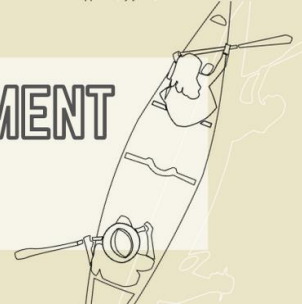


NAVIGATING THE LAW TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

ACCESSING LEGISLATIVE CHANGE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION



October 2020

What is legislation?

- There are two main categories of law in Canada: statutory law (legislation) and the common law.
- The common law originates from the court system and is developed by Judges through oral and written decisions.
- Statutory law, also referred to as legislation, is the written law elected politicians develop in Parliament (federal) or in a provincial or territorial Legislative Assembly.
- Legislation covers a broad range of topics that includes human rights, natural resource management, environmental assessment and the protection of human health.
- The elected officials that are responsible for making changes or creating new laws are part of the legislative branch of the government.
- The *Constitution Act of 1867* (section 17) gives the legislative branch of the federal government its legal powers. The Manitoba Legislative Assembly gets similar legal powers from *The Manitoba Act* (section 9) a law created in 1870 when Manitoba became a new Canadian province.

What is legislative change?

- Legislative change occurs when elected members of Parliament or a provincial or territorial Legislative Assembly make changes to existing laws or create new laws.
- Before a proposed change or new law receives final approval, it must first go through a number of steps, including: first reading, second reading, committee review, third reading, and royal assent.
- There are many reasons elected officials may consider legislative change such as new government policies, the need for new legal processes, and public pressure.
- While elected officials play an important role in the legislative branch of the government, there are also many unelected individuals who work for government (bureaucrats) who can directly influence legislative change in Canada.

Why does legislative change matter?

- Legislation affects all aspects of our daily lives and direct the way government, industry and citizens behave towards each other and use natural resources.
- Changes to legislation can directly impact the way wild plant and animal species are protected, environmental impacts are assessed, water resources are managed, and natural resources are extracted. Such changes can impact the health of communities and the natural resources they depend on.
- All Canadian citizens have democratic rights that give them the opportunity to have a say in the legislative changes that occur in their local communities and at the federal level.



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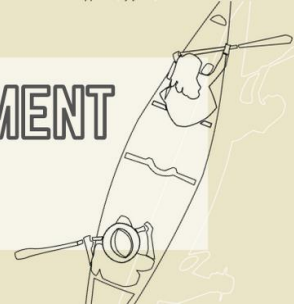
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Are there legislative changes in Manitoba I should know about?

- [Bill 35](#), *The Public Utilities Ratepayer Protection and Regulatory Reform Act* – This bill will make significant changes to the way electricity and gas rates are set and will reduce existing opportunities for public participation, among other things.
- MB Environmental Policies – the Government of Manitoba has also been making lots of changes to the environmental and natural resource policies that will influence future legislative changes. This includes changes to the way water, forest and mineral resources are managed in Manitoba. See <https://engagemb.ca/> for information about proposed policies and how to provide input.

What can I do about it?

- Learn what's happening in your local Legislative Assembly and in Parliament.
- Exercise your democratic rights as a Canadian citizen. For example:
 - Speak to your elected MLA or MP about the environmental issues that concern you.
 - Sign up to speak or submit written comments to a legislative or parliamentary committee about proposed legal changes.

For more information see:

- [Accessing Legislative Change](#) (webinar)
- [Accessing Legislative Change: Additional Resources](#)
- [Accessing Legislative Change: Discussion Questions](#)



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