

TECHNICAL BRIEFING

Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy



**PROTECT
ONTARIO**

Ministry of Energy and Mines

April 17, 2025

Ontario 

Overview:

The need for action

In response to President Donald Trump's tariffs and threats of economic force against Canada, the government has a plan to protect Ontario, its workers, businesses and communities, including through new pieces of legislation to make the province's economy the most competitive in the G7.

U.S. tariffs and related trade policies have created significant uncertainty and risk for Ontario's workers and businesses, underscoring the need for urgent action to protect the province's economy.

By building faster and more strategically, Ontario can protect its industries, protect the environment, mitigate the impact of these trade disruptions, and ensure the long-term prosperity and security of its economy.

Challenges in the current system

Today, mines are regulated by each part of the operation, not the project as a whole, causing confusing and duplicative processes that are holding back development.

It can take up to 15 years to get a new mining project built, including years spent on required permits and approvals, making Ontario below comparable jurisdictions such as Australia and Quebec.

Currently, projects of all sizes are subject to inconsistent permitting requirements across government, resulting in significant delays. Up to **32 different potential permits or approval types** may be required across four provincial ministries.

Case Study: **Mine Development**

One mine's Comprehensive Environmental Assessment **took 1,349 days** to process.

63 per cent or 852 days were internal processing.

Highlights

Enabling authorities to designate Special Economic Zones

Create new authorities to dramatically speed up approvals for strategically important priorities that impact Ontario's economy and security, starting with mining and critical minerals in the Ring of Fire.

Trusted proponents and vetted projects that meet high standards will benefit from streamlined requirements, accelerated permitting, and access to one-window services.

Implementation of “One Project, One Process” approach for mine permitting

Enshrine in legislation a new, faster process for mine permitting.

Transforming environmental oversight

Businesses will be able to register for projects with impacts on certain species and permissions, while maintaining balanced, robust environmental protection protocols.

Priority projects will be able to move forward faster, including a new streamlined environmental assessment process for municipal infrastructure.

Reviewing permitting and approvals processes

Establishing a **one-window system** to improve the experience of businesses navigating the system.

Begin the process of rebuilding provincial permitting and approvals from the ground up.

Limiting foreign jurisdictions' participation in Ontario's critical infrastructure

Legislative amendments to provide the government with the ability to **keep its energy supply, mining industry, and government-funded critical infrastructure safe and secure from foreign bad actors**.

Special economic zones

Current state:

- Approvals for mining projects takes up to 15 years and force proponents to navigate a complex and overlapping maze of approvals and processes from various levels of government. These complex processes slow down approvals, create unnecessary costs and stop shovels from getting in the ground.

Future state:

- This legislation provides the authority to designate Special Economic Zones that are of critical or strategic importance for Ontario's economy and security, with the goal of designating the first zone(s) by September 2025. **A zone** could mean an area that includes one or several projects of critical or strategic importance. Zones could include critical mineral projects including the Ring of Fire as well as critical infrastructure projects. The province will continue to honour its Duty to Consult responsibilities for these and all projects.

Key legislative/regulatory actions:

Regulation-making authority to designate and prioritize zones or projects to accelerate strategic priorities:

1. Develop regulations by September 2025 prescribing criteria for the purposes of identifying a zone, and prescribing criteria for the purposes of designating trusted proponents and vetted projects that are in scope within a zone that meet high operating, safety, and environmental standards.
2. Designate the first zone(s) in regulation by September 2025, with regulations to designate trusted proponents and/or vetted projects to follow afterwards.
3. Develop further regulations to exempt trusted proponents and vetted projects from permitting and approvals processes or modify permitting and approvals processes as they may apply to trusted proponents and vetted projects in a designated zone, once zones, trusted proponents and vetted projects have been designated by regulation.

One project, One process for mining

Current state:

- To secure approvals, mines must apply and receive approvals from multiple ministries through processes that are often repetitive and complex. These permits often focus on individual activities versus the project as a whole, causing significant cost and delay to breaking ground on a new mine.

Future state:

- A cohesive, streamlined approval process that includes realistic project timelines to give operators and investors certainty they need to hire workers, build and get critical minerals the world needs to market faster.
- A government assigned Project Lead to guide proponents through the streamlined approvals process.
- A goal of at least a 50 per cent reduction in government review time for permits.
- Continued compliance with the Crown's Duty to Consult obligations with Indigenous communities and environmental standards.
- Coordinated consultation processes with Indigenous communities versus undertaking consultation on a permit-by-permit basis.

Key legislative/regulatory actions:

- Enshrine in legislation a new, faster process for mine permitting in which designated mine projects at the advanced exploration or development stage could have permits from multiple ministries considered in parallel with dedicated project management support.
- New authorities to set defined service standards related to the government review time for permit processes.
- A government-assigned Project Lead will guide proponents through permitting and approvals, supported by a multi-ministry delivery team.

Transforming environmental oversight

Current state:

- Businesses that want to start construction on projects that impact species face complex requirements, adding time and actions to projects. The time to receive a permit can vary between 3 months to more than 2 years.
- Businesses must submit environmental permission applications for review that can take up to a year for important projects (e.g., housing, transit, electrification projects infrastructure) and for certain sectors (e.g., construction and development, warehousing, mineral exploration and battery energy storage).
- Municipalities with routine projects like parking lots must complete an environmental assessment process that can take up to 24 months to complete.

Future state:

- New legislation to streamline approvals for projects impacting certain species by adopting a “registration first” approach in place of the current permitting framework, and to better scope habitat protections. This practical solution maintains robust environmental protections by establishing clear, enforceable rules for businesses to follow, including mandatory requirements to register their project online. This will be supported by a modern, progressive enforcement model, which will escalate from education and awareness through stronger enforcement tools for bad actors. A zero-tolerance approach will be taken for those found to be contravening the prescribed standards.
- In 2025, new regulations to streamline environmental permissions to allow other types of activities adopt the registration-first approach (such as permissions for construction site dewatering and stormwater systems), as long as they follow rules set out in regulation, and, where required, have qualified professionals undertake certain assessments.
- Removing fees for the Environmental Activity and Sector Registry (EASR), saving businesses approximately \$2.6 million annually.
- Implement a new regulation for certain designated municipal infrastructure projects that would save municipalities up to 18 months and eliminate EA requirements for 60 lower-risk projects types, e.g., all municipal roads, new pumping stations, etc.) that are routinely completed by municipalities.

Key legislative/regulatory actions:

- New legislative framework establishing a registration-first approach for projects with impacts on certain species and strengthens enforcement.
- New legislation to eliminate fees for registration for environmental permits on the Environmental Activity and Sector Registry, while continuing to move more activities to this approach.
- Future regulations to create a new time-limited, streamlined EA process for certain designated municipal infrastructure projects.
- Removing outdated Environmental Assessment requirements for specific projects to help key projects proceed more quickly, e.g., Wyloo’s Eagle Nest mining project in the Ring of Fire.

Transforming environmental oversight (continued)

Project specific examples:

Wyloo's Eagle's Nest Mining Project

- Removing outdated Environmental Assessment requirements for Wyloo's Eagle Nest mining project in the Ring of Fire, as the scope of the project has significantly changed.

York1

- Removing Environmental Assessment (EA) requirements for York1 Environmental Waste Solutions Ltd.'s proposal to resume landfill operations and expand waste handling, processing, and transfer operations at the former Dresden Tile Yard in Chatham-Kent. The project will continue to be subject to environmental permits.
- Roughly 40 per cent of waste generated by Ontario businesses is exported to the United States. With the continued threats of border interruptions and tariffs, we can no longer afford to depend on the U.S. for this critical function, which is why we are building the capacity we need here at home, quickly, on a site that has historically been used for waste disposal.

Ontario Place

- Amending the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act to provide an exemption for projects associated with the OP redevelopment from being posted for consultation on the Environmental Registry of Ontario.
- More than 40 different studies, reports, plans and drawings, including arborist, geotechnical, shoreline, stormwater, and natural heritage impact studies, as well as two publicly available environmental assessments have already been completed.

Reviewing permitting and approvals process

Current state:

- Ontario's economic development permit process involves multiple steps and interactions with various provincial entities, leading to delays, inefficiencies, and increased costs for businesses.
- Proponents are required to navigate through multiple log-ins and platforms to submit applications.
- Government permitting processes may slow energy proponents in moving to construction and do not identify energy projects critical to broader objectives.

Future state:

- Duplicative, unnecessary, and outdated permits and requirements would be eliminated. Permits would be simpler and faster to obtain.
- Proponents to access all permit applications in one place to improve the experience for businesses and enhance usability.
- Strategically important energy projects are prioritized so they can move to construction sooner while ensuring the Crown's Duty to Consult is fulfilled.

Key legislative/regulatory actions:

- Establish a one-window permitting system to improve the experience of businesses navigating the system.
- Working across government to prioritize energy resource, transmission and distribution projects that are linked to Special Economic Zones and exploring processes to prioritize strategically important energy projects in permitting/approvals processes across all ministries and agencies.
- Amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act to allow for exemptions from archaeology requirements, separate from those enabled in special economic zone legislation, where doing so could advance a provincial priority. The province is also proposing amendments to update compliance and enforcement tools, including new investigative powers, and the ability for the minister to order an assessment.

Limiting foreign jurisdictions' participation in Ontario's critical infrastructure

Current state:

- The government does not have any tools to address foreign bad actors, nor the authority to cancel a registered mining claim if it is in the public interest to do so.
- The government has limited tools to address foreign participation in the energy sector and its procurement activities.
- The government has limited tools to limit or ban foreign jurisdictions from buying or taking equity in any Ontario government-funded infrastructure assets.

Future state:

- The government has the ability to keep its energy supply, mining industry, and critical infrastructure projects safe and secure from foreign antagonists.

Key legislative/regulatory actions:

- New authority to suspend the Mining Lands Administration System, suspend or remove a registrant, deny the transfer of leases, or revoke a mining claim registration or lease, if it is desirable for the protection of the strategic national mineral supply chain.
- Regulation-making authority to enable the Ministry of Energy and Mines to limit the participation of foreign jurisdictions (e.g., the People's Republic of China) in Ontario's energy sector.