

What's in a complaint?

TEACHER'S NOTES

GRADE 6 CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

Grade 6 Social Studies Skills Outcomes that correspond to this activity:

Communication

- 6-S-400 Listen to others to understand their perspectives.
- 6-S-403 Present information and ideas orally, visually, concretely, or electronically.
- 6-S-404 Elicit and clarify questions and ideas in discussions.
- 6-S-405 Articulate their beliefs and perspectives on issues.

Grade 6 Social Studies Knowledge and Values Outcomes that correspond to this activity:

6.4.2 Government in Canada

- 6-KP-049 Describe the main features of the Canadian government.
- 6-KP-052 Identify the main responsibilities of municipal, provincial, First Nations, and federal governments in Canada.
- 6-KP-053 Identify elected or appointed municipal, provincial, and federal government representatives and describe their main responsibilities.

We often tell people to participate in the democratic process by voting, running for office or by joining a political party. There are other ways to be active citizens, too. Think of expressing your concerns, perhaps by making a formal complaint, as a way of participating in government.

Every time government makes a decision, some person or group of persons is affected by that decision, sometimes negatively. Expressing our concerns when we believe there is a problem is part of being an active citizen and possibly effecting change.

Sometimes you might try to resolve a problem by dealing directly with a public-sector organization (that's always the best first step), but despite your best intentions, you cannot resolve the problem to your satisfaction. If you continue to have real concerns, you can share them with:

- an elected official responsible for representing your community, such as your member of the legislative assembly or a municipal council member, or
- an office that handles complaints about public-sector organizations, such as Manitoba Ombudsman.

GRADE 9 CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

Grade 9 Social Studies Skills Outcomes that correspond to this activity:

Communication Skills

- S-400 Listen to others to understand their perspectives.
- S-401 Use language that is respectful of human diversity.
- S-402 Express informed and reasoned opinions.
- S-404 Elicit, clarify, and respond to questions, ideas, and diverse points of view in discussions.
- S-405 Articulate their perspectives on issues.
- S-406 Debate differing points of view regarding an issue.

Grade 9 Social Studies Knowledge and Values Outcomes that correspond to this activity:

Cluster 2: Democracy and Governance in Canada

Learning Experience 9.2.1: Law, Order, and Good Government

- KC-005 Give examples of ways in which government affects their daily lives.
- KP-044 Describe the division of power and responsibilities of federal, First Nations, provincial, and municipal governments.

GRADE 12 CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Global Issues: Citizenship and Sustainability – “Active Democratic Citizenship” core concept and “Take Action” community-based projects

Law – Module 1 Fundamentals of Law learning experiences

As a result of a complaint to the ombudsman, a solution might be found that specifically addresses the problem. Or in some cases, if it was determined that certain laws or policies were having unintended consequences or were not applied fairly, government might change those laws or policies or revisit a decision. In other cases, the ombudsman might conclude that a decision by government was made fairly. When that occurs, the ombudsman will provide the complainant with a thorough explanation about why the complaint cannot be supported.

For examples of complaints and their outcomes, see Manitoba Ombudsman's investigation reports about municipalities at:

https://www.ombudsman.mb.ca/documents_and_files/municipal-investigation-reports.html

Also see the ombudsman's investigation reports about provincial government departments and agencies at:

https://www.ombudsman.mb.ca/documents_and_files/provincial-investigation-reports.html

Consider inviting the ombudsman (or ombudsman employees) into your class for a discussion about the ombudsman's role in Manitoba and how the ombudsman works.

ABOUT THE OMBUDSMAN

Manitoba Ombudsman is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and is not part of any government department or agency. The office's mission is to promote and foster openness, transparency, fairness, accountability, and respect for privacy in the design and delivery of public services.

The ombudsman conducts independent, impartial, and non-partisan investigations about access to information and privacy matters, the fairness of government actions or decisions, or serious wrongdoings that may have occurred. In Manitoba, four laws establish the ombudsman's authority to conduct investigations -- the Ombudsman Act, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Personal Health Information Act, and the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act.

In Manitoba, the ombudsman is appointed by all parties of the legislature. The ombudsman is appointed for a term of six years, and may be re-appointed for a second term of six years (but not for more than two terms).

Visit Manitoba Ombudsman's website at <https://www.ombudsman.mb.ca> for more information.

Historically, the first independent parliamentary ombudsman was established in 1809 in Sweden. The word "ombudsman" is Swedish, and is often translated as "citizen's representative" or "representative of the people." After Sweden, ombudsmen were established in Finland (1919), Denmark (1954), Norway (1961) and New Zealand (1962).

In 1970, Manitoba became the fourth province (after Alberta, New Brunswick and Quebec) to establish an ombudsman.