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# Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

Fall 2024

## Overview

- Bill 31 would make amendments to the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act*, the *Public's Right to Know Act*, the *Critical Infrastructure Defence Act* and the *Alberta Evidence Act*.
- Amendments would direct the Electoral Boundaries Commission to add two electoral divisions to the province as part of its review of Alberta's electoral map.
- Amendments would also help increase access to justice, secure crime data to assist with decision making and increase transparency, improve clarity by defining terms, and update legislation to address the current needs of Albertans.

## Amendments

### *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act*

- An Electoral Boundaries Commission reviews existing electoral boundaries and makes proposals to the Legislative Assembly about area, boundaries, and names of the electoral divisions.
- Amendments to the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act* would direct the next Electoral Boundaries Commission to divide Alberta into 89 proposed electoral divisions, an addition of two divisions.
- Amendments would also update and clarify the list of factors the commission may consider when drawing the new electoral boundaries.

### *Public's Right to Know Act:*

- The *Public's Right to Know Act* legislates public reporting of crime data to make it easier for Albertans to know how it impacts their community.
- Amendments would allow the Minister of Justice to require data about crime from government departments, branches, or agencies, as well as from municipalities and police services, which would enable more informed conversations between law enforcement, municipalities, and the province.

### *Critical Infrastructure Defence Act:*

- The *Critical Infrastructure Defence Act* protects essential infrastructure by creating offences for trespassing, interfering with operations, or causing damage.
- The definition of essential infrastructure is currently contained in both the act and the Critical Infrastructure Defence Regulation.
- The amendment would incorporate facilities identified as essential infrastructure in the regulation into the definition of essential infrastructure in the legislation, which would eliminate the need for the Critical Infrastructure Defence Regulation, and it could then be repealed.

### *Alberta Evidence Act:*

- The *Alberta Evidence Act* sets out a process for individuals to give evidence to the court either orally or in writing.
- Amendments would give Albertans simpler and more modern processes for confirming the truth of the information they provide to the courts.
- Albertans submitting written documents to the courts using an electronic system designated by the court would be able to electronically certify the information they provide is true rather than visiting a courthouse or paying to swear or affirm an oath in person.

- Other amendments would more easily allow Albertans to choose between making a secular affirmation or swearing a religious oath when testifying in court or confirming the truth of an affidavit.
- Currently, Albertans who do not wish to swear an oath must first object and make a justification for why they would prefer to make an affirmation. Amendments would remove the need for Albertans to justify their preference for an affirmation.