

Infrastructure Projects Act Technical Briefing

Ministry of Infrastructure

May 16, 2025

Projects facing unnecessary delays

Projects can face delays caused by slow approval processes and permitting requirements. Within our current system, even priority projects have to wait in the queue. Delays can mean missed opportunities for our Province and higher costs for developing the infrastructure projects we need.

- A post-secondary student housing project could not proceed until the local municipality made an amendment to their Official Community Plan, which took a year.
- A school seismic replacement project completion was delayed by 6 months due to lengthy wait times to receive a municipal permit.
- Construction of a new elementary school was delayed by two years waiting for a provincial permit related to an on-site stream.
- A post-secondary student housing project experienced a 1-year delay waiting on road permits from the Ministry of Transportation and Transit.

A new ministry to help get projects built faster

Created to ensure faster delivery of cost-effective, high-quality generational investments.

Ministry mandate commitments include:

- Ensure faster delivery of cost-effective, high-quality generational investments.
- Manage projects to minimize cost inflation.
- Identify and implement opportunities to reduce costs for taxpayers and expedite approval and construction of projects, including the standardization of infrastructure like schools and hospital patient towers.
- Work to address permit delays in major infrastructure projects and identify opportunities for reduced cost and increased efficiency.

NEXT STEPS

- To support the Ministry's work, this spring government is taking the next step forward.
- We're introducing legislation to enshrine the new ministry into law and help get shovels in the ground sooner for provincial infrastructure projects and for other key public and private sector projects of significant importance to BC.
- This will help infrastructure projects getting built faster, to support people in BC and strengthen our province.

Legislation Structure - Categories of Projects

Proposed legislation includes broad enabling authority to **designate two categories of projects where additional tools can be used:**

Category 1 Projects • All Ministry of Infrastructure projects • Could include projects led by other ministries (e.g. Ministry of Transportation and Transit)  Category 2 Projects • Could include projects from local government, private sector, crown agency or First Nations projects (e.g. BC Hydro) • Project-by-project determination of “provincially significant” 
--

Legislative Tools for Ministry of Infrastructure



General Tools – Ministry of Infrastructure

Transfer authorities for capital infrastructure from:

- Ministry of Education and Child Care
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills
- Other government ministries (ad hoc)



Additional Tools – Ministry of Infrastructure and “Provincially Significant”

Streamline:

- Provincial permitting
- Environmental Assessment processes
- Local government permitting

Category 1 – Transfer of Existing Tools

Overview

Working with School Districts, Health Authorities and Post-Secondary Institutions – authority for:

- Policy development, project planning, capital funding
- Land acquisition, development and administration of surplus land
- Can not expropriate land

Category 1 – New Tool

Overview

- Enable the **delivery infrastructure projects on behalf** of health authorities, post-secondary institutions and school districts
- Used on a project-by-project basis in consultation with relevant partners
- Enables multi-project procurement (e.g. supporting modular expansion across school districts)
- Support small school districts and rural colleges that do not have capacity to deliver major capital projects

Category 1 and 2 – New Tools

Overview

- Six new tools for:
 - Ministry of Infrastructure Projects
 - Projects of Provincial Significance
- 2 tools to speed up **provincial permitting**
- 2 tools to speed up **Environmental Assessments**
- 2 tools to speed up **local government permitting**

Additional Powers – Provincial Significance

Description	
Provincial Permits	1. Prioritized provincial permitting for “ front-of-line ” review.
	2. Develop a qualified professional reliance framework .
Environmental Assessments	1. Expedited environmental assessment process.
	2. Automatic approval low risk permits after Environmental Assessment certificate issued.
Local Government Approvals	1. Province delay updates to Official Community Plans at request of local government.
	2. Three-step process to reach agreement with local government . Minister of Infrastructure additional authority without agreement.

What the Legislation is NOT



Reduction to existing environmental standards and social values



Change to government's commitment regarding the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*



Automatic override of municipal governments – there will be a process to collaborate and reach agreement with local governments first

Prioritized Provincial Permitting – ‘Front of Line’

Category 1 and Category 2 projects

Designated Category 1 and Category 2 projects will be identified, tracked and expedited through provincial permitting, as determined by Cabinet.

- This means Category 1 and 2 projects will be put to ‘front of the line’ for review.
- This *does not* change the quality or rigour of permitting.
- This *does not* change the need for consultation with First Nations.



Provincial Permitting - Qualified Professional Model

Category 1 and Category 2 projects

- Qualified Professionals will be able to certify compliance within government standards on some low-risk permits.
- Thresholds will be set for works or activities that will be eligible to be assigned to a certified Qualified Professional.
- Complex permits remain with ministry Statutory Decision Makers (e.g. Surface Water License).
- Creates permitting efficiencies while maintaining accountability.



Expediting Environmental Assessments

Category 1 and Category 2 projects

Two options for expediting the environmental assessment process, approved by Order in Council, on a project-by-project and tool-by-tool basis.

- Allow for automatic authorization of low-risk provincial permits following the issuance of an Environmental Assessment Certificate.
 - For example, the issuance of a tree cutting permit on a mine site that has been approved through an environmental assessment.
- Provide for an expedited Environmental Assessment process.
 - Once developed, allows for an alternative and expedited process for designated projects, so they can go through a faster review.

This proposed alternative process will maintain BC's high environmental standards and will be developed through consultation with First Nations and interest holders to meet consultation obligations.

Local Government Development Permits

Category 1 and Category 2 projects

To support local government decision-making and streamline development permit approvals:

- By resolution a local government could request that the province waive or modify provincial planning requirements for alignment with Official Community Plans and Regional Growth Strategies for designated projects.
- This new local government power cannot be extended to requirements related to health and safety (for example: building permits, occupancy permits and sewer/stormwater management).

Local Government Authorities

Category 1 and Category 2 projects

The legislation sets out a framework for an agreement seeking process between project proponents and local governments to expedite local government approvals.

When a project proponent and a local government are finding it hard to come to a consensus on a project, the Province will be able to initiate a three-step process to work with a local government in the effort to reach an agreement:

- Consultation with the local government
- Seek written agreement with the local government
- If no agreement can be made, the Minister of Infrastructure can provide replacement measures for the designated project in order to advance it

Step 3 will only be used if all other avenues have been exhausted. The goal is to work collaboratively with local governments on shared priorities.

Projects of provincial significance

- A limited number of major projects that are in the public interest and will significantly benefit people in B.C. will be designated as provincially significant. These are projects delivered by other partners, such as crown agencies, local governments, First Nations, and private proponents.
- Provincially significant projects would need to create significant economic, social or environmental benefits for people in B.C.
- Factors under consideration include whether a project significantly contributes to: public infrastructure, critical mineral supply, food or water supply, energy security, human health and safety, trade diversification, access to markets, post-disaster recovery and others.
- **Does not include:** pipeline projects, LNG facilities, low-barrier housing or overdose prevention sites.

Summary

- Legislation introduced May 1, which:
 - **Consolidates tools** from other ministries related to building School Districts, Health Authorities and Post-Secondary Institutions
 - Introduces a new tool to deliver infrastructure projects **on behalf of** those organizations
 - 2 tools to speed up **provincial permitting**
 - 2 tools to speed up **Environmental Assessments**
 - 2 tools to speed up **local government permitting**

The legislation will maintain BC's high environmental standards and regulations and policy will be developed through consultation with First Nations and interest holders to meet consultation obligations.

Thank you.