

VISITING SCHOLAR LECTURE

# A TALE OF TWO CASINOS: UNEQUAL SPACES OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE

This presentation examines two recent casino decisions in Toronto. The first, in 2012-13, involved casino development in Toronto's dense and affluent downtown core; and a second in 2015 concerned the expansion of an existing racetrack in a poor, suburban area of the city. In the 2012-13 debate, several downtown options were identified as possible locations for a new casino in the City of Toronto, all scrutinized – and then rejected – by the “local” community council on the basis of concerns like traffic and addiction. In 2015, the suburban Rexdale racetrack expansion was approved quickly and with little community deliberation using the “city-wide” decision-making process. I conclude that local actors do not simply influence decision-making; they can reshape the purportedly neutral governance model within which decision-making takes place. This account suggests that actors beyond municipal leaders – in particular, local advocates – play a key role.

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Alexandra Flynn is an Assistant Professor in the City Studies program at the University of Toronto (Scarborough). She teaches and researches in the areas of urban governance and local government law. Her dissertation project, *Reimagining Local Governance: The Landscape of “Local” in*

*Toronto* (2017), examined Toronto's complex local governance model along with its motley of institutions. Her current project focuses on Indigenous-municipal relationships in the land use planning process. In 2017, she received a SSHRC Insight Development Grant to investigate the notion of a “municipal duty to consult” and its potential for reciprocal, respectful relationships between Indigenous and municipal governments. Alexandra has over ten years of experience as a lawyer in Vancouver representing First Nations and as a senior policy official at the City of Toronto where she focused on intergovernmental relations. She has a long history of volunteering with organizations focused on homelessness and access to justice.

FEBRUARY

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FRIDAY

12:30 – 1:30PM

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