



Signe Leisk

Partner

Contact Information

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Office

Toronto

Expertise

- Municipal, Planning & Environmental
- Real Estate & Development
- Universities & Colleges

Biography

Signe Leisk is a partner in the Litigation Group at Cassels and serves as Co-Chair of the firm's Municipal, Planning & Environmental Group and Chair of the Universities & Colleges Group. Signe's practice encompasses all aspects of municipal, land use planning and environmental law, with a particular focus on land development. She has extensive experience representing both private sector builders and developers as well as municipalities and public institutions. Signe appears regularly before the Ontario Land Tribunal (formerly the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal) and the courts, with significant experience in mediation. Signe is recognized as a leader in her field by *Chambers Canada*, which notes that clients consider her "the best legal mind in the room."

Signe's representative work includes:

- Acting for a joint venture consortium in the redevelopment of the York Downs Golf Course, including official plan and zoning by-law amendments, and plans of subdivision
- Obtaining approvals for high rise, mixed-use condominium developments across the GTA, including the negotiation of s. 37 agreements, rental replacement, and heritage conservation
- Representing Infrastructure Ontario in the development of a new mixed use community in the West Don Lands area of Toronto, including preparations for the Pan/Parapan American Games
- Obtaining approval for large scale, institutional and public facilities, including the Toronto PanAm Sports Centre at the former Morningside Landfill in Toronto
- Acting for a national retailer in obtaining approval for 'big box' stores across Ontario
- Assisting municipalities and provincial agencies with large scale expansions of infrastructure, such as roads, water and sewer lines, including assistance with Class Environmental Assessments and expropriations as required
- Acting for both public and private sector clients with respect to development charge matters, including negotiating and drafting front-ending and development charge credit agreements, and providing representation before the Local

Planning Appeal Tribunal

Signe has authored numerous articles on municipal and planning law and is a co-author of three leading texts: *Municipal and Planning Law in Canada, 2nd Edition* (Thomson Carswell), *Canadian Forms & Precedents-Municipal Law* (LexisNexis), and *Canadian Forms & Precedents – Land Development* (LexisNexis).

Signe is a sessional lecturer at the Toronto Metropolitan University School of Urban and Regional Planning, Masters of Planning (Urban Development) program. She has also guest lectured at Western University Faculty of Law, University of Toronto Faculty of Law and Department of Geography and the Queen's University School of Urban and Regional Planning.

Achievements

- *Best Lawyers in Canada* (Municipal)
- *Canadian Legal Lexpert Directory* (Property Development)
- *Chambers Canada* (Real Estate: Zoning/Land Use: Ontario)
- *Lexpert*, Rising Star Award (2013)
- *Precedent Magazine*, Precedent Setter Award (2010)
- *Urban Land Institute*, WLI Championship Team (2014)

Client Commentary

- “Signe has a strong ability to work and assist with all members of the team.” – *Chambers Canada (Real Estate: Zoning)*
- “She is very responsive and leads a dynamic team that understands the municipal approval process and overall government regulations.” – *Chambers Canada (Real Estate: Zoning)*
- “Very responsive, creative and highly expert.” – *Chambers Canada (Real Estate: Zoning)*
- “Very responsive and knowledgeable.” – *Chambers Canada (Real Estate: Zoning)*
- “The best legal mind in the room.” – *Chambers Canada (Real Estate: Zoning)*
- “She’s passionate, knowledgeable and knows how to communicate with a variety of different personalities.” – *Chambers Canada (Real Estate: Zoning/Land Use)*

Insights

- What Was Old is New Again: Proposed Changes Under the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024
- New Day for Publicly Funded Universities: Proposed Changes for Public Post-Secondary Institutions Under the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024
- The Sky is Not The Limit: New Flight Path MZOs Reduce Potential Height of Development in Toronto's Downtown

Pro Bono & Community Involvement

- ULI (Urban Land Institute) Toronto, Former Member of Management Committee and Past Co-Chair of Program Committee
- ULI Americas, Member, Transit Oriented Development Product Council
- Lambda Alpha International Honorary Society for the Advancement of Land Economics Simcoe Chapter, Member, Board of Directors
- YWCA of Greater Toronto, Former Member, Board of Directors, Chair of Asset Management Committee (2009-2017)
- Toronto Board of Trade, former member of the Municipal Performance Committee (2010-2011)

Education / Bar Admissions

- Certificate in Advanced Alternative Dispute Resolution, Faculty of Law, University of Windsor, 2017
- LL.B., University of Toronto, 2000
- B.Sc. (Hons) (with Distinction), University of Toronto, 1996
- Ontario, 2002

Associations

- Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD)
- Canadian Bar Association
- Ontario Bar Association
- Ontario Expropriation Association