

Public Access to Information in Manitoba

Information that should be publicly available and/or posted on the Internet, that is currently not accessible.

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General

1. all materials used or filed in public hearings, legislative committee hearings, and similar events by filing and posting in the Public Registry, plus the registry for public entity (CEC, PUB etc. – currently their files are not fully on line, not fully accessible in their offices)
2. speeches and presentations by ministers and Premier
3. maps and data sources for government map products
4. a comprehensive, regularly updated government phone, address directory – in both a paper and online format
5. all licenses, permits, dispositions for Crown lands and water
6. all documents related to the departmental and public review of proposals under the *Environment Act*, and as was previous practice, all the review comments from regulatory and government entities as well as responses from proponents.
7. planning, policy, licensing, and regulatory review files from ***all government departments*** by filing and posting in the Public Registry
8. a searchable database or directory of all files in the public registry, listed by file number AND by file name with summary of contents
9. old, redundant, outdated public policy reports, documents, web pages; once a document is posted on the internet, it should not be removed – currently it is not uncommon for documents disappear from departmental websites. Archived web pages, content should be easily accessible.
10. records of meetings (meeting notes, summaries) etc. for public policy processes

Manitoba Conservation

1. copies of all existing environmental licenses under *The Environment Act*, all amendments, alterations, additions, or grandfathering steps as part of environmental licenses (as well as a mechanism to allow public comment on these steps)
2. chronological sequence or listing of all notices/notifications/proposals etc. under the *Environment Act* and a search function to provides access by file number and file/licensee name
3. schedules for any process under the *Environment Act*, with cross referencing regarding access to information from these processes.
4. review comments and responses by developers regarding any consultation or public policy/regulatory/license review by filing and posting in the public registry
5. loans, incentives, business agreements, subsidies etc. pertaining to projects requiring environmental licenses, including such mechanisms during an existing license period
6. copies of all legal agreements referenced in or material to existing proposals under the *Environment Act*, existing licenses etc.

7. any annual reports, plans, or monitoring data required under an Environment Act license.
8. all materials posted at open houses, public meetings, or similar events during the course of a long term environmental license.
9. records for any regulatory process underway regarding Acts that affect public lands and waters in Manitoba
10. continued posting of materials required under environment act, after CEC proceedings have begun, and full access or cross reference to online materials and CEC holdings, including transcripts
11. public notices regarding any process for which contents will be placed in the Public Registries
12. all materials filed in the physical Public Registry by filing and posting on the (currently selective) electronic/online Public Registry. Operational standards for both electronic and paper public registries needed, must be public.

Manitoba Water Stewardship

1. listing of all existing water allocations, permits and dispositions in Manitoba (searchable by number, holder of disposition etc)
2. notices regarding any water allocations under consideration, with registry including all comments, responses, etc.
3. record of decisions for all water allocations
4. public review and comments for water allocations - new
5. review comments and responses by developers regarding any consultation or public policy/regulatory/license review by filing and posting in the public registry
6. records regarding all watershed planning processes, including public review steps for draft watershed plans.
7. reports on any monitoring, annual reports, data from reporting from water projects in the province, that hold permits or licenses under Manitoba acts.

NOTE: These expectations require that the public registry system in Manitoba meet at least the standards for Ontario. Paper registry is still required for those who do not have Internet access or for whom Internet access is inadequate, and because EIS materials often contain materials that will not be able to be posted on line. Operational standards for the public registry system (including what is to be posted) in Manitoba need to be clarified, and made public, including time periods within which materials will be posted, and made public. As departments have been set up, and branches have been moved out of parent departments, participation in public registry has been omitted. The public registry system needs to include all departments who are making decisions, and issuing permits, licences and dispositions etc. for activity in public and private lands and waters in Manitoba.

Public registry also needs to include all government public policy press releases regarding the *Environment Act*, environmental licenses, allocations, lands planning, watershed planning etc.

As noted above, all material filed in the physical locations for the Public Registry should also be posted in an electronic/online Public Registry. Currently there are large inconsistencies as to what is posted online and only selected materials from certain public registry files are being made available. There should also be a public process to confirm the guidelines and standards for when and what material is to be posted in the Public Registry. Currently this is discretionary in many cases and decisions are made on an ad hoc basis, also materials are often posted very late, and not accessible during public processes.

Finally, public access to information is not just about making information physically or electronically accessible. It is also about the adequacy of advance notification, time allocated for public review, and acknowledgement of the uneven playing field in terms of the public's capacity to participate, retain expertise, and devote time to research and analysis. Mechanisms to enable the public and public interest groups to increase their capacity to participate need to be built into policy and regulatory processes as this enhances the quality and meaning of citizen engagement.