

RAISE YOUR VOICE ABOUT LEGISLATION



Making laws are one of the most important things our elected representatives do at the Legislature. Often, laws that are debated and passed at the Legislature have some impact on workers, unions and/or

workplaces. But as a worker and citizen in Manitoba, you have the right and the opportunity to tell government and all MLAs what you think about the bills that they are considering before they become law. Manitoba is one of the only provinces in Canada that lets anyone speak to government about bills before they are passed, making it even more important for unions and workers in Manitoba to be engaged in the political process.

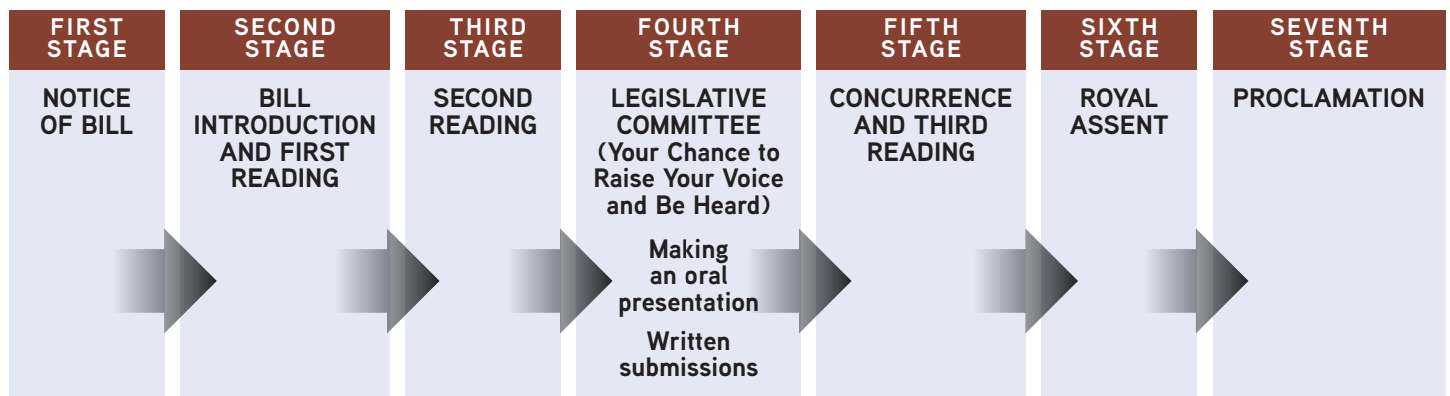
This document is designed to give you a sense of the path a bill takes from its introduction in the Legislature to becoming law. It is important to keep in mind that not all bills

become law. Some are introduced without going much further in the process. Sometimes, they are introduced and move to other stages before being withdrawn or significantly altered due to public backlash.

Some bills, especially private members bills, can be introduced by members of the governing party or opposition parties but not receive enough votes in the Legislature to move forward.

However, the vast majority of bills introduced by cabinet ministers, known as government bills, do become law because the governing party (who have the most votes) want them to become law.

Below you will find more information about each stage in the lifecycle of a bill as it makes its way through the legislature. You will also find out about how you can get involved in telling government what you think about a bill that matters to you and your union.



▶ First Stage–Notice of Bill



The first time people are made aware of a bill is when it is scheduled for introduction in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba – often known as the bill being given ‘notice’. At that point, the title of the bill appears on the Legislature’s Order Paper (basically a list of things that are on the Legislature’s agenda) at least one day prior to its introduction. No details of the bill are included except for the bill number and bill name.

▶ Second Stage – Bill Introduction and First Reading



The time we learn about the contents of a bill is when it is ‘read’ a first time and introduced in the Legislature. The cabinet minister who is responsible for the bill gives a short introductory speech which often contains little detail, but the text of the bill will be distributed and posted online (usually a few hours after it is introduced) on the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba website: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature>

This is how the second stage is supposed to work, and usually does work, although the Pallister/Stefanson government chose to break with decades of tradition by withholding the text of 17 bills for many months before making their text available to the legislature or the public.

▶ Third Stage–Second Reading



At this stage, MLAs debate the principles and objectives of the bill in the Legislature. Second reading can often take a few hours or even a few days, depending on how many MLAs choose to speak to the bill. Speakers from the party whose member introduced the bill will almost always speak in support, and often though not always, the opposition parties will critique the bill. Second Reading debate can happen weeks or even months after the bill’s First Reading.

▶ Fourth Stage – Legislative Committee (Your Chance to Raise Your Voice and Be Heard)



Here is where you come in. After a bill has passed Second Reading, it is referred to a Legislative Committee (comprised of members selected from both sides of the House). At this stage, members of the public are able to present oral and written submissions concerning proposed bills. You can register in advance to speak to a bill that matters to you by calling the Legislative Clerk’s Office at 204-945-3636 or emailing committees@leg.gov.mb.ca.

There is no way of knowing how far in advance a committee meeting will be scheduled for the consideration of a bill. However, you can register to speak to any bill that has been given First Reading, so the best way to ensure you have the opportunity to speak your mind about a bill that matters to you is to register after that bill has received First Reading. Then, you will be notified by the Clerk’s Office when a committee has been scheduled to consider the bill. This is your opportunity to say what you like, dislike, or would change about the bill.

If you cannot make the committee meeting date(s), you can provide a written submission or withdraw.

Check in with your union to see if they have prepared a submission on the bill and you can use their document to draft your presentation notes or your own submission.

MAKING AN ORAL PRESENTATION

You must register to make an oral presentation by calling the Clerk's Office at 204-945-3636. You will be asked for the following registration information:

- ✓ Presenter's name, address, contact information;
- ✓ Whether the presenter is a private citizen or is speaking on behalf of an organization, like a union (organizations are only allowed to have one official presenter each, so unions will often designate their President or another person as their official representative. Other members or staff of the same union can register as private citizens); and
- ✓ The name and number of the bill you want to register to speak to.

Each presenter is allowed a maximum of 10 minutes to make an oral presentation, and an additional five minutes to respond to questions from members of the committee. Typically, MLAs on the committee will thank people who are presenting as private citizens for their presentations and not ask many challenging questions. Sometimes they will not ask questions at all. However, if someone is speaking on behalf an organization, the MLAs are more likely to ask them more challenging questions. Oral presentations are more impactful than written submissions, but all presentations are considered part of the record of legislative committee meetings.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

If you prefer to send a written submission on the bill, you can do so anytime following the first reading to:

Clerk of Committees
Room 251 - 450
Broadway Winnipeg MB
R3C 0V8

You may also fax your submission to (204) 945-0038, or send it by email to: committees@leg.gov.mb.ca.

Written submissions must be received before the committee considering the bill concludes its deliberations so that it may be provided to committee members.

Sometimes a bill will be amended at the end of a committee meeting, based on feedback from presenters and stakeholders.

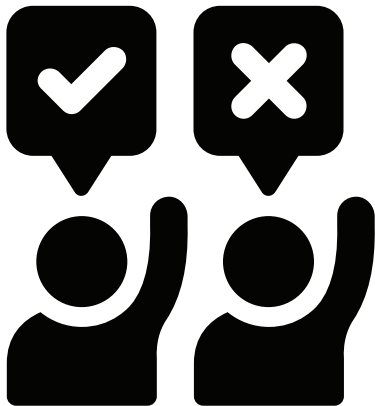


Fifth Stage–Concurrence and Third Reading



This stage is one of the last steps before a bill becomes law. It is an opportunity for the Legislature to consider any final amendments to the bill.

If the Legislature decides that the bill should move forward, the Lieutenant Governor is brought in to give the bill Royal Assent.



Sixth Stage–Royal Assent




To become law, a bill that passes all stages in the House must receive Royal Assent from the Lieutenant Governor. This is merely a formality, as government has already decided the bill should become law.

Seventh Stage - Proclamation



A bill does not necessarily come into force on the day it is given Royal Assent (though many bills do come into force at this point). The details of proclamation will be included in the text of the bill itself – either proclaimed upon Royal Assent or proclaimed on a date set by government. Some bills are straightforward and can be proclaimed right away, though many require a number of regulatory decisions and other considerations, and it is up to government to determine when the law is ‘proclaimed’.


MFL ACTIVIST GUIDE


HOW TO LOBBY FOR CHANGE

Lobbying meetings are an important part of any campaign to influence government actions, legislation, and/or funding decisions. Face-to-face (or virtual face-to-face) meetings with constituents and interest groups can make a real impact on elected officials. Often, lobbying is employed as one part of a broader strategy to raise awareness about an issue (and can be combined with public advertising, social and traditional media products, and other strategies to raise public interest in an issue).

Politicians care what voters think, and requesting a meeting to lobby a politician as a constituent or a representative of a group in their constituency makes an impact. By telling elected officials what you think about a law or a program they are considering, you can affect change.

You don't need to be a policy expert or a professional lobbyist to influence politicians and their staff. You just need to show that you are connected to the people and the communities that politicians need to represent (and who they rely on for votes at election time). Speaking from your own experience can be one of the most powerful lobbying tools at your disposal. Union activists are experts on workers and workplaces, and also provide essential perspectives as working people in their communities.

Voters hold a lot of power with politicians, and when we raise our voices about the things that matter to us, politicians listen. It's the job of politicians to serve their constituents and to listen to voters about the issues that matter to them. Decision makers need to see union activists as advocates on behalf of workers, but also as citizens, taxpayers, consumers and—perhaps most importantly—voters.



Are interested in learning about how you can lobby elected officials to take action on something important to you and your union?

Check out the MFL Activist Guide: How to Lobby for Change.

- Set up a meeting
- Meeting checklist
- At the meeting
- After the meeting / Follow up

For a physical or digital copy, just contact the MFL office by calling 204-947-1400 or emailing admin@mfl.mb.ca

