

Trish Altass

Hannah Bell

Hon. Jamie Fox

Heath MacDonald

Hon. Bradley Trivers

Regarding bill 37, there are a few thoughts that I wanted to share.

The intent of the bill seems to be focused on enabling government to operate in an emergency. This is a reasonable objective, viewing some of the department presentation to your committee it was clear that they felt at times they were “skating on thin ice” when trying to deal best with the emerging situation and holding fast to the legislation that empowers their actions. Accommodation within legislation for this action is important. Also, the need to extend legislated milestones to allow government to focus on the emergency at hand is important. Legislation is not meant to stop or restrict the very actions it is trying to achieve.

An emergency is not a time when good policy is made, it does however expose the limitations of policy and brings into focus the changes that need to be considered. Government’s hurry in proposing this amendment while understandable, is concerning. The emergency we find ourselves in currently, has been evolving at such a pace that no legislation or government could have really anticipated. Typically, we think of a “State of Emergency” as a response to an extra ordinary event, it could be caused by weather, natural disaster, or even a significant social event. Mostly this would be a regional or local emergency, and the timeframe while not certain can be anticipated. Our current situation does not align with this understanding of emergency. This should lead us to take more time, not less in making sure future responses to this type of event can be carefully considered.

Looking back over the last few months reveals the challenges in determining the nature of the emergency and the proper response to it, it also may call into question as to whether an ongoing health crisis is well served by a state of emergency response. The discretionary actions which government put in place under the “State of Emergency” were well intended and supported by health and science, but as the situation evolved so did the health and science. It appeared as the crisis evolved, government was trying to justify previous action, (flattening the curve) for current actions (suppressing the disease), by defending past policy while implementing new policy. This crisis as it dragged on caused enormous mental fatigue, pain, and strain. Policy makers having implemented a lockdown, that was accepted by the public as a temporary measure (two weeks), became reluctant to adjust to the extended period. The harm this caused to families of dying patients in our hospitals was inhumane and a burden policy maker will have to carry.

The isolation imposed on our population, especially seniors, which was protecting them in the early days when, so little was known, became a huge source of pain as the crisis dragged on. Even when it was clear that the virus was not active in our province, testing was in place and results were much quicker, border protocol was limiting external carriers from entering our province, policy makers held fast to earlier health measures that were proving to have a negative emotional and mental affect.

The relaxing of the lockdown when it did begin was also lacking in health and science, the allowable groups at a restaurant verses a huge public space is an example of the lack of consistency. This led to confusion in the public. Also, the discretionary nature of “essential service” was not always supported by health and science, clergy who are essential to the mental and emotional wellbeing of many islanders, were not essential but our liquor stores quickly reopened.

Legislators must review the actions of government during this time, invite real public input and determine the way forward, our civil rights as guaranteed by the Charter were suspended at times in the last few months, this is very serious, it requires a through study.

I wish you well in your deliberations.

Respectfully submitted,

Philip Brown

Richmond PE