

Ring of Fire can learn from past: report

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The ongoing saga to develop the Ring of Fire could draw lessons from the past, according to a new report from the Northern Policy Institute. File photo.

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Dryden pulp and paper mill took decades to develop

The ongoing saga to develop the Ring of Fire could — and perhaps should — draw lessons from the past, states a new report from the Northern Policy Institute. In the report *From Resource to Revenue: Dryden Mill Lessons for the Ring of Fire*, Laurentian University history professor Mark Kuhlberg draws comparisons between the Ring of Fire and the early history of the pulp and paper mill in Dryden.

“Following the discovery of copper-nickel and chromite deposits in the Ring of Fire nearly a decade ago, there has been much talk about the enormous potential for economic development represented by this untapped resource,” Kuhlberg wrote. “Eight years later, however, many are questioning why so little progress has been made and some are becoming increasingly frustrated with the pace of development.”

His paper is meant to “bring a strong dose of reality to the expectations that surround the Ring of Fire project.”

The pulp and paper mill in Dryden, he wrote, was first conceived as a project in the early 1900s, but only got off the ground in the 1950s.

“This process was delayed for so long by a complex mix of local, provincial, national and international factors, and other forces,” Kuhlberg said.

He concludes the existence of a bountiful natural resource does not always immediately translate into economic development due to a number of factors.

He adds the factors that have slowed development at the Ring of Fire are even more complicated than those that prevented early development of forest products in Dryden.

There were virtually no environmental regulations, for instance, when the Dryden pulp and paper mill was developed, and Aboriginals were often denied a voice in the development process.

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