Official Statement on Bill C-39

The Macdonald Campus Students' Society (MCSS) denounces the Government of Canada's environmental and democratic rollbacks and stands against the *Building Canada Act*, tabled under Bill C-5, and the omnibus Bill C-39.

Today, November 23rd, MCSS chooses environmental protection, democratic accountability and Indigenous rights over economic interests.

Context

The *Building Canada Act* was adopted in June 2025, while Bill C-39 remains to be approved. These bills were tabled amid a commercial trade war with the United States of America and allegedly serve to build "Canada Strong."

MCSS is concerned about the implications of Bill C-5 and Bill C-39 for environmental safeguards, democratic accountability, and Indigenous rights.

Environmental protection

The *Building Canada Act*, tabled under Bill C-5, streamlines regulatory processes to fast-track the development of mega infrastructure projects deemed in the 'national interest'. Designated 'national interest' projects are exempt from the provision of many Acts of Parliament including the *Impact Assessment Act*, the *Species at Risk Act* and the *Fisheries Act*.

MCSS is concerned that the *Building Canada Act* weakens environmental protection standards and dismantles the very legal framework that safeguards the well-being of Canada's ecosystems and communities.

Bill C-39 scales these concerns to whole geographic areas; the bill designates 'regions of national interest' where environmental standards are substantially weakened to facilitate major industrial developments. Projects within regions of national interest, as under Bill C-5, can be approved and fast-tracked without consideration for pre-existing environmental regulations.

MCSS denounces the creation of 'economic sacrifice zones' under Bill C-39; regions where ecosystems, species, and community health are disproportionately threatened for economic benefits.

Bill C-39 also grants the Canadian Energy Regulator the power to pre-approve pipeline projects without impact assessments. MCSS denounces the expansion of fossil fuels, especially at the expense of community resilience and environmental conservation.

Given the substantial potential of adverse and irreversible harms associated with expedited regulatory processes, MCSS supports the need for rigorous impact assessments and opposes bypassing environmental regulations under Bill C-5 and Bill C-39.

Indigenous Rights

MCSS is also apprehensive that regulatory processes granting project pre-approval in extremely compressed timelines cannot uphold the principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent. MCSS is concerned that Bill C-5 and C-39 are incompatible with the duty to consult enshrined in the United Nations Declarations of Indigenous Rights and represent a threat to Indigenous rights in Canada.

“Indigenous peoples are the first and last line of defense” against extractivism. The environmental and health risks of mega infrastructure developments are disproportionately borne by marginalized and front-line communities, while economic benefits are unevenly distributed between the private and public sector. Meaningful Indigenous and public consultation is not a choice; it is a democratic duty. MCSS is concerned that Bill C-5 and Bill C-39 jeopardize this duty.

Democratic Accountability

MCSS is also deeply concerned with how the *Building Canada Act* and Bill C-39 grant immense discretionary powers to the Cabinet to designate projects, or regions, of national interest. As raised by West Coast Environmental Law, these bills significantly limit public consultation and erode the rule of law.

MCSS denounces Bill C-39 for restricting the striking rights of labor workers; the bill empowers the Ministry of Labor to end legal strikes if they are deemed to adversely affect the national interest. Bill C-39 undermines labour laws and the democratic right of workers to assemble.

Overall, MCSS is concerned that the *Building Canada Act* and Bill C-39 erode democratic accountability in Canada.

Closing statement

Bill C-5 and Bill C-39 may have emerged amid a commercial trade war with the U.S.; however, tariffs and economic uncertainty do not legitimize eroding Canada's democratic and environmental backbone or violating the inherent right to self-determination of Indigenous peoples. Building with urgency should never come at the expense of environmental protection, climate commitments, public accountability, or Indigenous rights.

MCSS argues that Bill C-5 and Bill C-39 are not in the 'national interest.' These bills do not improve the material conditions of Canadians across the country, fail to advance the interests of students and compromise environmental protection, democratic accountability and Indigenous Rights.

As students who will live with the repercussions of environmental and democratic rollbacks, MCSS demands the Government of Canada to withdraw Bill C-5 and urges Members of Parliament to vote against Bill C-39 so that 'building Canada strong' does not come at the cost of Canada's environmental and democratic foundations.

Sincerely,

Macdonald Campus Students' Society

Referendum Question:

Do you agree that MCSS should publish this statement positioning itself **against Bill C-39?**