



June 18, 2019

Honourable Jason Kenney
Premier, President of Executive Council
Office of the Premier
307 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Premier Kenney;

Last week, I joined the leaders of Alberta's public-sector unions at the Legislature to express alarm over Bill 9, the *Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act*.

It's clear to us that the Bill is not about deferring arbitration, despite the title. Instead, it's about using legislation to break the legally-binding contracts that cover more than 180,000 public-sector workers.

I'm writing today with a number of very specific questions about the Bill and your government's intentions.

Section 5(c) of the Bill states, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations...respecting any other matter that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable for carrying out the intent of this Act."

If passed, this clause would allow Cabinet to make regulations on anything to do with the intent of the Act (which is to balance the budget without acknowledging that your government's tax cuts will make things worse, or that current deficits are the result of Alberta's long-standing and structural over-reliance on volatile resource revenue).

To be clear, we think your government is planning to pay for its corporate tax cuts by cutting the salaries of nurses, teachers and other public-sector workers (because, even though you won't admit it publicly, at some level, we think you understand that the tax cuts won't pay for themselves).

We also think that you're planning to use the new powers that you're giving yourselves under section 5(c) to impose wage cuts on public-sector workers without negotiation or arbitration, and even without debate in the Legislature.

With all of this in mind, my questions for you are as follows:

First, if this Bill is really just about deferring arbitration, that goal can clearly be accomplished by Sections 2 and 3. Why do you need the other extraordinary powers that would be conferred on your government by section 5(c)?

Second, given the clear breakdown of trust between your government and the thousands and thousands of hard-working Albertans who will be impacted by this legislation, can you give us a clear and unequivocal assurance that the powers conferred by Section 5(c) will NOT be used to impose wage rollbacks and that, instead, your government will respect the collective bargaining process?

If you cannot provide these reassurances, we will have no choice but to proceed on the assumption that your government intends to break contracts, ignore the collective bargaining process and use the power of your majority to inappropriately impose wage cuts.

I look forward to your answers to these two straight-forward questions. In the meantime, I would formally like to request a face-to-face meeting so we can discuss these issues at greater length.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gil McGowan', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gil McGowan
President
Alberta Federation of Labour

Cc Honourable Travis Toews, President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Honourable Jason Copping, Minister of Labour and Immigration