

MP says invoking Emergencies Act sets ?dangerous precedent?

By Sam Odrowski

Use of the Emergencies Act, approved by Parliament earlier this week, will be revoked, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced on Wednesday afternoon.

A 185-151 vote in the House of Commons on Monday evening approved the Emergencies Act for an additional 30 days, despite the three-week ?Freedom Convoy? protest in Ottawa being fully dismantled over the weekend, and border blockades being cleared over a week ago.

Trudeau said on February 23 that the situation was no longer an emergency.

The Conservatives and Bloc Québécois opposed the motion to approve the act, while the NDP, Green Party, and Liberal Party supported it.

Dufferin?Caledon Conservative MP Kyle Seeback, who voted against the motion, said he's most disappointed that it was made into a confidence vote by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, so if it failed an election would be triggered.

?I think the reason why this passed is because the Prime Minister threatened to have an election over it, and I think on something as serious as choosing to invoke the Emergencies Act ? he did a disservice to the country by doing that.?

Seeback says since the Emergencies Act was invoked on February 14, he's firmly stood against it. He told the Citizen when it comes to there being an emergency, national in scope ? he doesn't see it.

?I don't think the Emergencies Act should ever have been invoked. The only argument I could see would be the border crossings, but the border crossings, most of them were cleared before the Emergencies Act was invoked, and the last one was on its way to being taken care of,? he remarked.

?Extending it for up to 30 days when there are no border closings, when everything's been dealt with in Ottawa, to me is really irresponsible, and it sets a very dangerous and authoritarian precedent.?

As a former lawyer, Seeback said precedent isn't just important for case law but also parliamentary procedure for the government.

?When you set the precedent to invoke the emergencies act so low, that is, I think, a dangerous precedent that other governments can look at to potentially justify other actions, which is why I was against this being done in the first place,? he noted. ?The last time we invoked measures like this were during wars, or during an actual terrorism crisis with the FLQ.?

Seeback also noted that many legal and constitutional experts agree with his position, including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, who has launched a lawsuit over the Emergencies Act being invoked.

With respect to how the Emergencies Act is being used to seize bank accounts of people who donated to the Freedom Convoy, Seeback expressed concerns.

A House of Commons committee heard on Tuesday that donations as small as \$20, made after February 15, could result in donor's bank accounts being frozen.

Parliament will reconvene on Monday, February 28, and, prior to Wednesday's update, Seeback said the Conservatives would be introducing a motion to revoke the Emergencies Act.

Justin Trudeau said the act wouldn't be used a day longer than it is necessary.

He also noted that the measures are geographically targeted as well as reasonable and proportionate to the threats it sets out to address.

- with files from Brock Weir