Opportunity blooms in wild rose country: Federal government plants Major Projects Office in Calgary

September 08, 2025

In the wake of the *Building Canada Act* (BCA), the Prime Minister's office has announced that it intends to launch a Major Projects Office (MPO) to facilitate the advancement of major infrastructure and energy projects that are of national interest. These projects may include, without limitation, ports, railways, energy corridors, critical mineral developments and clean energy initiatives.

The MPO will be headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, with regional offices in other major Canadian cities. The BCA and MPO come largely in response to American tariffs and represent part of Canada's action plan to promote long-term economic prosperity and independence. Calgary, with its well-known entrepreneurial spirit and long history of resilience in face of shifting global markets, is the perfect base of operations.

The MPO's mission is to get nation-building projects built faster. It intends to do so by: (1) streamlining and accelerating regulatory approval processes; and (2) helping structure and co-ordinate financing of these projects. In practice, this will include:

- identifying projects of national interest and fast-track their development by creating a single set of approval conditions (with the goal of approving those projects in less than 2 years); and,
- attracting domestic and global capital to these major projects by structuring and co-ordinating financing from the private sector, provincial and territorial partners, and government initiatives, including the Canada Infrastructure Bank, the Canada Growth Fund, and the Indigenous Loan Guarantee Program.

Dawn Farrell, Board Chair of Trans Mountain Corporation (among other things), will spearhead the initiative as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the MPO. Farrell, with Calgarian roots, brings more than 35 years of experience to the role. She has previously served as President and CEO of both Trans Mountain Corporation (Trans Mountain) and TransAlta Corporation (TransAlta). Her resume is robust, including overseeing Trans Mountain's multibillion-dollar expansion project and TransAlta's transition from coal to renewables.

An article published by the Globe and Mail highlights a draft list of 32 potential projects on which the MPO may focus, including a pipeline that would bring Alberta oil through northwest British Columbia to the Pacific Coast. The list remains in draft form, but demonstrates the significant emphasis being placed on energy related projects. But the MPO has some major work ahead of it, including getting provinces and territories on board to achieve a “one project, one review” approach for environmental assessments. The MPO will also be working collaboratively with an Indigenous Advisory Council, whose membership has yet to be determined.

The initiative creates interesting opportunities for industry stakeholders, the federal government purports to be moving with urgency and determination, and it signals the potential for major investment in Canadian infrastructure.

BLG’s team of experts have extensive experience with major infrastructure projects from inception to completion and are well-represented across the country, including boots on the ground in our Calgary office. If you would like to learn more about the opportunities that may arise from the creation of the MPO, and how your organization might benefit, please feel free to contact us.

By

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