



## **ALBERTA'S HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION GETS A NEW NAME AND SOME UPDATING**

**October 2, 2009**

The Government of Alberta recently amended the province's human rights legislation. The implementation of some of the more controversial changes has been delayed, but the following changes are effective as of October 1, 2009:

1. The legislation is now named the Alberta Human Rights Act rather than the very cumbersome Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act.
2. The new name of the commission is the Alberta Human Rights Commission.
3. Sexual orientation is now formally written in as a protected ground. Between April 2, 1998 and October 1, 2009, sexual orientation had been "read in" as a protected ground under Alberta's human rights legislation through court decisions.
4. The definition of "marital status" is now "the state of being married, single, widowed, divorced, separated or living with a person in a conjugal relationship outside marriage." Previously, the word "state" in this definition was "status," and the word "person" was followed by "of the opposite sex." Presumably, same sex marriages will now receive human rights protection.
5. The Chief Commissioner is now called the Chief of the Commission and Tribunals. Human rights panels are now called human rights tribunals.