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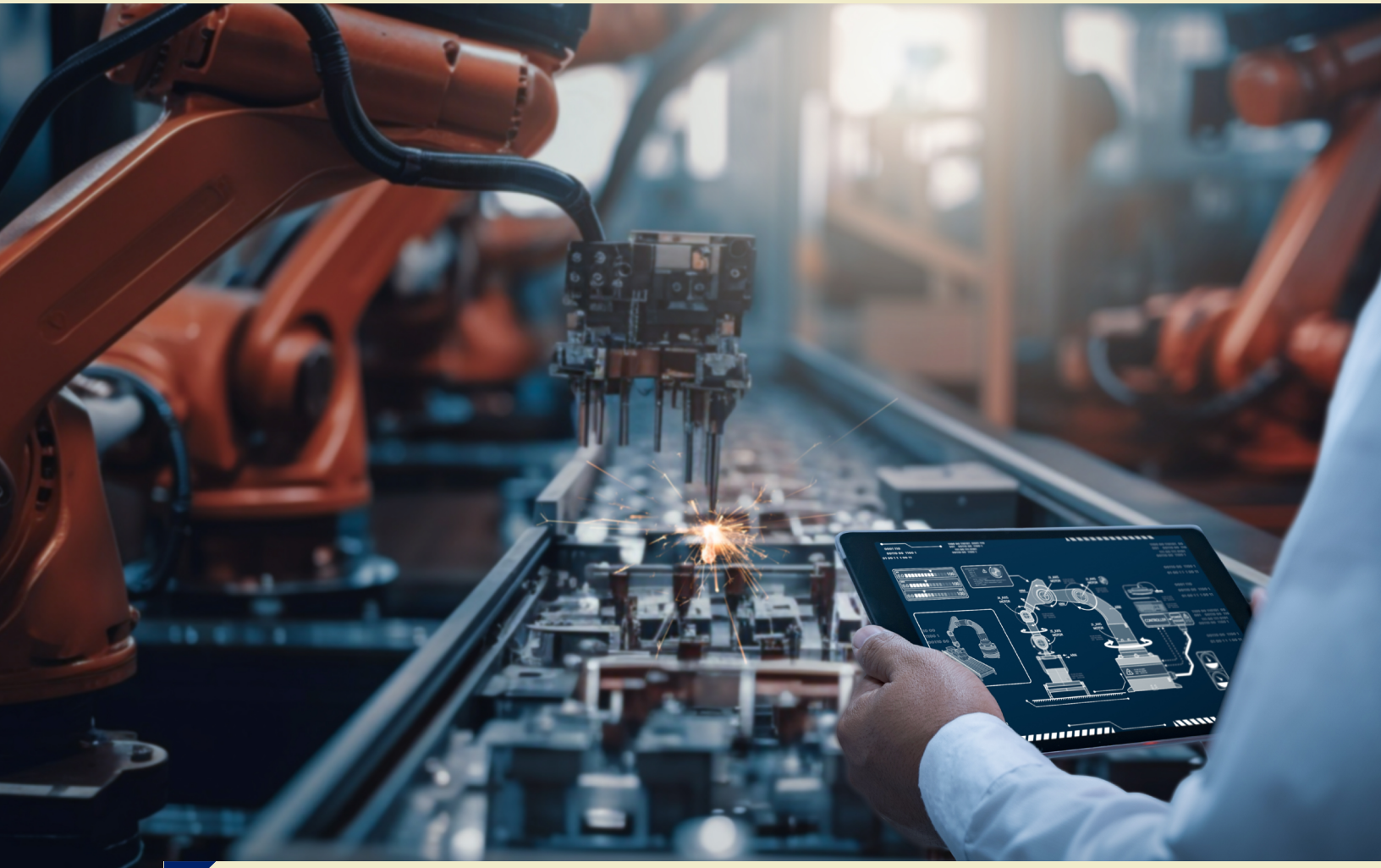

Moonshot Zones: Accelerating Canada's AI-Driven Industrial Future

A Framework for Regulatory Modernization across National Interest Economic Regions

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Problem Statement

Canada stands at a generational inflection point. After years of stagnating productivity and flatlining GDP per capita (The Hub, 2025)[1], the country faces dual pressures from rapid technological change and geopolitical upheaval. Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the global economy, emerging as a foundational strategic asset in an era of intense geo-economic competition (Bovell, 2025)[2]. At the same time, geopolitical instability and supply chain disruptions have exposed the risks of overreliance on any single market or trading partner. Canada possesses abundant natural resources, strong public institutions, and world-class technological talent, all ingredients for prosperity, yet has struggled in recent years to deploy and scale major projects in the national interest. Fragmented regulatory regimes, entangled approval processes, and uncertain timelines have hampered investment in critical industries. A slow and expensive regulatory process does not create the conditions required for major project investment, and many proponents now look to other jurisdictions (Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers [CAPP], 2025)[3]. Under Canada's current framework, only one major project (Cedar LNG) was approved in the four years after 2019, before key parts of the federal Impact Assessment Act was partly struck down as unconstitutional (Exner-Pirot & Gullo, 2024)[4]. The status quo stands at a crossroads. If Canada is to seize the opportunities of the 21st century, it must act decisively to unlock its economic advantages not incrementally, but with bold, strategic ambition.

This policy proposal introduces **Moonshot Zones:** designated regions of national economic interest created to fast-track high-impact industrial and infrastructure projects, embed AI as a transformative "super-driver" across sectors, and dramatically boost Canada's export competitiveness. **Moonshot Zones** offer a new approach to industrial strategy: one that leverages Canada's comparative strengths in resources and talent, aligns them with our strategic priorities in AI, clean technology and advanced manufacturing, and does so by harnessing the tools and levers we already have (legislation, institutions, capital) in a smarter and more coordinated way. Crucially, this policy framework does not require creating new government agencies or new spending programs. Instead, it realigns existing powers and programs, underpinned by the newly enacted *Building Canada Act*, to accelerate projects of national importance while maintaining rigorous standards. The ultimate goal is to achieve **AI-accelerated economic sovereignty:** developing Canada's resources and industries with Canadian-built technology, diversifying exports and supply chains, increasing productivity, and generating broad-based prosperity across all regions.

[1] The Hub. "Hunter Prize Finalists Deliver 10 Innovative Ideas to Fix Canada's Stagnant Living Standards." *The Hub*, September 6, 2025. https://thehub.ca/2025-09-06/hunter-prize-finalists-deliver-innovative-ideas/.

[2] Bovell, Sinead. *Canada's AI Imperative: A National Industrial Strategy for AI Sovereignty and Global Leadership*. Waterloo, ON: Centre for International Governance Innovation, May 2025. https://www.cigionline.org/articles/canadas-ai-imperative.

[3] Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP). *Building Canada's Future: Leveraging Our Natural Advantages*. Ottawa: CAPP, March 2025. https://www.capp.ca/publications/building-canadas-future.

[4] Exner-Pirot, Heather, and Michael Gullo. *Time to Move from Talk to Action on Regulatory Reform*. Ottawa: Business Council of Canada, February 2024. https://thebusinesscouncil.ca/publication/time-to-move-from-talk-to-action-on-regulatory-reform.

What Is a Moonshot Zone? (Policy Proposal)

A **Moonshot Zone** is a high-potential geographic region to be designated by the federal government as critical to Canada's national economic interest. In essence, Moonshot Zones are the physical manifestation of a modern industrial strategy: one that combines our *comparative advantages* (such as abundant clean energy, rich mineral and agricultural resources, and a skilled workforce) with our *aspirational advantages* in emerging fields (such as AI, cleantech, and value-added manufacturing). The term "moonshot" evokes big, ambitious goals. These zones are not defined by a single sector or project; rather, they are defined by their capacity to integrate advanced technologies (notably AI) into the region's existing economic base in order to **transform traditional industries into globally competitive, technology-driven export engines**. For example, a Moonshot Zone might encompass a logistics corridor, mining district, or energy hub that, with the infusion of AI and automation, can dramatically scale up output and efficiency.

Designation as a Moonshot Zone signals that a region is of national strategic importance. It is a recognition that accelerating development there, whether it be critical minerals in Northern Ontario or clean energy in Atlantic Canada, will yield outsized benefits for the country's autonomy and economic resilience. Importantly, a Moonshot Zone does not override or undermine local governance or Indigenous rights. Provinces, municipalities, and Indigenous nations maintain their jurisdiction and authority. What the designation does is trigger a suite of federal coordination mechanisms and regulatory modernization initiatives (described below) to help high feasibility and viability projects in the zone get built faster and at scale. In short, Moonshot Zones provide a focused platform to concentrate policy support, investment, and innovation in the regions that can drive Canada's future growth.

Designation and Streamlined Approvals

Zone Designation via Order-in-Council: Moonshot Zones would be established under existing federal legislation. Specifically, by leveraging the *Building Canada Act* provisions for projects of national interest. Cabinet (Governor-in-Council) can designate **National Interest Economic Regions** via Order-in-Council, using criteria analogous to those for national interest projects. Key considerations for designating a Moonshot Zone include:

- **Strategic Location:** The region's position in a trade corridor or logistics network vital to domestic and international commerce.
- **Resource or Industrial Base:** An abundance of critical natural resources or clean energy assets, or an existing industrial cluster with high growth potential.
- **High Export and Growth Potential:** Evidence that development in the region could significantly increase value-added exports or strengthen supply chains.

If a region meets these criteria and is deemed to align with Canada's national productivity and security goals, the federal cabinet can formally designate it as a Moonshot Zone. The *Building Canada Act* (enacted as part of Bill C-5 in 2025) already empowers the government to fast-track "projects of national interest" through streamlined approvals (Annibale & Rodrigues, 2025)[5]. We extend this concept from individual projects to entire high-potential regions. All projects within a Moonshot Zone that meet the strategic criteria would qualify for an expedited federal review process. It bears emphasizing that this approach works within Canada's constitutional framework: provinces and Indigenous authorities are consulted and must consent to any zone touching their exclusive jurisdictions, and local land-use or permitting processes are respected. The federal designation simply serves as a catalyst and coordination overlay for projects of mutual interest.

[5] Annibale, Jason J., and Natasha R. Rodrigues. "Bill C-5 – Fast-Tracking National Interest Projects in Canada." *McMillan LLP Insights*, March 2025. https://mcmillan.ca/insights/bill-c-5-fast-tracking-national-interest-projects-in-canada/.

Consolidated "One-Stop" Federal Authorization

A central regulatory innovation of Moonshot Zones is the use of a **single, consolidated federal permit**, such as a *Consolidated Authorization Document (CAD)*, for major projects in the zone. Currently, large projects must navigate dozens of separate federal permits and reviews (e.g., environmental assessments, fisheries, navigable waters, transport, Indigenous consultation, etc.), often sequentially and with poor coordination. This fragmented approach leads to duplication, delay, and uncertainty. In a Moonshot Zone, by contrast, the federal government would issue one comprehensive authorization that replaces the multiple individual permits. This mechanism is enabled by the *Building Canada Act*'s streamlined process: once a project is designated in the national interest, the Act calls for the Minister to provide a single authorization and conditions document covering all required federal approvals (Annibale & Rodrigues, 2025)[6]. The Major Projects Management Office (MPMO), an existing federal office, would serve as the principal secretariat coordinating this process. Each relevant federal department and regulatory agencies still conducts its review and prescribes any necessary conditions (so environmental protection and safety standards are fully maintained), but these are all integrated into one unified decision and timeline. The proponent deals with one federal touchpoint and gains a clear, coordinated set of requirements and deadlines. It provides greater certainty to investors and developers up front, without sacrificing due diligence. By reducing unnecessary administrative and regulatory burden, Moonshot Zones will significantly reduce project lead times and aim to shrink federal review to as little as one to two years, compared to the five-plus years that have become common for major projects in Canada (McMillan LLP, 2025)[7].

[6] Ibid

[7] McMillan LLP. "Federal Government Introduces the Building Canada Act to Accelerate Nation-Building Projects." *McMillan LLP News Release*, February 2025. https://mcmillan.ca/news/building-canada-act-announcement.

Eliminating Duplication and Enforcing Timelines

Achieving speed without lowering standards requires a regulatory system that is smarter, not sloppier. Moonshot Zones would therefore implement several tools to eliminate duplication, streamline oversight, and enforce timely decisions:

- **One Project, One Assessment:** Federal regulators will wherever possible accept equivalent assessments done by provincial or Indigenous authorities, rather than repeating them. Where a province or Indigenous regulatory body has conducted a robust environmental review or technical study that meets federal requirements, the results can be substituted for a federal review. Such equivalency agreements prevent two layers of government from doing the same analysis, aligning with the principle of "one project, one assessment, one decision" (Exner-Pirot & Gullo, 2024)[8]. Proponents get clarity, and jurisdictional collaboration is improved, not circumvented.
- **Sunset Clauses for Conditions:** Project approval conditions that are outdated or redundant will automatically expire ("sunset") after a defined period, unless an active risk justifies their continuation. This ensures that old, no-longer-relevant requirements (for example, monitoring obligations tied to construction phases long since completed) do not continue to burden projects indefinitely. Regulatory agencies would periodically review conditions attached to projects in Moonshot Zones and prune those that no longer serve their purpose, making compliance lighter over time without compromising outcomes.
- **Automatic Escalation Triggers:** If interdepartmental disagreements or issues are holding up a project's approval, an automatic escalation mechanism will trigger a higher-level intervention. For example, if two departments have a conflict that remains unresolved beyond a set period, the issue is escalated to a Deputy Minister-level committee or even Cabinet committee for prompt resolution. This prevents lower-level gridlock from stalling the entire initiative.

By instituting these measures, Moonshot Zones will cultivate a regulatory culture of expediency, clarity, and accountability. Proponents will face a process that is not only faster, but also more transparent and predictable. This is critical for restoring investor confidence in Canada. As one analysis put it, Canada's current slow and capricious permitting system has left Canadians poorer, deterring investment and costing jobs (Exner-Pirot & Gullo, 2024)[9]. Moonshot Zones aim to reverse that dynamic by proving that Canada can deliver major projects on time. Indeed, the purpose of the *Building Canada Act* is explicitly to enhance prosperity and security *"while protecting the environment and respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples"* (Annibale & Rodrigues, 2025)[10]10. Moonshot Zones embody that balanced mandate: accelerate what matters, without cutting corners on what matters most.

[8] Exner-Pirot, Heather, and Michael Gullo. *Time to Move from Talk to Action on Regulatory Reform*. Ottawa: Business Council of Canada, February 2024. https://thebusinesscouncil.ca/publication/time-to-move-from-talk-to-action-on-regulatory-reform.

[9] Exner-Pirot, Heather, and Michael Gullo. *Time to Move from Talk to Action on Regulatory Reform*. Ottawa: Business Council of Canada, February 2024. https://thebusinesscouncil.ca/publication/time-to-move-from-talk-to-action-on-regulatory-reform.

[10] Annibale, Jason J., and Natasha R. Rodrigues. "Bill C-5 – Fast-Tracking National Interest Projects in Canada." *McMillan LLP Insights,* March 2025. https://mcmillan.ca/insights/bill-c-5-fast-tracking-national-interest-projects-in-canada/.

Embedding AI as National Infrastructure

A distinguishing feature of Moonshot Zones is the deliberate embedding of artificialintelligence as a core infrastructure layer across all projects and operations in the zone. AI is not treated as a separate "sector", but as a horizontal capability that can supercharge traditional industries by improving efficiency, reducing environmental impacts, and fostering innovation. To that end, the Moonshot Zone framework includes several measures to mandate and incentivize the use of sovereign Canadian generative AI and machine learning solutions:

1. **Mandated AI-Enabled Compliance:** All major projects authorized in a Moonshot Zone will be required to incorporate advanced digital monitoring and automation for regulatory compliance. In practice, this means deploying tools like AI-driven environmental sensors, real-time emissions tracking, digital twin simulations of project operations, and automated reporting systems. By leveraging AI for continuous monitoring, projects can provide regulators and communities with real-time data on environmental and safety metrics (e.g., emissions, water quality, land disturbance, etc.), rather than periodic static reports. It can reduce the need for labor-intensive inspections and paper-based audits, thereby speeding up approvals.

2. **Incentives for Sovereign AI Adoption:** Moonshot Zones will preferentially reward projects that utilize Canadian-developed AI and automation solutions. Canada has world-class AI researchers and startups, but too often our intellectual property is bought out or applied overseas, yielding little domestic benefit. This initiative will create a home market for Canadian AI innovations. Concretely, if a project in the zone deploys AI tools that are owned and made by Canadian firms or institutions, that project would receive **priority status**, for example, faster permitting decisions or higher scoring in any federal funding considerations. Additionally, such projects could gain preferred access to existing federal programs for technology pilots and procurement. (For instance, Public Services and Procurement Canada and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada run programs to test-bed new technologies – these would proactively include Moonshot Zone projects using Canadian AI.) The federal R&D tax credit (SR&ED) could also be enhanced for expenses on Canadian AI solutions deployed in the field.

Through these measures, Moonshot Zones position AI as a fundamental infrastructure, akin to transportation or electricity, that underpins all economic activity in the zone. This aligns with expert recommendations that Canada embed AI across its economy as part of a national industrial strategy (Bovell, 2025)[11]. It also directly addresses Canada's chronic productivity challenge. By one estimate, widespread adoption of generative AI in key sectors could boost Canada's productivity by 1% to 6% over the next decade, depending on the pace of uptake (Business Data Lab, 2024)[12]. Moonshot Zones will help capture these gains by creating living laboratories of AI-enabled industry. In doing so, they ensure that Canadian AI innovations scale up on Canadian soil, fueling growth in both our digital and traditional resource-based sectors.

[11] Bovell, Sinead. *Canada's AI Imperative: A National Industrial Strategy for AI Sovereignty and Global Leadership*. Waterloo, ON: Centre for International Governance Innovation, May 2025. https://www.cigionline.org/articles/canadas-ai-imperative.

[12] Business Data Lab (Canadian Chamber of Commerce) and Deloitte. *Prompting Productivity: Generative AI Adoption by Canadian Businesses*. Ottawa: Canadian Chamber of Commerce, May 2024. https://www.businessdatalab.ca/reports/generative-ai-adoption.

Policy Rationale: Why Moonshot Zones, Why Now?

Canada cannot afford a business-as-usual approach in the face of today's economic challenges. Moonshot Zones directly tackle several strategic needs that have never been more urgent:

- **Diversifying Exports and Building Resilience:** Canada's economy is overly dependent on a few sectors and one dominant trading partner. (For instance, until very recently the U.S. was the sole customer for Canadian oil exports, a "one customer challenge" that limits our leverage (Exner-Pirot & Gullo, 2024)[13].) By developing value-added industries around our resources and linking them to new markets, Moonshot Zones reduce reliance on any single sector or country. This builds autonomy and resilience against global shocks.

- **Restoring Investor Confidence:** After a decade of high-profile project cancellations and capital flight, investors have grown wary of Canada's cumbersome project approvals. By delivering a faster, clearer process, Moonshot Zones send a strong signal that Canada is open for business on competitive terms. The ability to get shovels in the ground without indefinite delays will rebuild confidence among domestic and international investors that Canada can execute nation-building projects again. In turn, this should unlock increased private capital flows into our industries, creating jobs and growth.

- **Scaling Canadian Innovation:** Canada has often been a world leader in inventing new technologies (like AI), but lags in adopting and commercializing them. Moonshot Zones create the conditions for Canadian-made innovations to scale in the real economy. By tying incentives and fast-tracking to the use of Canadian AI and cleantech, we create a virtuous cycle of "innovation, deployment, improvement, and export" of those solutions. This helps Canadian firms grow from startups to globally competitive companies. It also ensures the public sees tangible benefits (in jobs, productivity, services) from our innovation investments, addressing the innovation "scale-up" gap that policymakers have long lamented.

[13] Exner-Pirot, Heather, and Michael Gullo. *Time to Move from Talk to Action on Regulatory Reform*. Ottawa: Business Council of Canada, February 2024. https://thebusinesscouncil.ca/publication/time-to-move-from-talk-to-action-on-regulatory-reform.

Implementation and Governance

One of the advantages of the Moonshot Zones framework is its pragmatism: it does not depend on creating new bureaucracies or spending programs, which can be costly and slow to get off the ground. Instead, it repurposes and focuses tools that already exist in the federal toolkit, complementing them with strategic intergovernmental coordination.

Key implementation considerations include:

- **Legislative Authority:** The *Building Canada Act* (2025) provides the necessary legal basis by allowing designation of projects (and by extension, regions comprising projects) as being in the national interest, along with adaptive regulatory powers. Zones would be designated via Cabinet orders. The Act also permits Cabinet to vary or exempt regulations for those projects, providing flexibility to implement the streamlining measures (such as consolidated authorizations and timeline enforcement) described above (Norton Rose Fulbright, 2023)[14]14. The **Major Projects Management Office (MPMO)** would be given an expanded mandate to act as chief coordinator for Moonshot Zones. The MPMO would manage the Consolidated Authorization process for zone projects, liaise with provincial and Indigenous regulators to establish equivalency agreements, and monitor compliance with timelines.
- **Financial Alignment (No New Spending):** Moonshot Zones do not entail new federal spending programs; however, they do involve realigning existing funding and financing tools toward zone objectives. For instance, federal innovation funds (like SDTC grants or regional development agency programs) can prioritize applications from Moonshot Zones that meet quality thresholds. The Strategic Innovation Fund could allocate a portion for large-scale projects in zones. Tax incentives like the Accelerated Investment Incentive or clean tech tax credits could be tweaked to offer bonus depreciation for capital investments in Moonshot Zones. Private capital, both domestic and foreign, is expected to finance the majority of project costs; government's role is to reduce risk and uncertainty.
- **Pilot Phase and Scaling:** Implementation would begin with a pilot phase, designating a handful of initial Moonshot Zones to prove the concept. These pilots should be regionally distributed and tied to urgent national priorities. Based on current opportunities, candidates for **pilot Moonshot Zones** could include:
  - **Edmonton–Fort Saskatchewan Hydrogen & Energy Corridor (Alberta):** Centered on Alberta's Industrial Heartland, this zone would scale up blue hydrogen production, carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS), and petrochemical manufacturing, leveraging AI to optimize complex energy systems. It aligns with federal clean fuel regulations and builds on existing carbon pipeline infrastructure, positioning Canada as a supplier of low-carbon fuels and technologies.
  - **Ring of Fire–Sudbury Critical Minerals Zone (Northern Ontario):** Focused on the deposits of nickel, lithium, chromite and rare earths in the Ring of Fire and Sudbury basin. This zone would accelerate mining projects and mineral processing facilities with advanced AI-enabled exploration and sustainable practices. In partnership with Indigenous communities, it would anchor an electric vehicle (EV) battery supply chain entirely within Canada, from mine to battery to EV, feeding both domestic production and export markets.

[14] Norton Rose Fulbright. "How the New Building Canada Act Works." *Norton Rose Fulbright Canada LLP Legal Update*, July 2023. https://www.nortonrosefulbright.com/en-ca/knowledge/publications/how-the-new-building-canada-act-works.

- **Saskatoon–Estevan Agri-Uranium Innovation Basin (Saskatchewan):** A dual-strength zone combining the province's agricultural heartland with its southern uranium mining region. Here AI-powered precision agriculture and agri-food processing would boost crop yields and agri-export capacity, while enhanced uranium extraction and milling (with world-class environmental safeguards) would secure critical fuel for clean energy. By integrating developments in food and energy, this zone drives two export pillars and makes use of Saskatchewan's skilled workforce in both domains.

- **Kitimat–Prince Rupert LNG & Forestry Corridor (Northern British Columbia):** Centered on the deepwater ports of Kitimat and Prince Rupert, this zone would fast-track liquefied natural gas (LNG) export facilities and AI-optimized forestry and wood-product operations. It builds on projects like Coastal GasLink and LNG Canada, with Indigenous equity partnerships providing a model for inclusive development. By speeding additional LNG capacity (with carbon mitigation) and improving forestry supply chains, Canada can expand exports to Asia and diversify beyond the U.S., while managing resources sustainably.

- **Halifax–Guysborough Clean Energy & Aquaculture Hub (Nova Scotia):** This Atlantic zone targets offshore wind power, tidal energy, and sustainable aquaculture. Recent federal moves to open Atlantic Canada for offshore wind make this region ripe for rapid development. AI would streamline everything from marine spatial planning to fishery stock monitoring. Projects like large-scale wind farms off Nova Scotia's coast and innovative tidal energy in the Bay of Fundy, coupled with advanced fish farms, could make the region a clean energy exporter (e.g., green hydrogen/ammonia) and a leader in ocean tech.

- **Saguenay–Greater Montréal Green Manufacturing Corridor (Quebec):** Encompassing Quebec's Saguenay region (with its aluminum and potential lithium production) through to the Montréal metro, this zone would support AI-integrated manufacturing of battery materials, aerospace components, and electrified transportation infrastructure. It capitalizes on Hydro-Québec's abundant clean electricity to power green industrial processes. By linking resource areas with manufacturing centers via efficient rail and port logistics, it would strengthen domestic supply chains for EVs, aircraft, and public transit systems, while spurring exports of high-value goods.

- **Winnipeg–Regina Prairie Agri-Freight Corridor (Manitoba/Saskatchewan):** This zone would modernize key inland ports and rail corridors to move Western Canada's grain, pulse, and food products faster and farther. AI-driven logistics (smart grain terminals, automated rail scheduling, IoT sensors for crop conditions) can greatly enhance the Prairies' agricultural productivity and reliability. The zone could also incubate clean tech manufacturing (such as farm machinery or biofuel equipment) adjacent to transport hubs, adding value before export. Improving east-west rail connections and intermodal facilities in this corridor will benefit the entire country's supply chain efficiency.

- **Whitehorse–Inuvik Strategic Arctic Corridor (Yukon/Northwest Territories):** A zone designed to finally build out critical infrastructure in Canada's North, doubling for both economic development and national security. Projects would include all-season roads to Arctic communities and resources, enhanced Arctic ports and airports, and telecommunications networks for remote monitoring. Dual-use infrastructure would support military mobility and sovereignty while enabling mining, tourism, and clean energy projects in the North. Given the remoteness and environmental sensitivity, AI and robotics would be heavily used for remote operations, climate monitoring, and minimizing ecological disturbance.

- **Thunder Bay–Hamilton–Halifax Trade Gateway (Ontario–Nova Scotia):** Rather than a contiguous region, this "zone" links Canada's major transcontinental trade gateways: the Lake Superior port of Thunder Bay, the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence industrial corridor (including Hamilton's port), and the Atlantic port of Halifax. The goal is to digitally integrate our supply chains coast-to-coast. AI and blockchain systems would expedite rail and marine logistics, reduce port dwell times, and improve customs and security screenings. Bytreating these dispersed but connected nodes as one integrated trade infrastructure zone, Canada can cut shipment times, attract investment in warehouse and distribution centers, and better serve European markets through our coasts.

- **Ottawa–Saint-Hubert Space and Aerospace Zone (Ontario–Quebec):** Anchored by Ottawa (with federal labs and Space Agency facilities) and the Montréal/Saint-Hubert aerospace cluster, this zone would expedite projects in the emerging space economy. That includes satellite manufacturing, launchpad development, and AI-driven remote sensing and communications networks. By fast-tracking dual-use orbital and space infrastructure projects, Canada can carve out a niche in the booming space industry (estimated in the trillions globally) while also enhancing strategic communications and sovereignty (e.g., Arctic surveillance from space).

These examples illustrate the breadth of Moonshot Zones, from energy to agriculture to high-tech, and how they align regional strengths with national strategic outcomes. The pilot zones would be closely monitored, and lessons learned would inform adjustments before expanding the program. Over time, additional zones could be designated as new opportunities arise or as initial zones mature and achieve their goals.

- **Monitoring and Accountability:** Each Moonshot Zone will have clear performance metrics (e.g. investment dollars attracted, jobs created, export volume increased, AI adoption rate, permitting times reduced, etc.). The federal Moonshot Zones Advisory Group, as mentioned, would track these metrics and publicly report on them annually. Zones that consistently underperform or that achieve their mission could be re-scoped or even phased out, ensuring that the designation remains tied to results, not permanence.

Conclusion

Canada has found itself at a pivotal crossroads and must choose an ambitious path forward. Moonshot Zones offer a bold yet practical framework for the country to seize its competitive moment. By fast-tracking high-impact projects and building AI-powered industrial ecosystems, Canada can jumpstart growth in a way that is climate-smart, inclusive, and strategically self-reliant. It challenges us to use the tools we already have, our laws, our institutions, our talent, our innovative companies, *smarter, faster, and more ambitiously than ever before*. It is about cutting through regulatory burden and administrative red tape that no longer serves us, while upholding the safeguards that do. It is about marrying our rich endowment of resources with the cutting-edge technologies artificial intelligence advancements of the future. And it is fundamentally about restoring a sense of national purpose and confidence: that Canada can still imagine and execute big "moonshot" projects in the public interest.

In the 20th century, Canada built railways, pipelines, and highways that united a continent-sized nation. In the 21st century, the nation-building challenge is different: it is to build the digital, sustainable, and resilient economy of tomorrow. Moonshot Zones are a vehicle to do exactly that: to translate regional strengths into national prosperity, and to do so with urgency. The world will not wait, and incremental tweaks will not suffice. By embracing Moonshot Zones now, Canada can leap ahead, secure its economic sovereignty in the age of AI, and ensure shared prosperity for generations to come.

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The Hunter Prize for Public Policy aims to shake up Canadian policymaking by marshalling fresh ideas, energy, and voices to take on a clearly-defined "wicked problem" and improve the economic and social well-being of Canadians.

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