



ALBERTA
MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

Office of the Minister

March 15, 2012

Dear Chief Elected Official:

I am writing to reaffirm the intent behind emergency management bylaws as well as the provincial *Emergency Management Act*. You may have heard about or have already been approached by a group of individuals lobbying to have emergency management bylaws repealed based on their premise that it infringes on personal rights and freedoms. As Minister responsible for the *Emergency Management Act*, I want to clear up any misconceptions brought forward by this citizens group.

The *Emergency Management Act* gives local authorities the ability to declare a state of local emergency (SOLE). It also gives municipalities the flexibility to, in good faith, do what is necessary to keep their residents and property safe. This includes:

- acquiring or using personal property to prevent, combat or alleviate the effects of an emergency or disaster
- authorizing or requiring any qualified person to render aid of a type the person is qualified to provide
- authorizing the entry into any building or on any land, without warrant
- causing the demolition or removal of trees, structures or crops, if the demolition or removal is necessary or appropriate in order to reach the scene of a disaster or to attempt to forestall its progress or to combat its progress
- authorizing the conscription of persons needed to meet an emergency

These provisions are common across Canada and many have been in place for decades. Fortunately, Alberta has never experienced a disaster to the magnitude that requires citizens to help with the emergency response. In fact, as you can likely attest, during an emergency we all regularly encounter many citizens who want to voluntarily help out their friends and neighbours, so this provision has never been needed. Additionally, communities have either repaired property or paid compensation when actions to assist with the emergency response caused damage to personal property. This requirement is clearly stated in the Act, contrary to the argument put forth by the group challenging local bylaws.

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Many municipalities have created bylaws to bring structure to how they respond to an emergency and these are based very closely on the provincial Act. Even without an emergency management bylaw, each local authority has the above listed options, and more, available to them under the Act to assist with the emergency response.

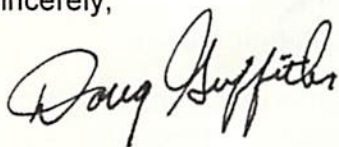
Your emergency management bylaw solidifies how your community will respond during an emergency, who can declare a SOLE and who would be included in your municipal emergency operations centre. With a bylaw, you are able to pre-identify who represents the quorum necessary to declare a SOLE so the entire Council does not need to meet to make a resolution. Without a bylaw, there could be a delay in declaring a SOLE. The result could be a risk to the safety of your residents.

The powers available to you are listed in the *Emergency Management Act* and are in place to assist you when there is a significant threat to personal safety and people's lives are on the line. Any action taken during a state of local emergency is done with the goal to protect the public, and I stand behind you as elected officials as well as your first responders who make difficult decisions to keep our friends, families and property safe.

I believe Albertans expect that during an emergency, officials should do everything in their power to keep our families and our properties safe. To suggest otherwise is irresponsible, especially when there is a threat to public safety.

I want you to know that we are here to assist you should anyone try to challenge your emergency management bylaw. Please contact your local Alberta Emergency Management Agency field officer or my office at 780-427-3744 if you have any questions or require support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Doug Griffiths". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Doug" being more prominent than the last name "Griffiths".

Doug Griffiths
Minister

cc: Honourable Alison M. Redford, QC
Premier

All Government MLAs