

Major Projects Identification Committees Process – Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the IESO creating this process?

The Ministry of Energy and Mines directed the IESO to formalize a process to provide visibility into major projects, stay ahead of emerging electricity needs, and support economic growth. This process will build early relationships between project developers, property owners, governments, municipalities, Indigenous communities, and the IESO, to inform electricity system plans and forecasts and ensure Ontario's electricity system is ready to support new investment.

How does the process work?

It is a five-step process that will streamline the IESO's intake of major project intelligence.

Step 1: Major Project Originators (such as project developers, project owners, or another party associated with the project or site like a municipality, Indigenous community, electricity distributor, transmitter, or government ministry/agency), submit project information to the IESO via an online intake form. Originators can submit information at any time and can submit as little, or as much, as is known at the time. The primary information the IESO is looking for is project type, location, size, and in-service date.

Step 2: The IESO sends a confirmation email to the Major Project Originator and reviews the submission.

Step 3: The IESO works with the Major Project Originator to ensure project information is accurate and up to date. During this step, the IESO may request updates or additional information, and Major Project Originators are invited to provide updates as they arise.

Step 4: The IESO will form committees of Major Project Validators, such as provincial ministries and agencies, Local Distribution Companies, transmitters, municipalities, Indigenous communities/organizations, local and regional development agencies, and/or other relevant entities. These committees will be formed on an as-needed basis to review project information, verify details, and layer on additional insights. All Validators are required to sign a non-disclosure agreement to protect confidentiality and commercially sensitive information.

Step 5: The IESO will collate all project information to finalize a Major Project List annually. This list will be used to inform electricity system plans and forecasts, including the Annual Planning Outlook, Integrated Regional Resource Plans, Bulk System Plans, and Reliability Outlooks.

How will the committees be formed? Who decides membership?

Committees will be flexible and dynamic, rather than static, to be responsive to external factors and emerging project development trends. The IESO will be purposeful in assembling the committees, selecting relevant, impacted, and responsive parties based on project location, impacted sectors, and project timelines.

What will the committees do?

The committees will validate the major project information that the IESO receives, capture any missing information, and complement the IESO's own assumptions by identifying potential disruptions and timeline constraints.

What is defined as a 'Major Project'?

In general, any project that is greater than 10 MW in size, but that is not a firm requirement. A cluster of projects in one area may exceed 10 MW.

How will this process help the IESO plan and forecast?

By giving the IESO early visibility into potential new projects, the MPIC process will:

- Enhance the IESO's planning efforts by providing insights into demand forecasting for the Annual Planning Outlook, Bulk Plans, and Integrated Regional Resource Plans.
- Enable closer coordination by ensuring a shared understanding of major projects in development and supporting streamlined grid connection requests when the time comes.
- Facilitate early engagement to ensure all impacted parties are aligned on the shared goal of economic growth.

How does this process complement existing processes?

The MPIC process represents a disciplined approach that ensures major projects across Ontario are captured early in existing IESO processes. This voluntary process is designed to complement, not replace, existing IESO planning and connection processes.

The process will establish relationships early, offering opportunities for engagement and education to support project readiness, and a streamlined connection process.

This is a new process that will continue to evolve based on lessons learned, to ensure it aligns with existing processes and continues to create efficiencies.

How is MPIC different from a formal grid connection application?

The MPIC process takes place before a formal grid connection application to:

- Establish early relationships between project developers, landowners, municipalities, Indigenous communities, economic development organizations, government ministries, and electricity sector organizations, to coordinate efforts and better accommodate new projects.
- Inform electricity system plans and forecasts.
- Help project developers navigate Ontario's grid connection process more efficiently by establishing an early relationship with the IESO and reducing back and forth communication.

After a new project has been identified, what happens then?

The IESO will work with those who submit projects, or sites, to gather additional information on project timelines, energy/capacity needs, location, etc. ultimately resulting in the submission of a formal System Impact Assessment.

Does the process make decisions on what projects get approved?

No. This process exists to notify the IESO of potential major projects and undeveloped sites and ensure the electricity system is ready to support investment. It does not prioritize or approve projects.

Will information about potential projects be made public?

The IESO intends to share aggregated information with the public on a regular basis either through existing planning products, like the Annual Planning Outlook, or via dedicated reports. This will include regional trends, forecasted demand, and the timing of new developments.

Commercially sensitive or confidential information will be protected and anyone with access to confidential information as part of the MPIC process will be required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

What is the Major Project Intake Form?

Developers looking to build new facilities and landowners looking to develop new sites are encouraged to complete this form ahead of a formal grid connection request. Information collected through this form will be used to inform the IESO's electricity planning activities, including Integrated Regional Resource Plans, the Annual Planning Outlook, and Bulk Plans.

How does this process benefit project developers and owners?

First, it helps ensure that demand from potential new projects is accounted for in electricity system plans, forecasts, and infrastructure developments. Second, it helps project developers prepare for their formal grid connection application by establishing early communication and information sharing with the IESO.

For municipalities, economic development organizations, and government ministries/agencies, it provides a formalized channel for sharing information on potential new investments outside of the IESO's regular five-year planning cycles, while allowing for deeper collaboration to align on regional priorities.