

PM Carney's Major Project Reforms

Gutting Environmental Protections is the Wrong Path for Canada

**MEDIA
BACKGROUND**
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PM Carney's Plan to Ram Big Projects Through Is Not Progress. It's Recklessness

Context:

Since coming to power, Prime Minister Mark Carney has been pushing through a reckless agenda of deregulation, especially when it comes to major project approvals.

In 2025, PM Carney tabled the *Building Canada Act* (BCA), which was quickly passed through Parliament, despite strong opposition from Indigenous nations and civil society. The BCA gives Cabinet power to designate projects as being in the national interest, and allowing those projects to skip review processes and skirt laws that keep communities, nature and wildlife safe. The BCA faces multiple high-profile legal challenges from [First Nations coalitions](#) and [environmental groups](#) arguing it grants unconstitutional, unchecked executive power to fast-track infrastructure and bypass environmental laws without proper Indigenous consultation.

On May 8, PM Carney [released a discussion paper](#) which [proposed even more sweeping changes to decision-making on industrial projects](#), in effect gutting environmental and public oversight. The approach set out in the discussion paper risks putting Canada's environment, waters and rarest and most vulnerable species at risk – without ensuring that projects are better built or confer net benefit for Canadians. If implemented as proposed, these changes would lead to outcomes in which nature suffers and species are driven to extinction – all while project decision-making becomes less transparent and more politicized.

The government claim that environmental regulations delay major projects is unsubstantiated. Evidence shows that [it is economic factors](#) such as unviable market conditions, not regulatory factors, that delay project timelines.

In response to public pushback, the government extended consultations to July, effectively delaying the tabling of legislation.

PM Carney's vision of getting major projects built faster would:

- **Enable harmful projects to proceed without understanding the risks:** The proposal to create federal economic zones, which allow for projects to be “pre-approved” based on regional assessments, is reckless. The same is true of the proposal to allow Ministers and Cabinet to authorize pipelines at the beginning of the process, before reviews and routing details are completed. We are also concerned about the proposal to allow “early construction” to begin before assessments are finished.
- **Rush project decision making:** The one-year timeframe suggested for project reviews would make it impossible to adequately consider a project's potential impacts.
- **Put vulnerable species, like the southern resident killer whales, at grave risk of extinction by removing one of Canada's very few legally binding safeguards:** The proposal gives Cabinet the power to authorize projects even if they pose a threat to vulnerable species by exempting projects from application of the jeopardy test for species at risk.
- **Undermine Indigenous Rights:** The combined effect of proposed changes is likely to undermine Indigenous rights and make it practically impossible for the government to meaningfully consult Indigenous communities as constitutionally required.
- **Put Canada's waterways and fish habitat at risk.**
- **Increase the risk of costly and impactful environmental disasters.**
- **Erode public trust in project approvals:** Overall, the proposed changes make project decision making less transparent and more political – and therefore more vulnerable to legal risk and public opposition.

Not Aligned with Canadian Values

- [71 per cent of Canadians believe](#) economic growth and nature protection should be balanced to ensure both security and sustainability for future generations. Only 7 per cent of respondents believed that economic growth and national security should be prioritized at the expense of nature.
- [In May 2026 Ekos](#) found that 61 per cent of respondents, including 92 per cent of Liberal Party supporters, believe that the government has a responsibility to prevent species from going extinct in Canada.

Environmental Defence Urges the Government to:

- Abandon the proposals to give Cabinet authority to create federal economic zones and pre-approve pipelines before routes are finalized and have been reviewed.
- Leave the Species at Risk jeopardy test intact, and ensure that projects that risk pushing species to extinction aren't designated under the *Building Canada Act* (including both the *West Coast pipeline* and the *Robert Banks Terminal*).
- Uphold Indigenous rights and free, prior and informed consent.
- Avoid any weakening of environmental protections, including by rushing timelines and allowing construction to begin before projects have been authorized.
- Ensure project decision-making is democratic and participatory.

We urge Members of Parliament to vote against any legislation that would make into law proposed changes to major project decision-making that affects impact assessments, Species at Risk, and other key environmental protections.

Timeline & Next Steps

- June 26 2025 - The *Building Canada Act* received Royal Assent only 20 days after it was first tabled.
- May 8 2026 - The government released the [Getting Major Projects Built in Canada Discussion Paper on Proposed Legislative, Regulatory, and Policy Reform](#). Consultations were scheduled to end on June 7th, with a goal of tabling legislation before Parliament rose for the summer.
- June 4 2026 - The government extended the consultations until July 22nd following significant pushback from advocacy groups and the public.
- August 1 2026 - [The government gave notice](#) that they intend to list the West Coast Oil Pipeline as a project of national interest under the *Building Canada Act*. According to the Act, notice must be given 30 days prior to a project being listed under the Act.
- August 28 2026 - [The government gave notice](#) they intend to list the Roberts Bank Terminal 2 project as a project of national interest under the *Building Canada Act*.
- September 21 2026 - Parliament resumes. Government sources have indicated that they intend to table the legislation shortly after Parliament sits.



ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE: Environmental Defence is a leading Canadian environmental advocacy organization that works with government, industry and individuals to defend clean water, a safe climate and healthy communities. Visit environmentaldefence.ca for more information.

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