



# INTRODUCTION TO THE STANDING SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

## MANDATE

The Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources has the mandate to examine legislation and to study issues related to energy, the environment and natural resources generally, including:

- mines and natural resources, other than fisheries and forestry;
- pipelines, transmission lines and energy transportation;
- environmental affairs; and
- other energy-related matters.

## HISTORY

The *Rules of the Senate* were first amended to provide for a standing committee dealing exclusively with these broad subject areas on December 9, 1982, with the committee actually beginning operation during the Second Session of the Thirty-second Parliament (1983-1984).

Originally called the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the committee's name was changed to the Standing Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources less than one year later, on October 25, 1983. Subsequently, the committee's name was again modified, this time to include reference to the environment, on June 15, 1991. Prior to the establishment of the current committee, the Senate had, from 1946 to 1968, a committee on Natural Resources.

## SELECTED STUDIES

Over the past decade, the committee has undertaken a variety of special studies and produced several significant reports. Most recently, the committee examined non-renewable and renewable energy development including energy storage, distribution, transmission, consumption and other emerging technologies in Canada's three northern territories. During the course of the study, the committee held 18 hearings and heard from 42 witnesses consisting of federal, territorial and municipal officials, the Alaskan Energy Authority, industry representatives, energy associations, aboriginal governments, territorial electric utilities, energy experts, business leaders and environmental groups. Beginning May 9, 2014, committee members travelled for a week in the territories visiting each of the capitals and also smaller communities such as Kimmirut and Rankin Inlet in Nunavut and Whatì in NWT to listen to community leaders. The June 2015 report entitled *Powering Canada's Territories* made five recommendations to the federal government.



In December 2014, the committee released their report entitled *DIGGING SAFELY - One-call Notification Systems and the Prevention of Damage to Canada's Buried Infrastructure*. The report included four recommendations to the federal government to improve public and worker safety and to prevent damage to buried facilities in Canada.

In August 2013, the committee released their report entitled *Moving Energy Safely: A Study on the Safe Transport of Hydrocarbons by Pipelines, Tankers and Railcars in Canada*, which provided 13 recommendations related to energy transport by transmission pipelines, tankers and railcars. Over a three year period from 2009-2012, the committee conducted hearings and held fact-finding meetings, both in Ottawa and across the country, in an effort to promote a national discussion on Canada's energy future. The report *Now or Never* highlighted 13 priorities for action to achieve long-term and affordable energy solutions, addressing the challenges and opportunities of responsible development and energy efficiency.

Following the explosion of British Petroleum's Deepwater Horizon on April 20th, 2010, the committee held hearings and made recommendations about the status of Canada's offshore oil and gas exploration and development industry, including the nature of the applicable regulatory regime(s) and Canada's offshore disaster response capability.

In the area of environmental protection, the committee conducted a review of the *Navigable Waters Protection Act* and made four important recommendations to the federal government. *The Canadian Environmental Protection Act (1999, c. 33) RX: Strengthen and Apply Diligently*, summarized the committee's detailed review of the Act by way of two case studies, to help determine how well the Act protected Canadian citizens and the environment.

In addition to these selected studies, the committee has a long history of examining various energy and environment issues such as: nuclear safety, sustainable development, environmental protection, and the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

## **SELECTED LEGISLATIVE WORK**

Over the past decade, the committee has studied bills which covered a wide variety of subjects such as: federal sustainable development, the environment, Canada's National Parks, the *Food and Drugs Act* (clean drinking water), the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*, navigable waters, migratory birds, wildlife species at risk, hazardous products, nuclear fuel waste and national marine conservation areas, to name a few.

## **CURRENT WORK**

For information on the current work of the committee, you may wish to review the orders of reference the committee has received from the Senate, or review the committee proceedings. Detailed information on current work of the committee can be found on the parliamentary website at <http://senate-senat.ca/enev.asp>.