

Construction in focus: Parliament's fall session set to bolster industry

The House of Commons will return for the second session of the 45th Parliament on September 15, 2025. In early September, Prime Minister Mark Carney and his cabinet met in Toronto for two days to align the Government's priorities and plans for the fall legislative sitting. The government's priorities are expected to build on the momentum from the first parliamentary session. Specifically, the focus will remain on fast-tracking major project approvals, building affordable housing, supporting sectors most impacted by tariffs, expanding defence investments, and preparing for the upcoming 2026 Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) renegotiation. This note will provide an overview of the key political updates for the construction industry since the House of Commons rose in the spring, and what's ahead for the fall.

Recap of the previous session

Passed through the House - Bill C-5: *The One Canadian Economy Act*, tabled on June 6, 2025, was passed in the House of Commons (HoC) on June 26, 2025. The legislation, which was split into two parts, addresses (1) dismantling interprovincial trade barriers and improving labour mobility, and (2) building Canada's infrastructure through the development of nation-building projects. Following the legislation receiving royal assent, attention has now turned to the official launch of the Major Projects Office (MPO) to see the first slate of nation-building projects approved.

Left on the table - Bill C-2: *The Strong Borders Act*, initially introduced on June 3, 2025, was left in its second reading and therefore did not become law before the HoC rose for the summer. However, it could be reintroduced and go through the stages of legislative reading once more. This bill sought to introduce:

- Amendments to the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, which would authorize Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to withdraw, suspend, cancel, or pause any immigration applications, including those actively being processed. This could pose issues with workforce inflow for the construction industry; and
- Restrictions on cash payments and donations up to \$10,000 in a single or repeated transaction. This could complicate the payment structure for some construction businesses that operate on an installment-based cash basis, especially if they consider seasonal, contract, part-time, or rural jobs.

Significant developments over the summer

The Leader of the Official Opposition - On August 18, 2025, Pierre Poilievre won the by-election in the Alberta riding of Battle River-Crowfoot, a conservative stronghold. The by-election was triggered by the resignation of former MP Damien Kurek, who stepped down so Poilievre could run. In the spring federal election, Poilievre lost his Ottawa seat to Liberal candidate Bruce Fanjoy – a riding he had held for 20 years. As a result, he was left without a seat in Parliament when the first session began. This decisive win means Poilievre has secured his return to the House of Commons.

Lifting counter-tariffs against the U.S - On August 22, 2025, Prime Minister Mark Carney announced that, starting September 1, most of the \$60 billion in counter-tariffs on U.S. goods would be removed, leaving only targeted tariffs, most notably on steel and aluminum products. The Prime Minister noted that Canada's retaliatory tariffs were a significant "sticking point" in current trade talks, especially since the United States granted tariff exemptions for CUSMA-compliant goods over the summer. CCA welcomes this move as it alleviates the economic pressure by giving the industry more certainty in meeting its project budgets and timelines.

Major Projects Office - On August 29, 2025, Prime Minister Carney launched the MPO, whose mandate is to “serve as a single point of contact to get nation-building projects built faster” so Canada can invest and build the infrastructure needed to become the strongest in the G7. The MPO’s goal is to streamline conditions to reduce red tape and expedite approval timelines for projects of national interest for all major projects across the federal government, up to a maximum of two years. On September 11, 2025, the first slate of nation-building projects was unveiled. The preliminary five projects focus on expanding trade infrastructure like the Port of Montreal and doubling the production of liquefied natural gas to upgrade Canada’s export capacity.

Despite the official launch, the MPO still has some groundwork to finalize. This includes attracting domestic and global capital to co-finance these projects with provincial and territorial partners, creating a “one project, one review” framework for environmental assessments, and collaborating with Indigenous leadership by establishing the Indigenous Advisory Council.

Buy Canadian Procurement - On September 8, 2025, Industry Minister Joly announced a series of initiatives to help industries most impacted by U.S. tariffs, such as the steel and aluminum industry. The measures of interest to the industry include:

- \$5 billion to create a Strategic Response Fund that should provide workforce training support for all tariff-affected sectors.
- The introduction of a new Buy Canadian policy that guarantees the federal government will buy from Canadian suppliers, intending to encourage provinces and municipalities to incorporate this in their own procurement and expand this approach to all federal funding streams and Crown corporations.

It is unclear how this will be operationalized in construction procurement, but CCA will monitor any developments as more details emerge.

Red Tape Review - On September 8, 2025, Treasury Board President Ali provided a 60-day progress report on the Red Tape Review, detailing the areas where the government departments can streamline regulations to boost productivity and lower costs. The review identified nearly 500 measures to cut duplication and eliminate red tape for businesses and Canadians. While construction is not explicitly mentioned, implementing the proposed initiatives, such as simplifying project review processes under the *Impact Assessment Act*, and ensuring Canadian goods can be exported more efficiently through international collaboration, stands to benefit construction.

What’s ahead

Fall budget - On August 23, 2025, Finance Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne announced that the federal government will present a budget in October. This is the Carney administration’s first budget, after they had previously noted that the delivery of a spring budget would have been premature due to the federal election and uncertainty from Trump’s trade war. CCA has submitted a [pre-budget submission](#) to the House of Commons (HoC) Standing Committee on Finance (FINA) and the Department of Finance’s consultations, to ensure that the industry’s perspective is adequately represented in the government’s budget considerations.

The context of this budget will be significant because of the trade turbulence since President Donald Trump’s re-election over the past year. As of this note, a formalized trade deal has yet to be struck between Canada and the United States, but Canada-U.S. Relations Minister Dominic LeBlanc has noted that “progress is being made on a trade deal,” but that they were not presently on the verge of an agreement. Carney has reiterated this sentiment, noting that while regular conversations are ongoing, Canadians should not expect immediate tariff relief.

Spend less, invest more - Meanwhile, the Carney government has pushed that his government would “spend less, so Canada can invest more,” championing the need for domestic investment to establish Canada in an evolving global economy, especially when prioritizing infrastructure and defence spending, while reigning in public spending. However, the cost-of-living crisis has presented a challenge as the government tries to simultaneously boost spending while cutting costs to maintain fiscal discipline.

This sentiment is reinforced by the fact that in July 2025, Minister Champagne sent two letters to his cabinet colleagues, with the first asking them to develop “ambitious savings proposals” ahead of a comprehensive review of public sector spending to achieve the goal of reducing program spending by 7.5 to 15 per cent over the next four years.

Meanwhile, the second letter from the Finance Minister requested that each Minister outline how their department’s operations and budget operations advance one of the priorities laid out in the singular mandate letter issued by the Prime Minister. These priorities include:

- Establishing a new economic and security relationship with the United States, as well as other allies and trading partners globally;
- Building one Canadian economy by removing barriers to interprovincial trade and expediting nation-building projects;
- Bringing down costs for Canadians;
- Making housing more affordable through the modernization of the housing industry and creating new careers in the skilled trades;
- Protecting Canadian sovereignty by strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces;
- Returning overall immigration levels to sustainable levels while still attracting the best talent; and/or
- Spending less on government operations;

CCA welcomes these priorities, which directly or indirectly involve supporting construction activity. The full scope of this prioritization will be made clear in the delivery of the federal budget this Fall.

Conclusion

Our Public Affairs team is gearing up for a busy fall with multiple advocacy events, including our semi-annual Meech Lake meeting with senior government officials on October 2, 2025, our response to the federal budget mid-October, the Best Practices in Construction Symposium being held in Toronto on October 31, 2025, and our upcoming Hill Day 2025 on November 18, 2025. In the meantime, we will continue to track any and all developments in these key policy files and analyze their impact on construction.

For more information on CCA’s advocacy work, please get in touch with our Associate Vice-President of Public Affairs and Industry Practices, [Louis-Philippe Champagne](#).