

June 18, 2025

**VIA EMAIL**

The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, P.C., M.P.  
President of King's Privy Council for Canada  
Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade,  
Intergovernmental Affairs and One Canadian Economy  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A3  
[dominic.leblanc@parl.gc.ca](mailto:dominic.leblanc@parl.gc.ca)

**Re: Call to Reverse Course on Bill C-5**

Dear Minister LeBlanc,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) to express our strong opposition to the rushed way in which the legislative study of Bill C-5, *An Act to enact the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act*, is currently unfolding. We urge you to ensure that Part 2 of the Bill receives the detailed and meaningful scrutiny it requires—otherwise, Members of Parliament and Senators should vote against it.

The CCLA is a national, non-profit, non-partisan and non-governmental organization founded in 1964 with a mandate to defend and foster the civil liberties, human rights, and democratic freedoms of all people across Canada. Key aspects of our mission include defending democratic principles and the rule of law, fighting against government overreach, and advocating for government accountability.

Part 1 of Bill C-5 primarily aims to remove federal barriers to the interprovincial trade of goods and services. While this part of the bill has flaws and could be abused to bypass important federal safeguards, CCLA's concerns focus on Part 2, the *Building Canada Act* (Act). This Act grants the executive branch of government unfettered discretion in designating "national interest projects", as well as sweeping powers to override federal laws that would otherwise apply to such projects.

These powers would enable Cabinet to handpick projects for which important legal safeguards could be disregarded, without Parliament being able to intervene. While the delegation of such power to the executive branch is always concerning, it is particularly worrying when it allows a minority government to circumvent the usual democratic dialogue, as is the case here.

Such extraordinary powers should only be introduced and invoked in the most exceptional circumstances—such as wars and pandemics. Even then, the exercise of these powers must be subject to stringent checks and balances. While the Bill includes some safeguards, such as a 5-year time limit and an explicit requirement for consultation with Indigenous peoples, these are wholly insufficient. If Parliament chooses to go forward with this Act, at the very least, the notion of "national interest project" should be clearly and narrowly defined, and Cabinet should be required to justify to Parliament on an annual basis the continued necessity of the extraordinary powers—otherwise they would expire.

Given the breadth of the powers delegated to Cabinet by this Act, it should be subject to particularly careful and meaningful study and debate. Representatives from both Houses of Parliament should consult the public, civil society, and experts to ascertain whether these exceptional powers are necessary in the circumstances, and, if so, which additional checks and balances should be implemented. Rather than welcoming this much-needed scrutiny, the federal government has limited parliamentary debate and restricted the House Committee's study of Bill C-5 to two days. Similarly, the Senate has, to date, scheduled only three days of consultation on this bill.

While fostering Canada's economy, sovereignty and security is an important goal, it should not be pursued at the expense of people of Canada's right to an accountable government. The arbitrary exercise of government power to circumvent legal protections and democratic oversight should not be normalized, especially in the absence of stringent checks and balances.

We urge you to reverse course and to ensure that Part 2 of Bill C-5 receives the detailed and meaningful scrutiny it so desperately needs. This could be achieved by extending the time allocated to the study of Bill C-5, or by splitting the bill so that only Part 1 proceeds on an expedited basis.

In the absence of such a democratic dialogue, we call on Members of Parliament and Senators to vote against this sweeping piece of legislation.

Sincerely,



---

Ana s Bussi res McNicoll

Director, Fundamental Freedoms Program

cc Members of the House Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities; Honourable Senator Ren  Cormier, Chair, Committee of the Whole; Honourable Senator Marc Gold, P.C., Non-affiliated; Government Representative in the Senate; Honourable Leo Housakos, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate; Honourable Senator Raymonde Saint-Germain, Facilitator, Independent Senators Group; Honourable Scott Tannas, Leader, Canadian Senators Group; Honourable Brian Francis, Leader, Progressive Senate Group