



# Issue Update

## New Environmental Legislation

The Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection has introduced a new *Environmental Management Act*, designed to combine and replace the current *Waste Management Act* and *Environmental Management Act*.

The *Waste Management Act* the primary environmental protection statute in B.C. has gone without any review for over 20 years and was very much in need of an overhaul. The old Act was very prescriptive in nature and often imposed unnecessary and cumbersome regulatory requirements on some activities.

The new Act has a modern more proactive approach that encourages responsible behaviour, improves contaminated sites provisions, centralizes decision-making, and places its focus on risk management.

The former Act required that the government treat all activities captured under the Act the same way and issue permits. The new Act allows the government to only require site-specific permits for high-risk activities. Medium-risk activities will be covered by province-wide codes of practice and low-risk activities will operate under a general prohibition against causing environmental harm. This new approach will greatly reduce the number of permits required and will alleviate the huge backlog in permit processing that now exists. The reduction in paperwork will free up staff to spend more time on compliance audits and ensuring standards are being met.

The old Act allowed a number of different managers and regional managers throughout the Ministry to make decisions. This causes problems with consistency. The new Act shifts the formal decision-making powers to provincial directors who will oversee regional managers.

The BC Construction Association requested an extensive review of the *Waste Management Act* in our submission for deregulation, and we are pleased by the active approach being taken by government in this area.

Information on the new Act can be obtained on-line at: <http://www.gov.bc.ca/wlap>

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