# A changing climate

**Projected difference in average summer temperatures in the 2050s compared with 1971-2000**



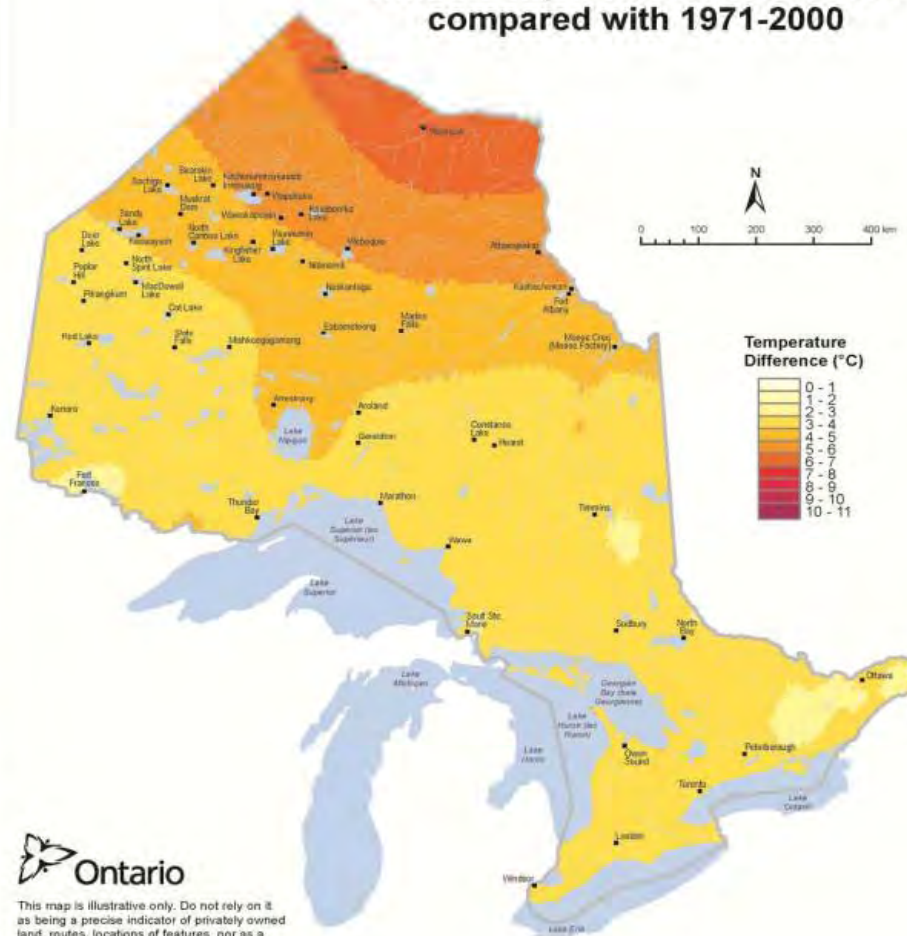
 Ontario

This map is illustrative only. Do not rely on it as being a precise indicator of privately owned land, routes, locations of features, nor as a guide to navigation. This map may also contain cartographic errors or omissions.

Projection: MNR Lambert Conformal Conic  
Datum: North American 1983

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**Projected difference in average winter temperatures in the 2050s compared with 1971-2000**



 Ontario

This map is illustrative only. Do not rely on it as being a precise indicator of privately owned land, routes, locations of features, nor as a guide to navigation. This map may also contain cartographic errors or omissions.

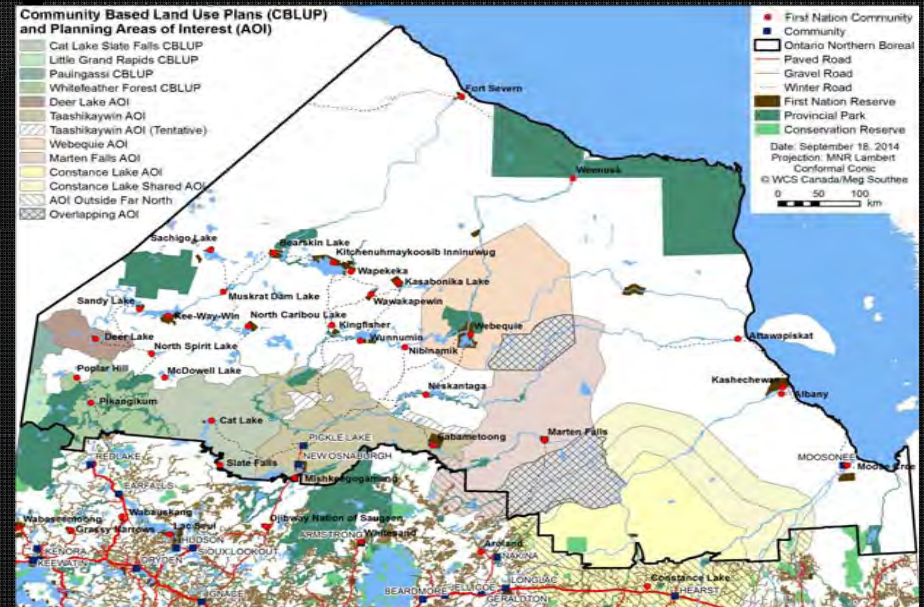
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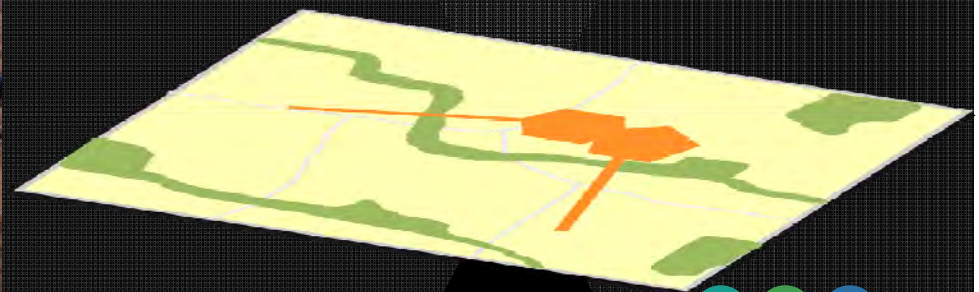
**Source: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, 2014. Spatial climate data was provided by Natural Resources Canada/Canadian Forest Service, Sault St. Marie**



# Planning for the future



## Environmental Assessment



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# Regional Planning Advice



## SCIENCE FOR A **CHANGING** FAR NORTH

The Report of the Far North Science Advisory Panel  
April 2010



## Far North Land Use Strategy: A Draft

September 2015





# Regional Planning Advice

- Values (vision) for the region
- Full involvement of First Nations; public hearings and explicit consideration of rights
- Incorporates independent expert advice (e.g., sustainability assessment, science, Elders)
- Explicit and robust cumulative effects design
- Clear commitment to transparency in decision making
- Protection of the public interest

## GETTING IT RIGHT IN ONTARIO'S FAR NORTH



The Need for a Regional  
Strategic Environmental Assessment  
in the Ring of Fire [Wawangajing]



ecojustice

by Cheryl Chetkiewicz and Anastasia M. Lintner



# Challenges

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- Piecemeal planning and not integrated with assessment
- No regional mandate or expertise
- Regional approach to planning is weak (e.g., Far North Land Use Strategy)
- No regional thinking about the future (e.g., scenarios for infrastructure and mining sectors, climate)
- Limited understanding and no models or guidance
- Limited institutional capacity (First Nations) and no political will (government)



# Opportunities

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- Awareness of limitations of current planning approaches
- Interest in regional planning approaches and cumulative effects assessment
- Learning opportunities and outreach
- EA reform in Ontario
- Relatively robust ToR for current mining proposal in Ring of Fire
- Regional Framework Agreement (“enhanced EA”)



# Acknowledgments

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- Generous funding support for WCS Canada from **The W. Garfield Weston Foundation** and the **Schad Foundation**

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# Thank you!

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