ERIS ORIGINALS
THE ENVIRONMENTAL DUE DILIGENCE BLOG

# PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS COOPERATE TO ACCELERATE TARGETED PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

JUNE 2026 | JON ELLIOTT



*Rixie - stock.adobe.com*

The newly elected federal government is pursuing policies intended to accelerate high-priority infrastructure development, including fossil fuels and critical minerals. Among these initiatives, the federal government is expanding cooperation with provinces to streamline environmental assessments.

## Coordinating and Accelerating Environmental Assessments

The federal government has signed memoranda of understandings (MOUs) with individual provinces and territories for more than 20 years, agreeing to coordinate or share legal authority for environmental assessments, and often the actual undertaking of assessments as well. They cover Canada's Impact Assessment Act (IAA) (or similar earlier federal legislation) and analogous provincial laws. Since December 2025, the federal government has updated or signed agreements with Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island. Details vary, but typical terms include:

- Each assessment under the MOU will be completed within two years.
- Governments will recognize and allocate authority:
  - Each government's environmental assessment agency will notify the other and Indigenous groups as early as possible about projects potentially under joint authority and share information.
  - For projects primarily under provincial jurisdiction, Canada will defer to provincial assessments.
  - When joint authority is confirmed, the parties will develop roles, responsibilities, activities, and timelines to allow a single joint assessment process that meets both governments' requirements. They will also consolidate any conditions and limitations on approved projects.
- Assessment procedures will include coordination with affected Indigenous groups and the public.
- The parties will develop and apply joint procedures to facilitate assessment activities, including procedures to resolve any interagency disputes.

## Alberta - Focus on Energy

On April 2, the federal and Alberta governments announced a "Cooperation Agreement on Environmental

and Impact Assessment." The agreement contains terms consistent with the general provisions summarized above. It builds on an MOU signed by the two governments on November 27, 2025, which reaffirms earlier commitments to greenhouse gas management and cooperation with Indigenous and treaty rights, and sets forth ways the governments will cooperate to expand targeted energy development projects. The intention of the MOU is to:

- Increase oil and natural gas production in Alberta to expand exports and enhance the provincial electricity grid, while also reaching carbon neutrality.
- Reduce regulatory overlap to keep permitting and approval times below two years, even for major projects.
- Begin permitting for: new private sector pipeline(s) exporting at least one million barrels per day, with an application by July 1, 2026; major expansions of electricity generation and transmission within and into Alberta (from British Columbia and Saskatchewan); and carbon capture projects.

Both governments commit to cooperate with one another on a range of energy and climate projects, and with Indigenous leaders and other provinces when appropriate.

## Ontario - Focus on Critical Minerals

Canada and Ontario signed the "Co-operation Agreement between Ontario and Canada on Environmental and Impact Assessment," signed on December 18, 2025. The agreement contains terms consistent with the general provisions summarized above.

On March 2, Ontario's provincial government announced a plan to construct all-seasons roads to the mineral-rich "Ring of Fire", with construction to start in June 2026 and roads beginning to open in November 2030. This plan incorporates intergovernmental coordination as outlined in the December agreement.

## Implications for Environmental Consultants

These agreements are not limited to the sectors noted above, but extend to projects with environmental impacts sufficient to trigger mandatory federal and provincial assessments. Therefore, developers and consultants should consider whether their projects meet the applicable regulatory thresholds and qualify for coordinated and accelerated agency reviews. Potential benefits include:

- **Targeted sector opportunities**
  Accelerated activity in priority sectors will provide expanded opportunities for consultants with relevant technical and regional expertise. Tighter timelines will also require consultants to hone their analytical and project management skills.
- **Stronger demand with compressed timelines**
  Clearer and faster procedures should enhance individual projects. With a more defined timeline, the coordinated approach will also make projects more enticing to potential investors and developers, attracting additional resources and creating additional opportunities for existing organizations and those seeking to expand into these markets.
- **Shift to integrated, multi-jurisdictional processes**
  One project, one review" models reinforce the value of thoughtful assessment and review designs and meaningful engagement with governmental and community stakeholders to anticipate and avoid potential pitfalls.

Overall, these streamlined approaches will favour consultants who can operate quickly, collaboratively, and across regulatory boundaries, combining technical depth with strong project integration and management capabilities, and the ability to engage outside stakeholders positively.



**Jon Elliott**

***ABOUT THE AUTHOR***

*Jon's career spans consulting, writing, and teaching. He has managed compliance projects for organizations including Applied Materials and the City of Berkeley, authored legal handbooks and blogs, and contributed to 24 book-length resources for attorneys, EH&S managers, and trainers. An accomplished instructor, he has taught numerous courses on EH&S compliance and was named "Outstanding Teacher" in 1994. Jon holds a J.D. from UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law, a Master of Public Policy from UC Berkeley, and a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Princeton. He has also held leadership roles with the GSPP Alumni Association and the State Bar of California's Environmental Law Section.*