

*Canada's North: What's the Plan?*

by Thomas Berger, Steven Kennett, and Hayden King

Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2010, ISBN 978-0-88763-953-1, 137 pp., \$19.95 paper.

Reviewed by Graeme Voyer

*Canada's North: What's the Plan?* is a collection of three essays about land use planning in the Canadian North. The contributors are Thomas Berger, Steven Kennett, and Hayden King.

Berger is a lawyer who has represented Aboriginal groups in land claims agreements. Kennett is a policy wonk concerned with natural resources and environmental law. King, himself Aboriginal, is an academic and former policy advisor to Ontario's Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Land use planning in the North is the process of allocating land for industrial development or conservation. King articulates a useful working definition: land use plans are "attempts spearheaded by federal, territorial, and provincial governments to initiate a system for designating land use and allotting resources. Most often, this designation and allotment aims to accommodate conservation, development, subsistence hunting, and a general notion of sustainability" (80).

Berger's essay provides a historical background to current issues of land use planning. It tends to be repetitive, and Berger does not understate his own role in these matters.

Kennett's contribution is a highly abstract discussion, replete with buzz words. It is not really intended for the layperson, containing passages such as the following: "Planners have applied cumulative effects modelling and geographic information system technology to explore the use of disturbance thresholds and other innovations for managing impacts and achieving environmental, social, and economic objectives on Northern landscapes" (54). The gist of Kennett's essay is that, although the implementation of land use planning in the North has not been optimal, it is nevertheless a worthwhile strategy that is amenable to improvement.

Somewhat less optimistic is Hayden King, who argues that land use planning is couched in a bureaucratic discourse and based on Western scientific assumptions about the natural world; as a result, Aboriginal people are alienated and disempowered by the process. King urges indigenous people to use their power to rectify this "institutional imbalance" and infuse into the planning process "the values they know are essential to our relationships with the land and the diversity of creatures that we share it with" (103).

While the writers whose essays are collected in this volume approach the problem of land use planning from disparate perspectives, they agree that the North is likely to witness considerable change in the coming decades, a transformation that has already begun.

As Kennett remarks, "Northern Canada faces a period of rapid transition driven by factors such as increasing demand for natural resources, demographic changes, and the effects of global warming" (39). Moreover, as King points out, the North is increasingly central to Canadian politics, as the Canadian government seeks to consolidate its sovereignty in the region.

The North, then, will loom large in the Canadian consciousness in the near future, and this book is an excellent introduction to Northern issues. ♪

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