

**From:** Calgary-Glenmore <[Calgary.Glenmore@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:Calgary.Glenmore@assembly.ab.ca)>

**Date:** April XX, 2020

**To:** XXX>

**Subject: RE: Our democracy is under threat**

Hello xxx,

Thank you for reaching out with your concerns about Bill 10, the Public Health Emergency Amendment Act. In these challenging times, I appreciate the opportunity to clarify the emergency measures that our government is taking to support Albertans.

There are several misconceptions about the scope of Bill 10 that I would like to clarify. First, I want to reassure you that the decisions that our government is making in the fight against COVID-19 are not taken lightly. We continue to put measures in place that reflect the best medical advice of our expert public health officials, under the leadership of Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Deena Hinshaw.

The core purpose of Bill 10 is to update the *Public Health Act* so that we can better respond to public health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill clarifies the ability of government ministers to act rapidly during a public health emergency; creates strong consequences for defying public health orders; and extends the authority to enforce public health orders to community peace officers.

Bill 10 makes amendments to the Public Health Act that will clarify the ability of government ministers to make legislative changes during a public health emergency like COVID-19. The amendment clarifies that a minister can amend any enactment that they are responsible for, through a ministerial order, when a public health emergency is declared. This will ensure that the government can respond quickly to a pandemic, which as we have seen presents a rapidly-changing public crisis, is necessary. If every order made by a minister had to pass through the Legislative Assembly we would be unable to react appropriately to a pandemic. All orders made pursuant to the emergency powers is posted on the Alberta COVID-19 website to ensure transparency.

This Bill does not create new powers for politicians to implement any law that they choose during an emergency, as some critics have claimed. Rather, it clarifies language in the Public Health Act to confirm that ministers are able to add to legislation that they are responsible for, as long as it is in the interest of the public. Importantly, any orders that are issued during a public health emergency will lapse unless ratified by the Legislature.

I have also heard criticisms of the number of MLAs who voted to pass this Bill. In order for our Legislature to continue sitting and passing legislation that helps our province's response to COVID-19, MLAs must practice social distancing during Legislature sittings. The UCP government and the NDP opposition have agreed to reduce the number of MLAs present at a given time so that our Legislature can continue to meet, while protecting the health of MLAs and other staff of the Alberta Legislature.

Our government is taking these emergency measures to support the efforts of front-line workers in flattening the curve against COVID-19. Emergency legislation being introduced during the

pandemic has been informed by consultation with municipalities, emergency managers, and public health officials to ensure that all measures are in the best interest of Albertans.

Thank you for taking the time to reach out to my office with your questions. I hope that you are staying safe, and wish you good health in this challenging time.

Best Regards,

**Whitney Issik**

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