

# Action Alert: “Red Tape Reduction” Likely to Threaten our Parks and Public Lands

*June 6, 2022*



Recent legislative changes under the guise of “Cutting Red Tape” could be a threat to Alberta's parks and public lands, and will likely reduce public participation, transparency, and evidence-based decision making when it comes to setting important regulations for these lands. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) has reviewed the proposed changes and believes the public needs to be concerned about the erosion of environmental values.

“Bill 21, along with previous Red Tape legislation, threatens our wild spaces,” says Devon Earl, AWA conservation specialist. “The Minister will have

significantly more discretionary power to make under-the-radar decisions regarding our parks, public lands, and resources and to adopt regulations that are much better suited to private interests than to environmental protection.”

Bill 21, the *Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act*, received Royal Assent on May 31, 2022, but hasn't been proclaimed yet. This bill is one of a series of bills passed over the last few years under the umbrella of “red tape reduction”, which is being presented by our provincial government as a way to simplify regulations and remove onerous and unnecessary rules. Though we can all agree that reducing unnecessary restrictions would be positive, Bill 21 and other red tape legislation do not stop there.

Bill 21 and past red tape legislation remove oversight from Cabinet, and increase discretionary power of a Minister, reducing the visibility of regulatory changes and reducing the opportunity for the public to raise their concerns and have their voices heard. This is true in Bill 21 for the *Public Lands Act* and the *Provincial Parks Act*. Changes proposed in Bill 21 also allow the Minister to adopt documents from “any government, board, agency, association or person” as legally-enforceable rules under the *Public Lands Act* and *Provincial Parks Act*. There seems to be no requirement for such documents that become regulations to be science-based or consistent with land-use planning to limit cumulative effects.

If you can, AWA encourages you to write to your local MLA and Minister Jason Nixon ([AEP.Minister@gov.ab.ca](mailto:AEP.Minister@gov.ab.ca)) regarding your concerns about Bill 21, the *Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act*, and copy AWA ([dearl@abwild.ca](mailto:dearl@abwild.ca)). Specifically, we suggest that you include the following key points and requests in your email:

- Bill 21 allows Ministerial discretion to trump science-based decision-making and public consultation when it come to decisions about parks and public lands. This is not fair to Albertans who value our wild spaces.
- Ask that the provisions in Bill 21 that amend section 1.1 of the *Public Lands Act* and add a section following the existing section 12.1 of the *Provincial Parks Act* not be proclaimed. These provisions allow documents created by any government, board, agency, association, or person to be adopted as legally-enforceable standards and guidelines.
- Ask that Minister Jason Nixon commit to completing land-use planning that limits cumulative effects to lands and waters, prior to making any changes that affect our parks and public lands.

For more information, [click here](#) or contact Devon Earl, AWA Conservation Specialist ([dearl@abwild.ca](mailto:dearl@abwild.ca)).

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