

To: Mayor and Council **Date:** June 2, 2025
From: Mike Younie, Chief Administrative Officer
Subject: **Bill 15 - Infrastructure Projects Act**

Recommendation(s)

This report is for information only and no Council action is required.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with background information regarding *Bill 15 – Infrastructure Projects Act* (Bill 15) which has received second reading in the provincial legislature.

Background

The explanatory note for Bill 15

(https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/bills/billscurrent/gov15-1_43rd1st) states:

This Bill provides for the designation of different types of infrastructure projects and the authorization by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to use specified streamlining options in relation to infrastructure projects that have been designated.

Bill 15 seeks to identify “provincially significant” construction projects and bring them to the top of the queue for review and allows for exemptions from fulsome and transparent environmental assessments and related review by 3rd parties. As such, Bill 15 has been the subject of significant criticism by local governments, First Nations, environmental advocates, legal experts and the opposition. UBCM has been actively involved (Attachment A) in engaging with the province regarding concerns voiced by local governments. Attachment A provides a useful summary of Bill 15 and concerns expressed by local governments to date.

Discussion and Analysis

As above, many affected stakeholders believe Bill 15 is an overreach by the provincial government in that local concerns may not be accounted for, local government regulatory roles could be usurped and there is a concern that required First Nations consultation would not occur. However, the province has stated that it will be required to uphold the government’s commitment to the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Bill 15 also allows for the Minister to intervene in local regulatory processes to develop measures to address project delays where necessary.

Local governments, through UBCM, and First Nations feel that the province has not engaged in meaningful consultation to this point.

Bill 15 provides the Cabinet with extraordinary powers to override regulations, including local government OCP, zoning bylaw amendments and subdivision approval processes. While the legislation is not designed to change the quality or rigour of the provincial permitting process, it remains unclear if the legislation equally protects the quality and rigour of the local government permitting process.

A “provincially significant” project has not been defined yet but is expected to include projects such as mines, schools, energy, pipelines, food, community centres to name a few.

The provincial government has responded to the concerns saying that the legislation is designed to get to a yes or no decision more quickly.

Depending on whether Bill 15 is adopted as it currently reads or whether amendments will be made to address the significant concerns noted by many, Bill 15 could be the source of significant discussion at the September UBCM meetings in Victoria. At this point, Council could decide to put forward a resolution to UBCM although it is likely that UBCM will take the lead on the file on behalf of all local governments in BC.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Communication

No additional communication is required unless action is desired by Council.

Summary and Conclusion

Bill 15 – Infrastructure Projects Act has received 2nd reading in the provincial legislature. The legislation seeks to fast track provincially significant projects and has granted authority to the provincial cabinet to override provincial and local government permitting processes. Many stakeholders, including local governments and First Nations, are concerned with losing control and reduced input over large projects.

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Reviewed by: Christine Brough, Executive Assistant

Approved for Inclusion: Mike Younie, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment(s)

Attachment A: UBCM Commentary