

Introduction to Human Rights

Intro to Human Rights

In Canada, we have provincial, federal and international laws that protect our human rights. Human rights are fundamental rights that all people in the world have agreed that we should have. For example, this includes the right to not be discriminated against. Other human rights include the right to equality and the right to freedom, life and liberty.

In Alberta, the *Alberta Human Rights Act* protects the human rights of Albertans by not allowing discrimination in many situations. For example, discrimination is not allowed in housing, goods and services, and employment. There are other laws that protect our other human rights such as the right to equality or right to life, liberty and security; for example, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

The Alberta Human Rights Commission administers the *Alberta Human Rights Act*. The Commission is an independent commission created by the Government of Alberta. If someone has reasonable grounds for believing that they have been discriminated against, they can make a complaint to the Commission within one year of the discrimination incident.

We have both rights and responsibilities under the law. A right is a power or privilege that a person has under the law. A responsibility is a duty that a person has. A responsibility can involve doing or not doing something. There are both rights and responsibilities in the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, for example:

- **Right**—a potential tenant has a right to occupy a unit advertised as being available for occupancy.
- **Responsibility**—a person cannot deny a potential tenant the right to occupy a unit advertised as being available for occupancy because of their race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation.

Did you know?

The *Alberta Human Rights Act* is “quasi-constitutional.” This means that it cannot be altered, amended or repealed unless there is a clear legislative enactment. This also means that it is superior and prevails over any conflicting laws. It is not possible to contract out of human rights legislation. A landlord cannot write in a lease that the *Alberta Human Rights Act* does not apply to a tenancy situation.

What is the difference between the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (the *Charter*)?

The *Charter* and the *Alberta Human Rights Act* are both human rights legislation that address discrimination. The *Charter* differs from the *Alberta Human Rights Act* in many ways. The *Charter* is federal legislation and is part of the *Canadian Constitution*, which contains the basic rules about how the country operates.

The *Charter* guarantees all Canadians certain rights such as the rights to liberty and equality under the law. It also guarantees fundamental freedoms such as freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

The *Charter* applies to all government action (including action by provincial legislatures and Parliament) and to everything done under government authority. Unlike the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, which applies to both private and public sectors, the *Charter* only applies to the relationship between government and individuals.

Where to find more information

The Alberta Human Rights Commission can give you free and confidential information about the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and how it helps protect you from discrimination.



www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca

You should not rely on this publication for legal advice.
It provides general information on Alberta law only.

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