



Canadian Brownfields Network Summit Breakout Group Recommendations

Summary Report

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These recommendations come from the Canadian Brownfields Network's (CBN) 2018 Conference, "National Brownfield Summit: Charting the Future". This event brought together over 100 practitioners from across the country to plan for the future of the brownfield agenda. The conference focused on progress made since the 2003 National Brownfield Strategy report by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE), survey results from the Ryerson University NRTEE+15 Survey, and the state of brownfield regulation across Canada from the Ryerson University's Unlocking Brownfield Opportunities Report. Breakout groups used these findings to put forward recommendations and next steps for the future of Canada's brownfield agenda in relation to federal, provincial, and municipal involvement in brownfields, brownfield inventories, the linkages between brownfields and other societal issues, and brownfields and innovation. Sectors that participated in this event included environmental consultants, federal, provincial and municipal staff, and industry professionals.

Federal Government Involvement in Brownfields: Subgroup #1

What are they successful at? Supports brownfield redevelopment through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Green Municipal Fund. Fund their own Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan (FCSAP); find reuses at sites, divest as they have to. Retain and sell land for redevelopment through the Canada Lands Crown Corporation.

What are they unsuccessful at? Poor communication with the public. Funding cycles; the Financial Sector Assessment Program is a slow and challenging process. Limited access to funding from FCM. Lack of funds available for private stakeholders. Lack of funding outside of FCM.

Recommendations

- **Fund more broadly;** through the FCM's Green Municipal Fund; allocate funding to private sector and outside FCM; link housing and climate change to brownfields to encourage funding.
 - **Intergovernmental collaboration;** sharing and collaboration; with provincial and municipal governments; awareness; use technical methods.
 - **ID sites;** for divesting with provincial and local governments; with brownfield and remediation benefits.
 - **Better communication;** brownfields to be cleaned up and emphasized; promote success stories quickly; show what the federal government has done and what they are doing; promote their work.
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Provincial Government Involvement in Brownfields: Subgroup #1

What are they successful at? Provides financial assurance and funding. Supports brownfield redevelopment through regulatory instruments such as Record of Site Conditions, "Approvals in principle", and "Approved Professionals".

What are they unsuccessful at? Fails to speed up the process of approvals and policy formulation. Lack of a centralized review impedes the success of the Record of Site Conditions in Ontario.

Recommendations

- **Speed up process of approvals;** understand the review time periods; make the review process more local; simplify the administrative aspect of the review.
 - **Create a brownfield fund;** assist areas without real estate market drivers; 10 percent of tax increment financing should go towards a general brownfield fund.
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Provincial Government Involvement in Brownfields: Subgroup #2

What are they successful at? Willing to consult, discuss, and facilitate brownfield development. Successfully cleans up own sites.

What are they unsuccessful at? Lack of regulation implementation impedes redevelopment. Lack of transparent guidance in the review process, timelines, and remediation plans.

Recommendations

- **Improve remediation process;** one-window approach to brownfields; simplify remediation application and risk assessment process; timely processing of approvals; certainty within the process; transparency; share requirements.
 - **Holistic development approach;** brownfields are one aspect; discuss brownfields in terms of opportunity to “green” and provide affordable housing; a lens for all development projects; involve indigenous communities.
 - **Trust Qualified Person;** give Qualified Person more authority to manage with their judgement; avoid micromanaging each site.
 - **Inventory sites and economic value assessment;** inventory is key to determining the extent of the problem and opportunity; determine the economic value at stake to redevelop sites.
 - **Train new staff;** cut out bad habits.
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Municipal Government Involvement in Brownfields: Subgroup #1

What are they successful at? Some municipalities are more aware of the issue of brownfield redevelopment than others.

What are they unsuccessful at? Lack of information and staff with knowledge of brownfield redevelopment. Unwilling to purchase sites with liability. Uncertainty within municipalities. Lack of support and understanding from all municipal staff.

Recommendations

- **Improved education;** all municipal staff need to understand and promote brownfield redevelopment; should not depend on one champion, council, or staff.

- **Consistency and collaboration**; all levels of government work together to develop a guideline that municipalities use to manage brownfield redevelopment; guidelines would need to be prescriptive and be developed to reflect the needs of municipalities of different sizes.
 - **Better collaboration and alignment between municipality and province**; in both requirements and regulations.
 - **Increased political support**; political support for brownfield redevelopment is key; a top-down support and vision is crucial for redevelopment; having a person who is dedicated to supporting brownfield redevelopment helps stimulate change.
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Municipal Government Involvement in Brownfields: Subgroup #2

What are they successful at? Municipalities are willing to remediate their own land.

What are they unsuccessful at? Lack of initiative and inconvenient remediation process. Hard to access information. Lack of resources for smaller municipalities.

Recommendations

- **More accurate education**; educate governing body to provide regulations so developers have a framework; more understanding of risk assessment and tools; establish a brownfield coordinator role; provide technological training.
 - **More consistency**; internal consistency; stick to regulation rather than going above and beyond; document and clarify approaches; consistent answers.
 - **More open to risk assessment**; improved understanding of risk assessment.
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Municipal Government Involvement in Brownfields: Subgroup #3

What are they successful at? Some municipalities have developed progressive policies to address brownfield redevelopment.

What are they unsuccessful at? Averse to and inconsistent in risk assessment. Do not work as acting leaders. Lack of uniformity among municipalities. Lack of collaboration with provincial government.

Recommendations

- **Increased education**; environmental consultant to be the brownfield coordinator on a temporary basis; defer to the environmental regulations and not go above and beyond; decision-making tools to guide municipalities through various brownfield projects; understand the tools they have at their disposal.
- **More open to risk assessment**
- **Consistency across municipalities**; provide a resource for municipalities to ask their questions; to ensure consistency across the board; document the rules each municipality is applying.

Brownfield Inventories: Subgroup #1

Advantages of updated inventories? For developers: identifies sites with access to finance incentives; less time to investigate; more efficient; quick, up-to-date information. For governments: improved tax base; attracts investors; helps allocate resources; identifies opportunities; better understand financial liabilities and risks. For the public: provides temporary use during remediation; transparency; lobbying groups can target specific responsible parties.

Disadvantages of updated inventories? For stakeholders: liability; individuals unwilling to share information; cost to implement; exposure to Ministry orders; public relations; reputative risk. For developers: delays due to public involvement; out-of-date or inaccurate information.

Recommendations

- **CBN created guidelines;** on how to best record, collect, and share data by and between property owners and provincial governments; would involve establishing mandatory reporting requirements; would require a change in regulation which would likely be legally challenged.
 - **Focus on government owned sites rather than private ones.**
 - **Make provinces responsible for implementation, and involve land owners in data collection.**
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Linkages Between Brownfields and Other Societal Issues: Subgroup #1

What are the linkages? Housing and homelessness should be linked with brownfields. Economic development; leads to opportunity and job creation, especially in the environmental industry. Allows for multi-use spaces. Climate change related to dig-and-dump; brownfields in residential areas. Innovation to society; related to redevelopment.

What are the benefits of linkages? The attention of the public triggers the involvement of the government, which ultimately creates policy. A working “shining” example must be established; share success stories with the public; communicate positive outcomes; quantify what work has been done and present it. Strong communication strategy; diverse groups.

Recommendations

- **Encourage advocacy;** need advocacy to help push the message; push advocacy to politicians.
- **Support smaller communities;** advocate for the economic and social revitalization of smaller communities with lower land values; where the value of remediation may not be as obvious or apparent.
- **Implement community engagement;** more developer involvement; push for education; economic benefits; include citizens, journalists, municipalities, youth, middle age, elderly, local organizations.

Brownfields and Innovation: Subgroup #1

What is innovation successful at? Makes brownfield remediation cheaper, faster, and easier. Is socially acceptable; one dollar spent may result in many dollars of savings. Limits the need to transport soil.

What impedes innovation? Lack of strong central leadership; federal government is disjointed with the province and municipality. Too many overlapping regulations; in terms of environment, development, social factors. The cost of innovation; no incentives or fund. No mechanism to track and review soil transfer. Lack of collaborative data; sharing and accessibly. Lack of a streamline regulation process or risk assessment.

Recommendations

- **Harmonization of regulations and policy;** this may result in an acceptance of contaminated lands, funding certainty, parity with a greenfield land, and creation of efficient timelines.
- **Social acceptance and education**
- **More funding and incentives;** must come from the government; grants; implementation committees; collaborations between academics and industries; pilot projects; sustainable development; transparency around the availability of grants and funds.
- **Streamlined process;** one-window approach; liability is on the site professional or Qualified Person; insurance for omissions.