

GRASS ROOTS ALBERTA



When change in government policy becomes desirable or necessary, many people respond with one of two attitudes: They claim that nothing can be done, or they look for a quick fix. Both alternatives are mistaken. There are always things that can be done, but change doesn't happen overnight. Trying to promote change before people are ready rarely succeeds. So what is the process by which long-term, stable change actually occurs?

CHANGE

How is it brought about?

1 What about lobbying?

Associations, member organizations, and interest groups have traditionally sought to bring about political change through **lobbying**, a word originally used to refer to favour-seekers who waited in the lobbies of various legislative assemblies, hoping to be the last to speak with the legislator before he went in to vote.

Lobbyists attempt to change laws or policies by persuading **politicians**, not the **general public**—often overlooking the fact that before change can occur in democratic societies, there has to be a significant measure of public support. A lobbyist might be able to convince a politician of something, but that doesn't mean the people who vote that politician in or out of office will be convinced.

When the public is poorly informed about an issue, or when their beliefs are based on incomplete understanding, convincing politicians about the rightness of a position rarely changes the policy. For that to happen, a better understanding has to be achieved—**like adding weight to one side of a seesaw**.