ONTARIO DATA CENTRES

Have Your Say on Ontario's Draft Data Centre Playbook

A plain-language guide to giving fact-based feedback. Comment period open until September 12, 2026.

On August 13, 2026, the Ontario government released a draft framework called the Data Centre Playbook and opened it for public comment for 30 days. Comments go through the Environmental Registry of Ontario, notice 026-0853. This guide gives you accurate background and a set of ideas you can adapt into your own words. Comments written in your own voice carry more weight than identical form letters, so please treat the wording below as a starting point, not a script.

The two-minute background

- The playbook is a **grid connection framework**. It sets out how the Province will decide which large data centres are allowed to connect to the electricity grid. It comes from Bill 40, which gave the Minister of Energy and Mines authority over these connections.
- It proposes that new data centres pay the **full cost of their electricity**, including a separate rate class for new data centres above one megawatt, so household bills are not affected.
- It **prioritizes low-water cooling**, such as closed-loop and direct-to-chip systems.
- It does **not** change how data centres are approved at the **local level**. Zoning and site plan approval remain municipal decisions, and in many cases those happen without a public meeting or a council vote.

That last point is the key one. Approval to connect to the grid and approval to build on a specific piece of land are two separate decisions, made at two different levels of government. The playbook addresses the first and is silent on the second.

How to submit a comment

1. Go to the Environmental Registry of Ontario notice: **ero.ontario.ca/notice/026-0853**
2. Read the proposal summary.
3. Select **Submit a comment** and write your feedback in your own words.
4. Comments are open until **September 12, 2026**. Confirm the exact closing date on the notice page.

Ideas and sentence starters you can adapt

Pick the points that matter to you, put them in your own words, and add your own local perspective where you can. These are written as concerns, questions, and requests, which is what public feedback is for.

Coordinate the provincial framework with local land use

"The playbook governs grid connection but does not appear to address how data centres are approved at the municipal level. I would like the Province to coordinate with municipalities so that local land-use accountability, including public notice and council oversight, is addressed alongside grid connection rather than left as a separate process."

Publish the threshold that defines which projects are covered

"The draft applies to data centres that meet thresholds to be set out in a future regulation. Until that threshold is published, the public cannot know which projects the framework actually covers. I would like the connection threshold to be defined and made public as part of this process."

Define community benefit clearly

"The playbook refers to significant investment and meaningful benefits to host communities, but does not define these terms or explain how they would be enforced. I would like clear, measurable definitions of community benefit, and a description of how commitments will be monitored and enforced."

Require water use disclosure, not just prioritize low-water cooling

"The playbook prioritizes closed-loop and low-water cooling, which is positive. I would like the Province to go further and require water use disclosure and ongoing reporting for approved facilities, so communities can see actual consumption over time."

Confirm the electricity rate class will be finalized

"I support the principle that data centres pay the full cost of their electricity impact. I would like assurance that the proposed separate rate class will be finalized through the Ontario Energy Board, and clarity on when it would take effect, so this remains a firm commitment rather than an intention."

Add transparency and public reporting

"I would like the Province to publish, on a regular basis, which data centre projects have been assessed under this framework and the outcomes, so the public has a clear and current picture of data centre development across Ontario."

Keeping your comment effective

- Write in your own words. Personalized comments carry more weight than identical copies.
- Stick to what you can stand behind. Concerns, questions, and requests are always fair to raise.
- Add local context if you have it, such as why this matters where you live.
- Be specific about what you want changed or clarified.
- Keep it respectful and constructive. This is about better process, not opposition to data centres or AI.

Ontario Data Centres is a free, independent, non-partisan public resource. We are not against data centres or against AI. We track these developments using primary sources so residents, municipalities, and reporters can work from accurate information. This guide is based on the Government of Ontario news release and Data Centre Playbook media backgrounder, both dated August 13, 2026, and on the text of Bill 40 as enacted. Please confirm the comment closing date on the ERO notice before relying on it.

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