

Accelerating Energy Project Permitting

Memorandum to Government

- The TRBOT's Energy and Climate Committee has found that the slow and uncertain permitting processes for energy projects is creating barriers to the build-out of much-needed energy infrastructure during a period of accelerating demand.
- The Government of Ontario has made it a priority to remove barriers and reduce delays to building essential transit and broadband infrastructure. To meet Ontario's growing energy needs, the build-out of clean energy generation, transmission and distribution projects should be treated with the same priority.

Recommendation

The Government of Ontario should appoint a Special Advisor on Energy Project Permitting. This new role will help energy project proponents navigate the current complex process of project permitting. This role can also act as a champion within government to find ways to reduce red tape and improve the overall permitting process for energy projects.

The Special Advisor would:

1. Ensure that service standards for reviews are being met.
2. Address overlaps between various levels of government and different ministries.
3. Advocate for streamlining the permitting process to avoid unnecessary duplication and delays by helping:
 - a. Create a 'one window' approach, where one comprehensive project requires only one approval.
 - b. Streamlining approvals for project expansions vs. net new energy projects.
 - c. Proactively engaging with Indigenous communities and clarifying consultation.
4. Make recommendations to government on how to improve the existing process and regulations to help ensure that the government is achieving the outcomes it desires.
5. Provide policy clarity and consistency to help reduce uncertainty for developers.

Recommended approach: Premier's Appointment

An appointment by the Premier of a Special Advisor on Energy Project Permitting by way of an Order in Council, modeled on the 2018 appointment of Dr. Reuben Devlin as Special Advisor and Chair of the Premier's Council on Improving Health Care and Ending Hallway Medicine. (See Appendix for an Example of a Draft OIC).

By having the Special Advisor reporting to the Premier, it allows for better coordination across the Ministries and Agencies that have a role in the permitting process for new energy projects.

This should be paired with the creation of an Advisory Council on Energy Project Permitting composed of energy sector stakeholders, government officials and agency representatives. This group could be mandated to provide recommendations and advice to the Premier (or the Minister of Energy) in the fall of 2025. For example, the U.S. has established the [Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council to improve permitting efficiency](#).

An appointee reporting to the Premier would be best positioned to ensure that all Ministries and government agencies respond with urgency to requests for information and action.

Option 2: Minister's Appointment

A Ministerial Appointment, like that of David Collie as the Chair of Ontario's Electrification and Energy Transition Panel.

While still helpful, a Ministerial appointee would be reporting through the Ministry of Energy, which may limit their effectiveness in addressing barriers and delays originating in other Ministries or levels of government.

Rationale

Appointing a Special Advisor on Energy Project Permitting would be a made-in-Ontario solution, showcasing the government's commitment to fostering the investment and economic opportunities that a streamlined, predictable project review and approval timeline could provide for the province.

This initiative aligns with Minister Lecce's stated goal of establishing Ontario as a "clean energy superpower" and would represent a quick political win for the government. It would signal to the energy sector that policymakers are dedicated to supporting investments in critical clean energy infrastructure, while also reducing costs from duplication that would ultimately burden the ratepayer.

It is worth noting that the Government of Canada recently announced the [establishment of a Permitting Coordinator role](#) within the Privy Council Office's Clean Growth Office. However, this role, intended to facilitate timely permitting of clean energy projects by coordinating with relevant federal ministries and agencies, may not be as effective as an Order-in-Council (OIC) appointee, due to its function within the Public Service.

By appointing a Special Advisor, the Ontario government would take a bold and proactive step towards removing barriers and reducing delays in building much-needed energy infrastructure.

"My message is we're going to need all of the above, plus some, to generate the energy Ontario's economy and population demands over the next 20 or 30 years." – Hon. Steven Lecce, Ontario's Minister of Energy and Electrification



Appendix

Please note, this information is provided for illustrative purposes only

Draft Order in Council (Part 1)

On the recommendation of the undersigned, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, by and with the advice and concurrence of the Executive Council of Ontario, orders that:

Whereas the Government of Ontario is committed to ensuring the continued availability of reliable, affordable, and clean energy;

Whereas, the Government of Ontario is committed to acquire the energy resources we need this decade to power economic growth and increasing electrification;

And whereas the Government of Ontario considers it advisable to appoint an individual to serve as the Special Advisor on Energy Project Permitting;

Now therefore, pursuant to the prerogative of His Majesty the King in Right of Ontario to appoint advisors to serve His Majesty's Government of Ontario in the discharge of its executive obligations and responsibilities,

NAME

is hereby appointed as the Special Advisor on Energy Project Permitting, effective the date of this order, to serve at the pleasure of the Lieutenant Governor in Council for a period not exceeding three years from the effective date of this order, subject to any reappointment approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Draft Order in Council (Part 2 – Advisory Council)

On the recommendation of the undersigned, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, by and with the advice and concurrence of the Executive Council of Ontario, orders that:

Whereas the Government of Ontario is committed to ensuring the continued availability of reliable, affordable, and clean energy;

And whereas, the Government of Ontario is committed to acquire the energy resources we need this decade to power economic growth and increasing electrification;

And whereas, in furtherance of that objective, it has been determined that it is desirable, pursuant to the prerogative of His Majesty the King in right of Ontario, and in the discharge of the government's executive obligations and responsibilities, to receive advice from energy sector stakeholders about expediting energy project approvals;

Therefore, pursuant to the prerogative of His Majesty the King in Right of Ontario to provide for the appointment of advisors to serve His Majesty's Government of Ontario in the discharge of its executive obligations and responsibilities:

1. The Premier's Council on Energy Project Permitting ("the Council"), is hereby established for a term of up to three years, effective the date of this order;
2. The Chair and other members of the council will be appointed to serve at pleasure by order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council for terms of up to three years;
3. The Chair shall also serve as the Special Advisor on Energy Project Permitting;
4. The Chair will report to the Premier and work with the Minister and Deputy Minister of Energy and Electrification to develop plans to bring forward options for the government;
5. The Chair and the Council shall perform such other duties as are determined by the Premier and such duties may be amended from time to time at the discretion of the Premier;

