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# Golden Scissors Award
## 2026

WINNER

# The Government of Alberta's Automatic Yes Policy

**Awarded to:** The Government of Alberta

**Recipient:** Hon. Dale Nally, Ministry of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction

*An 'Automatic Yes' in reducing red tape!*

The Government of Alberta earns this year's Golden Scissors Award for its innovative Automatic Yes Toolkit, a major step forward in reducing red tape and improving permit and application approval times across government. Introduced as part of Alberta's Red Tape Reduction strategy, the Toolkit applies to low- and medium-risk permits and routine activities, allowing the government to focus on more complex applications.

The Toolkit combines three approaches: Code of Practice, Permit by Rule, and Shot Clock. It aims to reduce delays and simplify processes without compromising safety or oversight. Both the Code of Practice and Permit by Rule allow activities to proceed without a permit, as long as applicants follow defined rules and requirements. In the case of Permit by Rule, applicants must register their activities with the government and provide additional documentation. The Shot Clock sets firm deadlines for the government to provide a decision and requires communication to the applicant of either the application's approval or the rationale for its rejection.

Before this policy, something as simple as getting a permit to cut down a Christmas tree could involve long waits, leaving families frustrated during the holiday season. Alberta Parks utilizes an approach in alignment with the Automatic Yes Policy for a number of permits, including those for tree cutting, through its online portal. Albertans simply identify which park they wish to cut trees in, the number of trees they plan to harvest, and the purpose for which they are harvesting trees. The portal's ability to consolidate access to permits and standardize the approach has helped to support automatic approval in some permit types, and quicker approvals in others. In 2024, 1,251 Albertans benefited from receiving an Alberta Parks Tree Cutting Permit.

The Automatic Yes approach is also making a difference for Alberta's energy sector. The Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) has embraced this principle through its risk-based automation system and digital platform, One Stop. Handling an average of 40,000 applications annually under multiple provincial enactments, the AER is able to provide a decision on over 80% of low-risk applications without staff intervention. One Stop assesses risk based on legislation and regulations, ensuring that simple, low-risk applications move forward immediately, while higher-risk applications receive focused review by AER staff. This system acts as a "shot clock," flagging any applications that exceed benchmark timelines for immediate attention, which keeps projects on track and applicants informed. This approach not only accelerates energy development projects but also ensures regulatory resources are concentrated where they matter most—on higher-risk activities.

Alberta's ongoing work to improve permit review processes and decision times, including Automatic Yes Toolkit is delivering measurable results. To date, these tools have already improved decision times for 25% of provincial permits, some by as much as 30 days, and 68% of permits are now aligned

with Automatic Yes principles. By embedding accountability and efficiency into regulatory processes, Alberta has set a new benchmark for modern governance—one that other jurisdictions can look to as a model for cutting red tape without compromising safety or oversight.

**Background information:**

- Automatic Yes Toolkit: https://www.alberta.ca/automatic-yes-toolkit
- Alberta government news release: https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=92697D2B459C6-B508-5537-5CB224B5D80B6875

HONOURABLE MENTION

# Honourable Mention: City of Winnipeg's Permits Online

**Awarded to:** The City of Winnipeg Mayor and City Council

**Recipients:** City of Winnipeg Mayor Scott Gillingham and City Council

*From paperwork to faster permits*

Winnipeg has implemented a comprehensive modernization of its permitting and development systems to eliminate red tape and accelerate housing and business growth. This transformation focuses on digital innovation, regulatory flexibility, and streamlined processes that deliver measurable benefits for residents, entrepreneurs, and the broader economy.

At the core of these reforms is "Permits Online," a one-stop digital platform that consolidates applications, tracking, and payments. By replacing paper forms and in-person visits, the system significantly reduces timelines for renovations, signage, and business retrofits. Complementing this, a free online patio registration process now delivers approvals within days rather than weeks, delivering certainty to restaurants quickly and earning Winnipeg national recognition for its forward-thinking approach.

The City has introduced more than 35 permit exemptions for common projects such as garages, pergolas, solar installations, and accessibility ramps. These changes save residents weeks of waiting and allow builders to maintain productivity without unnecessary delays. Modernized zoning bylaws further support housing affordability and urban density by reducing parking requirements and enabling multi-unit housing and secondary suites to proceed with fewer hearings. These measures help duplexes, triplexes, and laneway homes move forward faster, addressing critical housing needs.

Operational improvements extend to inspections and occupancy requirements. Electrical and mechanical inspections are now conducted virtually through video or photo submissions, reducing scheduling bottlenecks. The removal of mandatory occupancy permits for simple tenant changes streamlines processes even further, cutting costs and time for businesses.

Collectively, these initiatives position Winnipeg as a leader in municipal modernization. The City is delivering faster approvals, reducing bureaucratic friction, and creating a more predictable environment for investment. By embracing digital transformation and regulatory agility, Winnipeg is creating a business-friendly environment for entrepreneurs, accelerating growth, and setting a benchmark for other municipalities. Continued monitoring and stakeholder engagement will ensure these reforms remain effective and adaptable as the city continues to grow.

**Background information:**
- City of Winnipeg website:
  - https://www.winnipeg.ca/news/2024-12-09-city-winnipeg-continues-expand-online-options-permit-applications
  - https://www.winnipeg.ca/building-development/housing/housing-accelerator-fund/infill-housing

- o https://www.winnipeg.ca/news/2025-01-13-city-winnipeg-receives-306-million-annual-installment-housing-accelerator-fund

ONE TO WATCH

# Committee on Internal Trade Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement on the Sale of Goods

**Awarded to:** Committee on Internal Trade (CIT)

**Recipients:** Agreement signatories:

- Hon. Caitlin Cleveland, Northwest Territories Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment (CIT Chair)
- Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, Federal Minister of Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade and One Canadian Economy
- Hon. Tony Wakeham, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Hon. Joseph Schow, Alberta Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration
- Hon. Ravi Kahlon, BC Minister of Jobs and Economic Growth
- Hon. Jean-Claude D'Amours, New Brunswick Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
- Hon. Tim Houston, Premier of Nova Scotia, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade
- Hon. Warren Kaeding, Saskatchewan Minister of Trade and Export Development, Minister Responsible for Innovation
- Hon. Darlene Compton, PEI Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Trade
- Hon. Samuel Poulin, Quebec Minister of Economy and Small and Medium Enterprises
- Hon. Jamie Moses, Manitoba Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation
- Hon. Victor Fedeli, Ontario Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

*Due to territorial elections, the governments of Nunavut and the Yukon participated as observers.

*Mutual recognition: Clear path to true free trade in Canada*

The Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement (CMRA) marks a major step toward real free trade within Canada. Signed by the Committee on Internal Trade on November 19, 2025, the agreement is expected to take effect by June 2026 in all jurisdictions.

Once in place, businesses will no longer have to search through thousands of rules across 14 different jurisdictions to sell their goods. If an item can be sold in one province or territory, it won't require additional testing, certifications, or approvals to be sold in any other jurisdiction. The agreement will cover a range of goods such as appliances, industrial machinery, vehicles, furniture, and clothing. However, it excludes food, live animals, alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, and plants.

With the signed CMRA, small businesses will be able to grow and reach new markets without facing additional red tape, while consumers will benefit from more choice and competitive prices.

CFIB will monitor implementation to ensure the impacts of the agreement are felt on the ground. The next step in removing internal trade barriers should include expanding the mutual recognition agreement to services, food products, and alcohol.

**Background information:**

- CIT News Release: https://www.cfta-alec.ca/committee-on-internal-trade-ministers-sign-the-canadian-mutual-recognition-agreement-on-the-sale-of-goods
- Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement: https://www.cfta-alec.ca/cmra
- CFIB statement: https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/media/cfib-statement-on-signed-canadian-mutual-recognition-agreement-for-goods

ONE TO WATCH

# The Government of Ontario's Regulatory Intelligence

**Awarded to:** The Government of Ontario

**Recipients:** Hon. Andrea Khanjin, Minister of Red Tape Reduction

***REGi: Harnessing AI to reduce red tape in Ontario***

Meet "REGi" ("Regulatory Intelligence"), an AI-powered platform designed to identify and reduce regulatory burdens across the Ontario government. Ontario's Ministry of Red Tape Reduction launched REGi in 2025.

Leveraging a Large Language Model (LLM), REGi is synced with Ontario's e-Laws to scan and analyze government requirements across all the province's 3,500+ statutes and regulations to identify red tape instantly and consistently. While not fully operational yet, the tool is already in use. At full maturity, it will immediately pinpoint outdated, duplicative, complex, and overly prescriptive rules across all laws, regulations, policies, and forms.

CFIB looks forward to seeing the new technology's impact on reducing red tape burdens for Ontario businesses and citizens.

**Background information:**
- Ontario 2025 Burden Reduction Report: https://www.ontario.ca/page/2025-burden-reduction-report

ONE TO WATCH

# The Government of British Columbia's Digitally Accelerated Standardized Housing

**Awarded to:** The Government of British Columbia

**Recipients:**
- Hon. Christine Boyle, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs
- Vincent Tong, CEO, BC Housing

### *A DASH of innovation: Transforming housing in British Columbia*

A new online toolkit called "Digitally Accelerated Standardized Housing" (DASH) helps developers and non-profit organizations design and build homes in British Columbia faster and at lower cost.

The open-source, free platform closes the gap between the planning, design, and construction phases of three- to six-storey buildings. By using prefabricated parts, permit-ready building types and standard designs, DASH speeds up approvals and streamlines municipal reviews, without sacrificing quality or design.

Developers can find suitable housing sites and generate code-compliant building layouts in minutes, architects can speed up the design process with ready-made unit layouts, while manufacturers can get digital access to a permit-ready library of prefabricated products. The BC government estimates the platform can save 50-60% of design time and 20-25% on construction costs.

The program will help British Columbians access affordable housing faster, while allowing builders and designers to reduce costs and deliver projects more quickly. CFIB will monitor the success of the toolkit to help get homes built faster over the next year.

**Background information:**
- BC Government News Release: https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2025HMA0114-001142
- BC Housing: https://www.acceleratedhousing.ca/
- News article on toolkit: https://www.townandcountrytoday.com/national-business/bc-government-dashes-out-digital-tool-to-help-build-homes-faster-11520123