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Legislation strengthens Alberta's commitment to human rights

Changes complement other improvements to human rights system

Edmonton... Proposed changes to legislation will strengthen human rights in Alberta, complementing improvements being made to the province's human rights system as a whole.

"Last year, I promised to review every facet of our province's human rights system to make it more efficient, effective and transparent for Albertans," said Lindsay Blackett, Minister of Culture and Community Spirit. "Alberta's population has grown in size and cultural diversity, and these improvements will help ensure the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission is better equipped to meet the priorities and needs of that changing population."

The *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act, 2009* will update legislation that has not been revised in the almost 13 years since it first became law. Proposed changes include adding sexual orientation to the scope of the Act, which will ensure it is consistent with current legislative and judicial decisions. The rights of parents on the education of their children would also be confirmed under proposed amendments.

Amendments will also clarify the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission's role and will establish a new process to improve the handling of appeals as they arise, by ensuring they are directed to members of a Tribunal.

The proposed legislative amendments complement several administrative changes being made to the Commission to reduce the time it takes to review a complaint, and to improve its services to Albertans. These changes are supported through an additional \$1.7 million to the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission in Budget 2009 - an increase of 26 per cent - to enhance the system's ability to investigate and mediate complaints in a timely manner, while maintaining fairness to all parties in the process.

More information on the improvements to Alberta's human rights system is available at www.culture.alberta.ca.

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