A Playbook for Voluntary Regional Governance in Greater Toronto

By: André Côté, Gabriel Eidelman, and Michael Fenn

The coronavirus pandemic has thrown into relief a range of health, social, and economic challenges for municipalities in the Greater Toronto region. These challenges – such as lack of affordable housing, income inequality, the need to spur economic development, and the impact of climate change – all need to be addressed at the regional scale. The authors have put forward six considerations for officials to keep in mind while developing a voluntary, bottom-up approach to regional governance.

[Read the full report: bit.ly/GTAplaybook]

FOCUS ON REGIONAL ISSUES
Concentrate on policy issues that demand improved regional coordination, rather than worrying about shifting regional boundaries.

RESPECT LOCAL CONTEXT
Learn from effective models around the world, but recognize that the most appropriate model for Greater Toronto is not necessarily what works elsewhere.

BRING OTHER REGIONAL LEADERS TO THE TABLE
Engage business leaders and civil society partners in the region.

DON’T GET BOGGED DOWN BY REPRESENTATION AND GOVERNANCE
Let partners opt in, and propose a ‘minimum viable process’ to move projects forward.

“BUILD THE MUSCLE” FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION
Start with projects that aren’t too controversial, binding, politicized, or costly.

DON’T EXPECT TO SOLVE PROBLEMS OVERNIGHT
Voluntary governance arrangements are built on relationships and trust. Patience, discipline, and incrementalism are required.