

July 31, 2020

Four years ago, the NDP government of Rachel Notley was pilloried in the national media, when it attempted to ban the alt-right media organization *The Rebel* from its news conferences. *The Rebel* is an unabashedly activist and extreme-right online outlet. Yet it argued, successfully and, I think, correctly, that organizations in the public sector must be open to scrutiny by all media.

The national outcry was loud enough that, within a few days, Notley reversed her position, and *The Rebel* was readmitted to the Legislature press corps.

The precedent that was set is that public-sector organizations do not get to choose who covers them according to the congeniality of their political leanings.

On the basis of that precedent alone, I find it alarming and baffling that Edmonton Police Services would refuse to accept Progress Alberta as a legitimate news organization, apparently on the basis of its politics.

This is alarming because it is profoundly anti-democratic: public organizations supported by public money must be accountable to *all* members of the public and not just to those with whom they agree.

It is baffling because, at a time when citizens around the world are gathering in the streets to protest the excesses of 21st century policing, one would think organizations such as EPS would be attempting to present themselves as honest and open, and not as secretive and resentful of public scrutiny.

The act of effectively banning a media organization deemed politically unfriendly clearly implies the latter.

I hope that common sense will prevail in this situation and that EPS will – as Notley did four years ago – reverse this petty, self-destructive decision.

Sincerely



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