The background of the page is a full-page photograph of a natural landscape. In the foreground, a wide, shallow riverbed is filled with smooth, grey and brown river stones. A small stream of water flows through the stones. In the middle ground, a dense forest of tall, thin evergreen trees stretches across the frame. In the background, a range of rugged mountains is visible, with significant snow cover on their peaks and upper slopes. The sky is filled with large, dark, grey clouds, with patches of blue sky and lighter, white clouds visible, suggesting a dramatic, overcast day.

The North Saskatchewan Regional Plan

A Primer

Environmental Law Centre

The Regional Plan - Why it is important?

Regional plans create a pathway to direct the management of our air, water and land for years to come. The potential for regional plans to substantively direct land use decisions into the future is real. The question is, will it be realized.

Our plan is what we make of it

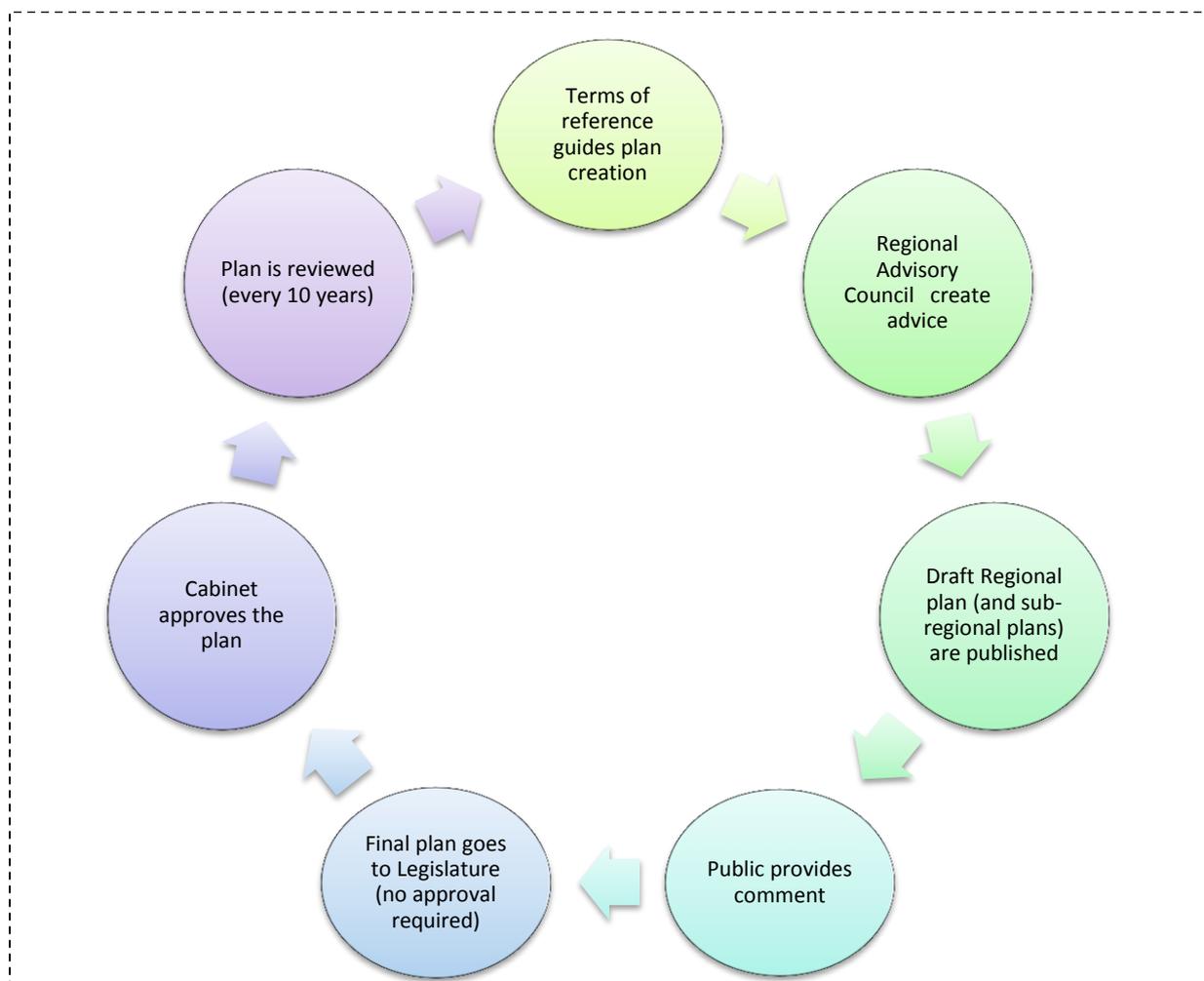
While creation and approval of a regional plan is a politically driven process (plans have to be approved by the provincial cabinet) regional plans are important as they will drive day to day decisions. Even if incremental gains are made in the planning process there are always future opportunities to have better and better plans.

Regional plans will not provide all the answers to the questions about what the future will look like but it remains an important step in the right direction.

What is the planning process and when does the public have a say?

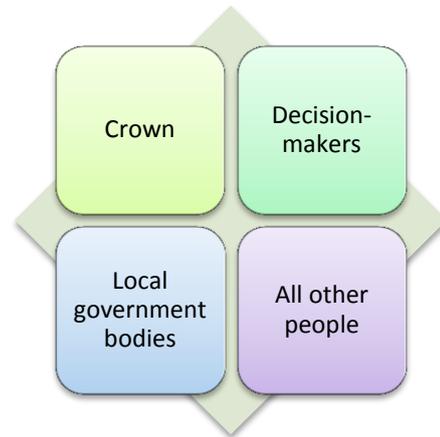
The planning process has multiple stages and provides opportunities for the Alberta public to give their input into the plans (see figure 1). Typically there is an opportunity to provide the government with feedback at two stages of the process 1) when the terms of reference are published, and 2) when a draft regional plan is published. There may also be opportunities to comment on the Regional Advisory Council Advice.

Figure 1: The planning process



Who must comply with regional plans?

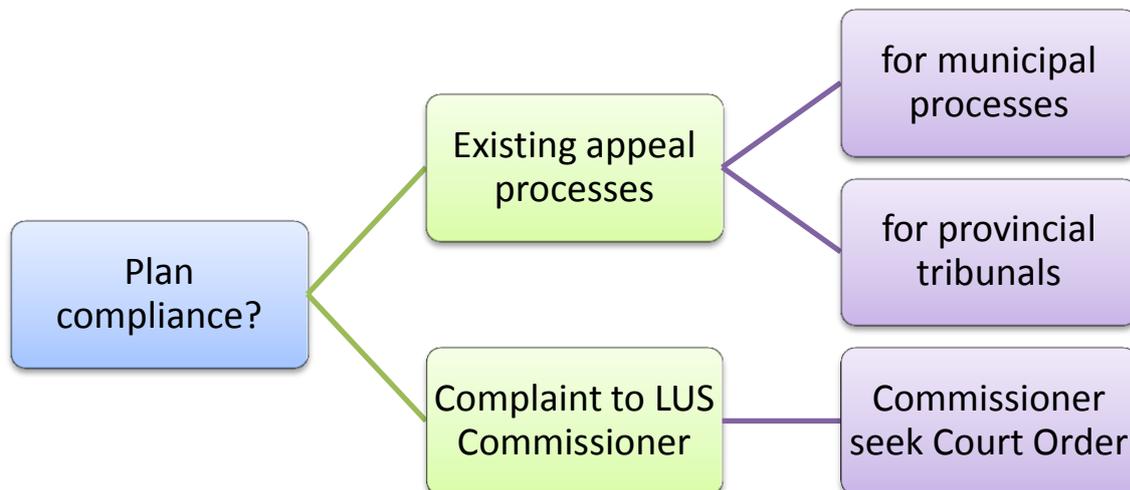
Everyone in a region must comply with a regional plan to the extent it applies to them. In practice (using the two existing plans) the primary audiences for regional plan compliance have been provincial and municipal governments and regulatory tribunals.



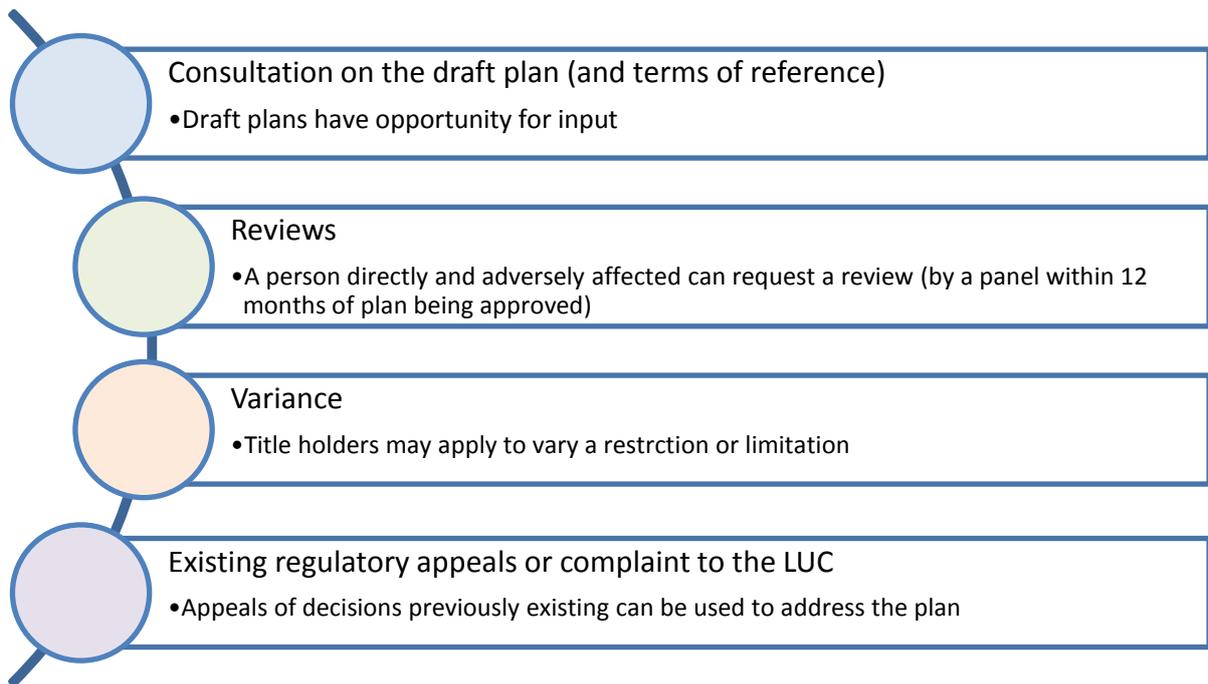
Once a plan is in place how is it enforced?

If there appears to be non-compliance with a regional plan there are limited avenues to target the non-compliance and get it remedies. The regional planning legislation opted to rely on existing appeal processes to deal with compliance with a regional plan and complaints to the Land Use Secretariat Commissioner.

Determining whether compliance has occurred will be easy to see in some instances, where the regional plan has clearly written requirements about how activities should proceed, while in manner others compliance will be a matter of interpretation and be more difficult to assess (evaluate).



How do Albertans get involved in the planning?



Will it affect my land?

A regional plan could feasible affect private land however any type of expropriation of rights would still be governed by existing statutes (e.g. the *Expropriation Act* or *Water Act*). Regional plans do not trump other relevant statutes related to private property.

The two plans that have been approved are not likely to have any impact on private land. Municipal planning laws, as always, will govern the use of the land, as will any other legislation that requires a landowner to get an authorization to undertake specific activities.



Visit ournorthsask.com for more information about the state of the region and risks and opportunities the ELC has identified for inclusion in the regional plan.

