

Cutting Wait Times for Archaeological Approvals by Up to 80 Per Cent

TORONTO — As part of the government's plan to protect Ontario by cutting red tape, attracting investment and building the most competitive economy in the G7, the province is proposing legislative changes to make the archaeological assessment process faster, fairer and easier to navigate. The proposed changes will reduce approval timelines by up to 80 per cent, increase sector capacity by 45 per cent and help get homes, infrastructure and other job-creating projects built faster while protecting the province's cultural heritage resources. Together, these reforms will help Ontario become the fastest permitting jurisdiction in the G7, attracting new investment and creating good-paying jobs.

"As part of our plan to cut red tape, we're modernizing Ontario's heritage framework to make processes faster, clearer and easier to navigate," said Graham McGregor, Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. "By cutting approval timelines by up to 80 per cent, we're helping get homes and infrastructure built sooner, while continuing to protect Ontario's archaeological heritage and strengthening our partnerships with Indigenous communities and sector partners."

The proposed changes will streamline archaeological approvals, expand sector capacity, improve digital tools and services by focusing on reforms in three key areas:

Streamlined archaeological assessments by introducing a faster and more efficient approval process that will reform outdated standards and guidelines, cut administrative burden for low-risk projects and implement exemptions for small-scale residential projects.

Enhanced sector oversight and compliance framework by introducing a risk-based enforcement approach that aligns with other Canadian jurisdictions, eliminates unnecessary licensing requirements and recognizes qualified professionals across jurisdictions to reduce barriers, strengthen oversight and improve labour mobility.

Advanced digital tools by replacing outdated systems, improving archaeological mapping and data collection and expanding user access by integrating services into Ontario's Centralized Digital Permitting Service (CDPS), to make information and services easier to access for businesses and stakeholders.

"Across the entire province we're working to speed up approvals so they are faster and easier to navigate, giving investors, job creators and communities greater certainty to move projects forward," said Andrea Khanjin, Minister of Red Tape Reduction. "These new changes will fortify Ontario's industrial base and accelerate project delivery to attract new investment and make Ontario the most competitive place in the G7 to invest, do business and create jobs."

These proposed improvements are part of an upcoming legislative package that will continue delivering on the historic progress the government has made to cut red tape, reduce permitting wait times and give businesses the confidence to invest and create jobs in Ontario. The changes announced today build on the success of the Heritage Framework Transformation (HFT), a multi-year initiative to modernize heritage policies, processes and digital tools. Through this work, Ontario has already eliminated a backlog of more than 3,000 archaeological reports and improved service delivery by allowing 80 per cent of reports filed to be entered into the report register within 10 business days. The province will implement the proposed changes in phases, beginning in early 2027 with enhanced compliance and enforcement tools, access to the CDPS and exemptions for certain small-scale residential projects. Further work will be undertaken, in consultation with Indigenous communities and sector partners, to support the transition to a new authorization framework. The ministry will continue working closely with Indigenous communities through ongoing consultations and new Indigenous Relationship Tables, providing

opportunities to share feedback and help shape future policy, operational and digital improvements. The ministry will also engage municipal and sector partners through its Sector Technical Tables to support implementation, reduce red tape and identify further opportunities to streamline approvals. These improvements support Ontario's goal of becoming the fastest permitting jurisdiction in the G7, while continuing to preserve archaeological heritage resources for future generations.

Ontario's archaeology framework has not seen significant review in the last 15 years, creating opportunities for updates to better support current conservation and development needs.

Archaeological assessments are triggered under various pieces of land use planning legislation, regulations, policies and processes. Carrying out archaeological work in advance of development is a key part of project planning and preserving Ontario's archaeological sites.

The Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism has seen a 30 per cent increase in archaeological assessments since 2020.

In 2025, the ministry received approximately 3,800 archaeological assessment reports for regulatory review. The current four-stage archaeological assessment process can take up to 64 months to complete. Based on the changes being proposed, the new archaeology approvals timeline, on average, will be reduced by 80 per cent.

The changes will also expand the range of compliance and enforcement actions such as enhanced guidance and training, proactive risk-based inspections, fines and compliance orders to improve sector compliance.

"First Nations have inherent rights to protect and care for their Ancestors, sacred sites and sacred items, rights that governments must respect. These are not simply matters of heritage; they are fundamental to our identity, teachings and responsibilities to past and future generations. The Ontario government has the legal duty to consult with First Nations and the moral obligation to partner with First Nations in the spirit of reconciliation. Ontario's Heritage Framework Transformation is an opportunity to turn past failures into lasting change by ensuring First Nations have meaningful roles in shaping the policies and laws to protect our Ancestors and cultural artifacts. We look forward to building a collaborative relationship that will ensure Ontario works with the Anishinabek Nation toward a future grounded in respect for our First Nations' inherent rights."

- Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Linda Debassige

"AMO supports modernizing Ontario's heritage framework to enable faster, more predictable development approvals while strengthening the protection of archaeological resources. We commend the province's commitment to engaging First Nations communities, whose knowledge and partnership are essential to protecting Indigenous heritage and advancing reconciliation."

- Riley Brockington, President, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)

"Today's announcement shows what is possible with collaboration and cooperation between the development industry, Indigenous communities and archaeologists. When we work together, we see strong progress and the necessary reduction of red tape. The latest round of changes under the Heritage Framework Transformation, including streamlining archaeological assessments and stronger accountability and oversight for higher-risk activities, leading to increased affordability for newly built homes."

- Scott Andison, CEO, Ontario Home Builders Association

"Ontario's current system for managing heritage was designed for yesterday's problems. It's a big job to debug it, to modernize it, and to make sure that it serves the needs of archaeologists, other stakeholders, and the First Nations. I welcome the proposal introduced by the Ontario government today and look forward to continued engagement. Importantly, acknowledging that Indigenous people have a legal and moral right to be involved in the management of their own heritage is huge."

- Paul Racher, Managing Principal, Archaeological Research Associates Ltd. (ARA)





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Enabling Access to Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids

TORONTO — As part of its plan to protect Ontario and strengthen public services, the Ontario government is taking the next steps to enable the sale and use of Health Canada approved over-the-counter hearing aids. As part of the Health Innovation Pathway, a streamlined approach to accelerating the adoption of innovative health technologies, the province is advancing proposed regulatory changes that, once passed, will give Ontarians with mild to moderate hearing loss more convenient and accessible options for hearing support. This new measure will not in any way replace or impact Ontario's existing model of hearing aid prescription and coverage but instead provide an additional option to support Ontarians with more choice and convenience.

"Our government is continuing to take bold and innovative action to protect our health-care system and connect more Ontarians to best-in-class health-care solutions," said Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "By making life-changing technologies like over-the-counter hearing aids more accessible, we're giving Ontarians more choice and flexibility to get the hearing support they need, when and where they need it."

In April 2026, the government launched a 30-day consultation period for individuals, industry partners, health organizations and others to provide feedback on the potential sale and use of over-the-counter hearing aids in Ontario. Given the overwhelming support received through this consultation, the government is moving forward with legislative and regulatory changes to officially enable the sale and use of over-the-counter hearing aids for adults with mild to moderate hearing loss.

Currently, all hearing aids in Ontario require a prescription from a regulated health professional. Upon completion of the legislative and regulatory changes, manufacturers of in-ear headphones and earbuds with built-in hearing aid capabilities (otherwise referred to as over-the-counter hearing aids) will be able to turn on these features, providing more choice and convenience for Ontarians. These changes will have no impact on the province's current model of care and Ontarians will continue to be able to receive funding assistance for prescribed hearing aids under the Assistive Devices Program.

Through Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care, the government is strengthening Ontario's health-care system and supporting the adoption of innovative solutions to provide people with faster access to high-quality care, when and where they need it.

More information about how the government continues to make progress on its plan to protect Ontario will be included in the 2026 Fall Economic Statement, which will be released on or before November 15, 2026.

"Our government is strengthening health care in Ontario by supporting innovative approaches that support a comprehensive, convenient and connected health-care system for everyone. Allowing over-the-counter access to hearing aids would reduce barriers to treatment for mild to moderate hearing loss and give people faster access to high-quality health care when and where they need it."

- Peter Bethlenfalvy Minister of Finance



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