New law would speed up Highway 69 widening: Province

Sudbury Star staff October 22, 2026

The Ford government on Thursday announced plans to introduce legislation that it says will accelerate the long-delayed widening of Highway 69 between Parry Sound and Sudbury.

If passed, the government said the Building Highway 69 Faster Act will enable the province to complete the widening project up to five years ahead of schedule by streamlining the environmental assessment process.

The province has been under pressure to get widening of Highway 69 back on track after a number of fatal accidents last winter and spring on the two-lane portions of the highway. Work to four-lane the highway began in 2005 but has been hit by a series of delays.

The proposed changes, which are similar to the measures introduced to speed up construction of Highway 413 in the Toronto area, are part of its plan to improve highway safety in Northern Ontario and support economic growth in the region, the province said.

“People in Northern Ontario have waited long enough for a safer, more reliable Highway 69, and our government is taking action to get it built faster,” Transportation Minister Prabmeet Sarkaria said in a release. “By cutting unnecessary red tape, we are accelerating construction by up to five years, improving road safety for drivers and strengthening a vital economic corridor and connection between northern Ontario and the rest of the province.”

The government, however, did not give a timeline for when the four-laning would be completed or how much it would cost.

For businesses across Northern Ontario, Highway 69 is far more than a transportation route.

Marie Litalien President and CEO of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce

Marie Litalien, president and CEO of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, welcomed the news. Widening Highway 69 from Sudbury to Toronto has been a longstanding goal of local business and political leaders.

“For businesses across Northern Ontario, Highway 69 is far more than a transportation route,” Litalien said. “It is a lifeline that connects communities, supports economic growth and keeps people and goods moving throughout the region.

“It is also a long-overdue investment in road safety for everyone who relies on this vital corridor. We welcome the Ontario government’s commitment to advancing this long-awaited project and delivering the infrastructure Northern Ontario needs to grow and compete.”

To date, Ontario has completed only 84 kilometres of widening on Highway 69. The proposed legislation will help accelerate the remaining 68 kilometres of widening, supporting shovels in the ground as early as next year, the government said.

The proposed legislation would establish a project-specific environmental assessment framework that builds on the environmental work already completed to support the Highway 69 expansion project. This would allow eligible work to proceed sooner, while maintaining environmental oversight and fulfilling the province’s duty to consult with Indigenous communities, the government said.

Ontario is also calling on the federal government to support the expansion of this “vital economic corridor,” which supports Canadian economic sovereignty and interprovincial trade, by expediting outstanding environmental and regulatory approvals, advancing critical rail relocation work with Canadian National Railway and ensuring timely approvals for watercourse crossings.

Federal support will help prevent unnecessary delays and keep the project on track for shovels in the ground starting as early as next year, according to the province.

“A safe, reliable Highway 69 is essential to Sudbury and Northern Ontario’s economy,” said George Pirie, the minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth. “Accelerating the expansion will improve road safety, strengthen our supply chains and provide Sudbury and northern communities with the modern transportation infrastructure they need to grow, attract investment and remain competitive.”

Thursday’s announcement did not address the fact that the remaining 68-km two-lane stretch runs through or near Indigenous lands – including Henvey Inlet, Shawanaga, and Magnetawan First Nations – requiring extensive ongoing negotiations and environmental assessments before work can proceed.

Quick Facts

- The Building Highway 69 Faster Act will be introduced as part of a wider package of legislative reforms that will help deliver on the government’s goal of cutting red tape, attracting investment and building the most competitive, resilient and self-reliant economy in the G7.

- Expansion of the remaining 68 kilometres of Highway 69 will be delivered in six sections, four of which are expected to be under construction by the end of 2027.
- As part of the government's work to widen Highway 69, the province is investing in the relocation of a Canadian National Railway Company rail line within the Township of Mowat and the Municipality of Killarney.

They said it

"Ontario cannot afford unnecessary delays that slow down the infrastructure our economy depends on. By cutting red tape and streamlining approvals, we are accelerating the widening of Highway 69, strengthening a critical trade and transportation corridor that connects Northern Ontario industries, workers and communities to markets across the province. At a time of global economic uncertainty, our government is taking decisive action to get transportation infrastructure built faster, fortify our supply chains and strengthen Ontario's competitive advantage."

- Andrea Khanjin, minister of Red Tape Reduction

"For families, workers and businesses in our communities, Highway 69 is more than a transportation route — it's an essential connection that people rely on every day. Our government is taking action to cut red tape and accelerate this long-awaited expansion, improving road safety and supporting jobs across the region. I will continue working closely with the Minister of Transportation, local First Nations Chiefs and municipal leaders to ensure our communities' voices are heard, and this important project continues to move forward."

- Graydon Smith, MPP for Parry Sound-Muskoka

"Modern, fully twinned highways are essential to protecting motorists, supporting economic growth and ensuring the safe and efficient movement of people and goods across our region. We thank Premier Ford and Minister Sarkaria for their continued commitment to northern Ontario's transportation infrastructure and look forward to ongoing dialogue with the province on accelerating highway expansion, particularly the twinning of Highways 11 and 17 across Northern Ontario. Together, we must continue working toward a safer, more reliable, and fully twinned Trans-Canada Highway."

- Dave Plourde, president, Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM)

“RCCAO welcomes the province’s proposed legislative measures to accelerate the Highway 69 expansion by streamlining environmental assessment requirements and reducing unnecessary regulatory delays. The construction industry has long emphasized the importance of improving approval processes to get critical infrastructure built faster, while maintaining appropriate environmental oversight. Accelerating this long-awaited expansion by up to five years would be a significant step toward improving road safety, strengthening Northern Ontario’s economy and ensuring the efficient movement of people and goods.”

- Nadia Todorova, executive director, Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario