

# **‘Shovels in the ground faster’: Frustrated by long delays, Doug Ford plans to push other premiers to support better co-ordination with Ottawa for big infrastructure projects**

By [Kristin Rushowy](#) Sun., July 9, 2023

Ottawa needs to work with provinces so that big infrastructure projects can get going faster, says Premier Doug Ford in what will be his main push as he heads to the annual summer meeting of provincial and territorial leaders.

Frustrated in particular by the decade-plus of delays to the [Ring of Fire](#) critical mineral project in northern Ontario — as well as slowdowns on others in dealing with two levels of government — Ford is hoping to get the country’s 12 other provincial and territorial leaders on side at the Council of the Federation, which runs Monday to Wednesday in Winnipeg.

“As we welcome hundreds of thousands of newcomers every year, we need to ensure we’re building the infrastructure required to keep pace with our historic growth,” Ford said in a statement to the Star.

“My priority at this year’s summer meeting is making sure we are doing everything we can to get shovels in the ground faster so we can build more homes and deliver on key projects, like Highway 413 and the Ring of Fire.”

Highway 413 is to undergo both federal and provincial impact assessments. And with Ontario’s focus on new electric vehicle battery plants, timely mineral extraction in the province is going to be key.

Ford said Ottawa needs “to work with provinces to move big, ambitious projects forward. I’ll continue to call on the federal government to work with all provinces to reduce unnecessary duplication and streamline federal reviews with existing provincial environmental assessments so we can get major projects done together.”

Last year at their meeting in Victoria, the 13 premiers were [focused on health care](#), but provinces including Ontario [have since worked out deals](#) with the federal government for improved funding.

This year, health care is still a concern, but affordability will also be at the top of their list.

“This meeting will allow all premiers to collaborate and take action on the key issues that matter most in our communities,” Manitoba Premier Heather Stefanson, chair of the Council of the Federation who is hosting the gathering at the Fort Garry Hotel, said in a statement.

On Tuesday, talks will focus on affordability and health care, and Wednesday will be set aside for economic issues.

Caroline Cochrane, premier of the Northwest Territories, said the labour shortage in the North is a challenge, and “with pressing shortages in health care, education and construction, recruitment is increasingly challenging as competition for workers increases across Canada.

“Collaboration on the recognition of credentials and certifications, especially in the critical sector of nursing, is especially important for us.”

In recent speeches, Ford has signalled his frustration with infrastructure project delays, and after landing massive new EV contracts — with Ontario and Ottawa working together to land multibillion-dollar deals with [Volkswagen](#) and [Stellantis](#) — the premier wants to ensure things move ahead.

“At a time when it’s never been more important to deliver infrastructure for our growing province ... We need to do everything possible to deliver on our commitment to build Ontario,” Ford told the Empire Club in June, noting his government has already made changes to cut unnecessary red tape.

“We need to get it done. It shouldn’t take years to get approval to build homes for growing communities. It shouldn’t take 15 years to open a mine. It shouldn’t take decades to build roads to the Ring of Fire.

“We have to ensure that Ontario is a place where we can do, and build, big things ... This isn’t just about delivering on our commitments. The world is watching us — global companies looking to invest and grow are watching us. We need to show them that we can deliver.”

The Star has previously reported that Ontario has already [spent more than \\$35 million](#) looking at the environmental impact of Highway 413, which will run between Milton and Vaughan, though advocacy groups say despite all the reports, key areas remain overlooked.

Critics say the highway will boost car trips, further harming the environment, including a [number of species already](#) considered at-risk.