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THE SASKATCHEWAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE RESPONSE TO
GETTING MAJOR PROJECTS BUILT IN CANADA - DISCUSSION
PAPER ON PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY, AND POLICY
REFORMS

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Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce

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Since 1920, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce has been the Voice of Business in Saskatchewan. Supported by provincial businesses, professional associations, and local Chambers of Commerce, the Saskatchewan Chamber is uniquely equipped to accurately reflect the needs of the broad Saskatchewan business community to help make Saskatchewan the best place to live, work and invest.

The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the Government of Canada's consultation on *Getting Major Projects Built in Canada – Discussion Paper on Proposed Legislative, Regulatory, and Policy Reforms*. The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce has repeatedly called attention to the fact that Canada's current project review and permitting system are characterized by excessive complexity, duplication, and uncertainty. Projects are frequently delayed by overlapping jurisdictional requirements, unclear timelines, shifting expectations, and prolonged decision-making processes. These challenges are particularly acute in sectors critical to Saskatchewan's economy including agriculture, mining, and energy, and they continue to discourage investment and limit Canada's ability to capitalize on global opportunities. Against this backdrop, the federal government's commitment to improving regulatory efficiency and accelerating project approvals is both necessary and welcome.

Public and Indigenous engagement questions for the public and Indigenous Peoples

1. What opportunities do you see emerging from these proposals to improve the assessments and permitting processes related to building major projects?

The discussion paper identifies several areas of opportunity, particularly with respect to early planning, clearer timelines, and improved coordination. These are broadly supported by the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, as efforts to improve interdepartmental coordination, reduce duplication, and establish clearer pathways for project approval are essential to restoring confidence and enabling projects to move forward more quickly.

From the perspective of Saskatchewan's business community, one of the most significant opportunities for improvement lies in establishing clear information requirements and scope at the

outset of a project review. While appreciating the effort the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) has been taking to align its review processes with the Building Canada Act's proposed maximum 2-year "end-to-end" timeline, this alone doesn't guarantee efficiency; the system still relies heavily on how regulators choose to implement the rules. Too often, projects experience "scope creep," with evolving requirements that introduce delays and uncertainty. If review scope is not tightly managed projects can still face uncertainty, delays, and higher costs, it is just shifted to earlier phases or informal expectations. Regulators must define expectations early and adhere to them throughout the process. A system grounded in early clarity, enforceable timelines, and consistent expectations would significantly improve predictability for proponents while ensuring that assessments remain focused on material, project-specific risks.

To be clear, businesses are not seeking lower standards, but rather a system that makes decisions clearly and on time. The discussion paper's direction aligns with the Saskatchewan Chamber recommendation to designate a single lead agency responsible for managing reviews. However, equally important is the need to move decisively toward a true "one project, one review" model. Duplication between federal and provincial processes remains one of the most significant drivers of delay, without improving environmental outcomes. Canada's provinces have a long-standing and robust history of effectively regulating infrastructure development and mining activities, with some frameworks dating back more than a century. Their regional proximity and familiarity with local environmental, economic, and Indigenous contexts allow for responsive and efficient oversight. Leveraging this capacity without duplicating it, is essential if Canada is to meet its strategic goals in resource development and climate leadership. The Saskatchewan Chamber strongly supports reforms that enshrine "one project, one review" approach, but believes effectively implementing this model requires the federal government to move beyond coordination towards a true substitution of processes where appropriate. The Chamber appreciates the positive effort IAAC has recently made by pursuing cooperation agreements with provinces to improve coordination and reduce duplication in reviews; however, further effort is needed to advance deeper cooperation and expand the use of substitution with provinces and territories. Specifically, where provincial assessments meet or exceed federal standards, they should serve as the primary review mechanism.

The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce understands the current focus of the proposals is on major projects, but our organization urges the federal government to examine an easy opportunity for improvement in the processes for smaller developments as well. A critical element of this broader reform effort is the need to modernize the Impact Assessment Act (IAA). As currently structured, the IAA continues to act as a bottleneck for project development, particularly in the critical minerals sector. The existing threshold system, which is based on production capacity or project size, often captures projects that are primarily regional in scope and well within the capacity of provincial regulators to assess. This has led to unintended consequences, including proponents deliberately designing projects below federal thresholds to avoid lengthy and uncertain federal processes. This distortion of investment decisions ultimately limits the scale and efficiency of resource development in Canada. The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce urges the federal government to amend the Physical Activities Regulations to raise the project size thresholds that trigger federal review for critical mineral developments.

The proposals in *Getting Major Projects Built in Canada – Discussion Paper on Proposed Legislative, Regulatory, and Policy Reforms* open the door to modernizing assessments, so they focus on project-specific, significant risks, rather than applying broad and duplicative requirements to low-risk activities. The Saskatchewan Chamber supports this change, we urge the government to enable faster approvals for lower-risk or expansion projects as this permits a better allocation of regulatory resources as well as a more proportionate and efficient system overall.

2. What are your views/general impressions on these proposals to improve regulatory efficiency related to building major projects faster in Canada?

The proposals align closely with the challenges identified by the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce membership, nevertheless the Chamber stresses that reforms must be durable across political cycles, and rules must remain stable once projects enter the system

There is clear recognition among the business community that regulatory inefficiency is undermining Canada's economic potential, especially in natural resource sectors that account for a significant share of GDP, exports, and investment. However, the Chamber's overall impression is that execution will be the determining factor in the success of these proposals. The business community has faced a persistent execution gap in situations where political intent to streamline processes has not yet translated into consistent action across regulatory bodies. For the federal government to successfully execute its proposals a focus needs to be placed on driving a shift in regulatory culture to ensure departments are fully aligned. Without internal buy-in even well-designed policy changes risk being delayed or undermined through continued reliance on risk-averse practices. As such, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce recommends that the federal government prioritize a fundamental shift in regulatory culture to ensure that internal practices do not delay or undermine policy reforms through entrenched risk aversion and bureaucratic inertia.

3. What do businesses and Indigenous Peoples require to advance major projects within a shorter timeframe under these proposals?

The proposals create space to address one of the most critical bottlenecks: unclear and inconsistent consultation processes. Canada's current approaches lack clarity and coordination, increasing uncertainty for both Indigenous communities and project proponents. Businesses and Indigenous Peoples require a combination of clarity, certainty, coordination, and capacity to advance major projects within a shorter and more predictable timeframe. The Saskatchewan

Chamber of Commerce has advocated for the creation of a centralized Indigenous Consultation Office and we are pleased to see this proposal in the discussion paper.

Both businesses and Indigenous Peoples benefit from early-stage clarity on consultation requirements, affected communities, and the scope of engagement. Providing standardized guidance (e.g., which communities to consult, how requirements scale based on project impact) and clear delineation of Crown vs. proponent responsibilities helps avoid delays later in the process and ensures engagement is focused and effective. Also fundamental to this is the development of a clear and broadly-accepted definition and approach to free, prior, and informed consent regarding consultation with Indigenous communities.

Meaningful participation depends on capacity. Indigenous communities must be supported with adequate funding, technical expertise, and resources to engage effectively in project reviews. Investing in early and well-supported consultation not only reduces delays later in the process but also advances economic reconciliation and strengthens project outcomes.

Conclusion

The business community of Saskatchewan is encouraged by the federal government's decision to support getting major projects built in Canada. Improvement to the country's legislative, regulatory, and policy processes are essential and must be viewed in the broader context of Canada's competitiveness and role in global supply chains.

The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce broadly supports the proposed reforms but recognizes that their effectiveness will depend on addressing core structural issues within the existing regulatory framework and, while the proposals aim to improve efficiency, there is a risk that incremental adjustments may not go far enough to address systemic issues. The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Canada to strengthen them by:

1. Establishing clear information requirements and scope at the outset of a project review and prohibiting 'scope creep'.
2. Ensuring a one-project, one-review approach by recognizing, aligning, or substituting federal reviews and permitting with provincial processes as the preferred or primary approach.
3. Amending the Physical Activities Regulations to raise the project size thresholds that trigger federal review for critical mineral developments.
4. Ensuring assessments focus on project-specific, material risks, with streamlined or expedited pathways for low-risk projects or expansions of existing operations.
5. Guaranteeing instituted reforms are durable across political cycles and that rules will remain stable once projects enter the system.

6. Prioritizing a fundamental shift in regulatory culture to ensure that internal practices do not delay or undermine policy reforms through entrenched risk aversion and bureaucratic inertia.
7. Providing early-stage clarity on consultation requirements, affected communities, and the scope of engagement, including standardized guidance (e.g., which communities to consult, how requirements scale based on project impact) and clear delineation of Crown vs. proponent responsibilities.
8. Co-developing with Indigenous Peoples a clear and broadly-accepted definition and approach to free, prior, and informed consent.
9. Facilitating timely and meaningful participation from Indigenous communities by enabling access to funding, technical expertise, and capacity-building resources.

In conclusion, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce welcomes the Government of Canada's commitment to improving the legislative, regulatory, and policy frameworks governing major projects. Timely, predictable, and coordinated decision-making is not simply an administrative objective—it is a fundamental requirement to unlock Saskatchewan's and Canada's full economic potential, attract investment, and ensure the country can compete effectively in an increasingly competitive global economy.