



**CANHC -
Canadian Association of Nuclear Host
Communities**
June 5, 2026

CANHC Responses:

**[Getting Major Projects Built in Canada - Discussion Paper
on Proposed Legislative, Regulatory, and Policy Reforms](#)**

CANHC Submission to the Privy Council Office

Discussion Paper: Getting Major Projects Built in Canada

Submitted by: The [Canadian Association of Nuclear Host Communities \(CANHC\)](#)

Introduction: About CANHC

The [Canadian Association of Nuclear Host Communities \(CANHC\)](#) is a national municipal association representing 22 communities, counties and regions that host — or are exploring hosting — nuclear facilities and activities across Canada’s nuclear fuel cycle.

CANHC members include municipalities and regional governments associated with nuclear generating stations, uranium and fuel cycle activities, nuclear laboratories and research facilities, waste management facilities, isotope production, and emerging small modular reactor (SMR) developments.

Our founding member communities have been actively involved in the nuclear industry and regulatory processes for over half a century. CANHC members are currently involved in, or directly impacted by, several major federal nuclear review and regulatory processes underway across Canada, including the Bruce C Nuclear Project, the proposed Wesleyville New Nuclear Project, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization’s proposed Deep Geological Repository for Used Nuclear Fuel, the proposed New Nuclear Project in Peace River, Alberta, and potential future SMR and new nuclear developments in Ontario, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and other jurisdictions.

Host communities play a unique and long-term role within Canada’s nuclear sector. Municipal governments are responsible for many of the local and regional systems that support major nuclear projects, including land-use planning, infrastructure, emergency management and response, housing and workforce pressures, transportation systems, public services, and broader community readiness.

CANHC works to support informed municipal leadership and help communities better understand Canada’s nuclear regulatory and impact assessment systems. This includes supporting information sharing, municipal capacity building, intergovernmental collaboration, and practical engagement between host communities, regulators, governments, Indigenous communities, industry and the public. CANHC also engages with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and countries around the globe to learn and collaborate on best practices and international experiences for host communities.

Many CANHC members have developed significant experience working with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) and its staff across a wide range of regulatory, operational,

emergency management, public engagement, and licensing matters. CANHC views the CNSC and its staff as an important source of trusted scientific, technical, and regulatory expertise for host communities across Canada.

CANHC generally supports efforts to modernize and streamline Canada's major project review and permitting systems where reforms improve coordination, reduce duplication, strengthen regulatory clarity, and maintain meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and host community governments.

CANHC appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the federal discussion paper, *Getting Major Projects Built in Canada*. Our comments are informed by ongoing discussions and operational experience from nuclear host communities directly involved in federal regulatory, impact assessment, emergency planning, and long-term project oversight processes.

In the sections below, CANHC has organized its perspectives in response to the broader reform themes and engagement questions identified by the Government of Canada within the discussion paper and associated consultation materials.

Question 1: Opportunities to Improve Federal Project Reviews and Permitting Processes

Streamlined and Coordinated Federal Reviews

CANHC generally supports efforts to modernize and streamline Canada's federal project review and permitting systems in ways that improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary duplication and administrative burden, provide greater regulatory certainty, and support timely project decision-making while maintaining public confidence and rigorous oversight.

CANHC also believes future federal review systems should more clearly recognize host municipalities, counties, and regional governments as **government partners** and jurisdictions within project review systems — rather than treating host governments solely as members of the general public.

Local governments of nuclear generating stations have regulatory obligations around emergency planning and management, and are directly responsible for many of the infrastructure systems and public services relied upon to support major projects, water and wastewater infrastructure, including land-use planning, transportation systems, housing pressures, environmental stewardship, public safety, and long-term community impacts. In some cases, local governments may also be responsible for permitting and/or restricting certain activities within and surrounding the nuclear site.

Municipal and regional governments are also directly accountable to their residents for ensuring that major nuclear projects are developed and operated safely, securely, responsibly, and in ways that strengthen and maintain local confidence and social acceptance.

If local governments are not consulted or involved in federal regulatory review processes, and significant local government issues and impacts are not addressed, it could lead to major project delays and constraints during site preparation and construction.

Earlier and more structured engagement with local governments can improve coordination, strengthen local confidence in project planning and oversight, reduce downstream conflict, and support more efficient and durable project decision-making.

CANHC recognizes the importance of improving review timelines and advancing more coordinated project delivery. In CANHC's view, achieving these objectives successfully will require earlier and more practical collaboration with local governments and the CNSC to help establish clear and effective approaches for governmental engagement within streamlined review processes.

CNSC Technical Expertise and Integrated Nuclear Reviews

For nuclear projects specifically, CANHC sees considerable merit in approaches that would support more integrated and coordinated reviews led through the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC). **Safety must be the primary consideration for new nuclear projects.**

Many CANHC members have extensive experience working with the CNSC and its staff through licensing, oversight, emergency planning, public engagement, environmental review, and operational processes. In CANHC's view, the CNSC possesses:

- deep technical expertise in nuclear safety, technologies and operations;
- strong operational familiarity with host community issues;
- long-standing relationships with many municipalities and Indigenous communities;
- established lifecycle regulatory oversight responsibilities extending across decades of project operations, and
- a well-established regulatory framework that separates independent Commission decision-making from CNSC staff technical review and regulatory oversight functions.

CANHC also values the CNSC's established public Commission hearing process, which provides opportunities for host governments, Indigenous communities, industry, and members of the public to participate directly in transparent decision-making processes informed by specialized nuclear expertise.

Overall, CANHC believes more coordinated "one project, one review" approaches with the CNSC as the lead for nuclear projects, could improve safety, efficiency, reduce duplication,

eliminate unnecessary process overlap, and create clearer and more predictable regulatory pathways for proponents, governments, Indigenous communities, and host municipalities.

Indigenous Consultation and Intergovernmental Coordination

CANHC believes there are opportunities to improve coordination of Crown consultation responsibilities and Indigenous engagement processes across federal departments and agencies.

More coordinated approaches could help reduce duplication, consultation fatigue, administrative burden and uncertainty for all parties while continuing to support reconciliation, meaningful consultation, and opportunities for long-term partnerships with Indigenous communities.

CANHC is not suggesting that host governments play a role in Crown consultation responsibilities. Rather, CANHC believes there may be value in creating opportunities for earlier and more coordinated dialogue among Indigenous communities, host governments, regulators, and proponents on matters of shared interest relating to major projects.

Where appropriate, such approaches could improve mutual understanding, strengthen relationships, identify common concerns earlier, and support more coordinated project planning and implementation.

CANHC believes improved coordination among regulators, Indigenous communities, proponents, and host governments would strengthen project certainty, public confidence, and long-term project success.

Community Readiness and Long-Term Planning Certainty

At the same time, CANHC believes streamlined review processes for nuclear projects must continue to recognize the significant long-term implications that such projects create for host governments, Indigenous communities, and surrounding regions.

CANHC continues to advocate that “Community Readiness” for major nuclear developments must be recognized as an important federal consideration within integrated project assessments and regulatory reviews.

In CANHC’s view, community readiness considerations for nuclear projects are directly connected to federal nuclear oversight responsibilities and should not be treated solely as downstream municipal servicing matters to be addressed outside federal review systems.

This includes consideration of:

- municipal infrastructure capacity;
- emergency management interfaces;
- transportation systems;

- health and social service impacts;
- housing and workforce pressures;
- cumulative regional effects; and
- long-term governance and service delivery implications.

If these items are not considered or addressed during federal regulatory reviews, they are likely to contribute to project delays and implementation constraints during site preparation and construction. Local and regional governments do not have the fiscal capacity and resources to address or mitigate these items and intergovernmental coordination and support is required.

Unlike many conventional infrastructure or resource projects, nuclear developments involve highly regulated federal oversight responsibilities extending across safety, security, emergency preparedness, environmental protection, transportation, waste management, and long-term operational oversight.

CANHC believes host community readiness forms an important part of the broader conditions necessary to support the safe, secure, and successful implementation of major nuclear projects.

Addressing many of these issues earlier within federal review systems can improve project execution, intergovernmental coordination, regulatory certainty, and long-term public confidence.

Greater regulatory predictability and earlier coordination with host governments can also help communities plan responsibly for growth, manage cumulative pressures, and ensure that the long-term economic and community benefits associated with major projects are achieved successfully and sustainably.

Without appropriate planning certainty and early coordination, rapid project-related growth pressures can create significant challenges for host communities and risk undermining long-term public confidence and support.

Municipal Capacity and Participation Support

CANHC also notes that meaningful participation by host governments within increasingly streamlined federal review systems will require appropriate municipal capacity and participation support mechanisms.

Host municipalities and regional governments are often expected to engage on highly technical nuclear, environmental, emergency management, infrastructure, and socio-economic matters over complex regulatory processes that can span many years.

Many nuclear host communities are small and medium-sized municipalities with limited staff and budgets, including some communities with populations of only a few thousand residents.

While they may be expected to review complex technical documentation, participate in hearings, engage residents, coordinate with neighbouring governments and Indigenous communities, and plan for long-term growth and infrastructure pressures, they often do not have dedicated in-house expertise or resources available to support all of these activities.

Ensuring that host governments have appropriate opportunities to access information, technical expertise, and participation funding will strengthen the quality of engagement and support more effective and durable project outcomes

CANHC notes that current federal participation funding approaches do not provide dedicated participant funding mechanisms for local governments, nor do they recognize the unique role and responsibilities of municipal host governments within major nuclear project review systems.

Permitting and Authorization Processes

CANHC also supports efforts to improve coordination and efficiency across related federal, provincial and municipal permitting and authorization processes associated with major projects. It is important to note that for some provinces, like Ontario, the provincial government requires the local and/or regional government to administer, permit and enforce certain acts (ie. Ontario Building Code, Ontario Fire Code).

Understanding what level of government (federal, provincial, municipal) has authority and permitting responsibilities is important for new nuclear facilities and the ancillary buildings/infrastructure. Where such permitting decisions may create direct implications for host communities, local infrastructure systems, emergency management arrangements, land-use planning, or regional environmental and socio-economic considerations, host governments should be engaged early as governmental partners within those processes.

Earlier coordination among regulators, proponents, Indigenous communities, and host governments can help identify practical local considerations earlier and support more durable and broadly supported outcomes.

Question 2: Risks and Considerations Associated with Streamlined Review Systems

Maintaining Public Confidence, Trust, and Legitimacy

CANHC believes one of the most important considerations associated with streamlined federal review systems will be maintaining long-term public confidence and trust, transparency, and legitimacy in project decision-making processes.

This is particularly important for major nuclear projects.

While nuclear projects can provide significant long-term economic, energy, employment, and infrastructure benefits for host regions and Canada as a whole, they also involve highly regulated technologies and activities associated with safety, security, environmental protection, emergency preparedness, transportation, waste management, and long-term operational oversight extending across generations.

As a result, public confidence and long-term social acceptance are foundational to the successful development and operation of nuclear projects.

In CANHC’s experience, project delays and conflict often arise not from meaningful engagement itself, but from late-stage issue identification, fragmented coordination, unclear governmental roles, insufficient early collaboration, and situations where communities do not feel meaningfully included in decision-making processes that directly affect them.

CANHC believes there is a risk that overly accelerated or insufficiently coordinated review systems could unintentionally weaken public confidence and trust if host governments, Indigenous communities, and local residents do not believe that their concerns, responsibilities, and long-term interests are being appropriately recognized within project planning and oversight processes.

For nuclear projects specifically, maintaining public confidence requires transparent regulatory systems, strong technical expertise, meaningful governmental and Indigenous engagement, and long-term relationships built on trust, coordination, and accountability.

As noted previously, CANHC also believes that recognizing “Community Readiness” as an important federal consideration within integrated nuclear review systems will be essential to the long-term success, legitimacy, and sustainability of future nuclear developments.

Question 3: Improving Coordination and Implementation Within Streamlined Review Systems

Early Coordination and Governmental Partnership

CANHC believes successful implementation of streamlined federal review systems will depend heavily on early coordination, practical intergovernmental collaboration, and clear engagement frameworks involving regulators, Indigenous communities, proponents, and host governments.

For nuclear projects specifically, CANHC believes host municipalities, counties, and regional governments should be engaged early as governmental partners in discussions regarding project planning, community readiness, public communication and long-term implementation considerations.

It is important that governments and regulators engage directly with local communities, local governments, local stakeholders, and residents living in close proximity to proposed projects — ultimately, the people and communities most directly affected by major developments.

Local governments are democratically elected by local residents and possess important knowledge regarding community conditions, infrastructure systems, emergency management responsibilities, and local priorities. CANHC believes local governments should therefore be engaged early and meaningfully throughout regulatory review processes.

In CANHC’s view, earlier collaboration with host governments can help identify local and regional issues proactively, improve planning certainty, strengthen public confidence, and reduce downstream conflict and delays.

Special economic zones through regional impact assessments

Further to the above, through the Special Economic Zones and regional impact assessments, it’s important that all levels of government are involved, including federal, provincial, regional and local governments. As noted above, without engaging and involving local governments early in the process, it may result in project delays later on.

Role of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC)

CANHC believes the CNSC is well positioned to play an important leadership role within streamlined and integrated nuclear review systems.

CANHC members have developed strong working relationships with CNSC staff over many years and value the organization’s technical expertise, regulatory experience, transparency, and long-term oversight role across the nuclear lifecycle.

CANHC also believes there may be opportunities for the CNSC, host governments, Indigenous communities, and other partners to continue working collaboratively on practical approaches for governmental engagement, community readiness considerations, public confidence, and coordinated implementation within future streamlined review systems.

CANHC also believes there may be value in exploring more formal and predictable mechanisms for ongoing engagement with host governments and Indigenous communities throughout the life of major nuclear facilities.

While project reviews and licensing decisions represent important milestones, host communities continue to experience the long-term operational, emergency management, infrastructure, workforce, and socio-economic implications associated with these facilities for decades. Establishing regular opportunities for dialogue, issue identification, information sharing, and problem resolution would help strengthen long-term relationships, public confidence, and regulatory legitimacy.

Long-Term Success and Public Confidence

CANHC believes efficient regulatory systems and meaningful governmental engagement are not competing objectives.

For nuclear projects specifically, long-term project success depends upon public confidence, strong relationships, credible regulation, and sustained collaboration among all levels of government, regulators, Indigenous communities, industry, and host regions.

In CANHC's view, streamlined systems that maintain these foundations will be best positioned to support successful nation-building projects across Canada.

Conclusion:

CANHC appreciates the Government of Canada's efforts to examine opportunities to modernize and improve the efficiency of Canada's major project review and permitting systems.

CANHC supports efforts to modernize and streamline Canada's major project review systems where reforms improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary regulatory duplication, strengthen regulatory clarity, and maintain credible and meaningful engagement with Indigenous nations and host governments.

For nuclear projects specifically, CANHC believes there is significant value in review systems being led by organizations with appropriate technical and safety expertise, operational familiarity, and long-term regulatory oversight responsibilities, including the CNSC.

Efficient regulatory systems and meaningful partnership with host communities are not competing objectives. In CANHC's experience, they are mutually reinforcing foundations for successful nation-building projects and durable public confidence.

We urge the federal government to:

- Support integrated "one project, one review" approaches for nuclear projects led by the CNSC, with appropriate coordination across the federal departments and agencies;
- Formally recognize host municipalities/regions as government in the major project review framework;
- Pair regulatory acceleration with commensurate investment in municipal community readiness, housing, and infrastructure; and,
- Recognize CANHC as a national resource, coordinating body, and representative voice for nuclear host communities and engage the organization in ongoing discussions regarding the development and implementation of regulatory reforms affecting host regions.