

Kenney's "not a lockdown" is very much one. And it's more dangerous than COVID.



By John Carpay

It seems that Jason Kenney is taking his government's communications strategy straight out of George Orwell's classic 1984. The government in 1984 uses propaganda as a cornerstone of exploiting people and remaining in power, with slogans like "War is peace; Freedom is slavery; Ignorance is strength."

Too harsh?

After declaring a new public health emergency in Alberta this week, Kenney said: "Let me be clear, we are not moving into a lockdown."

He then proceeded to make all indoor social gatherings illegal; impose fines of \$1,000 or more on people gathering "socially" outside of their homes (including weddings and funerals) in numbers larger than 10; limit religious gatherings to one-third

capacity while requiring masks and prohibiting singing; shut down all banquet halls, conference centres, trade shows, auditoria, community centres, children's play centres and indoor playgrounds, and all team and individual sports; place onerous and profit-killing restrictions on restaurants, pubs, bars, and lounges; harm retail establishments by reducing them to a fraction of the capacity needed for profitability; limit museums, galleries, libraries, movie theatres, indoor entertainment centres and indoor fitness centres to 20 per cent capacity; severely damage "personal services" businesses providing haircare, esthetics, wellness services, professional services, taxi and rideshare, hotels/motels, and private lessons; and keep grade 7-12 children away from school for six weeks (November 30 through to January 11).

This, maintains Premier Kenney, is not a "lockdown."

Our caring and compassionate premier magnanimously acknowledges that these severe restrictions on our Charter freedoms to move, travel, assemble, associate and worship will be "disruptive to businesses and to all Albertans."

Not a lockdown; just "balanced" measures that are a bit "disruptive."

Not that our premier would know what it's like to have to take care of children at home when you are used to them attending school from 9:00 to 3:00. Not that our Premier's own public sector salary will in any way be impacted by his own measures. Not that he would ever need to survive on only \$2,000 per month in government benefits while shouldering the responsibility of

supporting a family and paying for rent or a mortgage.

Premier Kenney wants to “thank all Albertans in advance for [our] understanding and what [we] have done personally” to “stop the spike and protect each other.”

Premier Kenney ignores Alberta Health Services (AHS) data which does not justify or support the daily fearmongering perpetrated by him and by Chief Medical Officer Deena Hinshaw.

As of Tuesday, November 24 there were fewer than 500 COVID-19 deaths in Alberta since March, in the context of more than 27,000 Albertans who die each year: more than 2,000 per month and more than 500 each and every week. Of course, the 492 COVID-19 deaths are troubling, but so are the other 26,500 deaths from cancer, drug overdoses, cancelled surgeries, suicides, lack of access to health care, and other causes of death. Many of these 26,500 deaths are caused directly by the government’s lockdown measures, like cancelling 22,000 medically necessary surgeries and delaying thousands of vitally important CT scans and MRIs to diagnose cancer.

Only 348 COVID-19 patients are currently in hospital according to AHS, leaving more than 8,100 hospital beds available for more COVID-19 patients, and for patients suffering from the various conditions that cause 98 per cent of deaths in Alberta. COVID-19 patients are

occupying 4 per cent of Alberta’s hospital beds, which is pretty close to the 2 per cent of deaths in Alberta that result from COVID-19. Why and how is this a crisis that justifies the lockdowns we have been suffering under – to various degrees – since March?

Is it Jason Kenney’s goal that our 8,500 hospital beds remain empty? If yes, why bother spending more than \$7,500 per person on health care each year? Is the health care system here to serve citizens? Or are citizens supposed to refrain from using it, as though we wish to avoid troubling our masters? Overcrowding, bed shortages and delayed surgeries have been serious problems for many years, long before COVID-19 arrived. Why is it a crisis when COVID-19 patients occupy 4 per cent of available hospital beds? Is this percentage actually higher than when flu patients enter hospital each winter, of which we are told there are “zero” this year?

What applies to hospital beds also applies to ICU capacity. AHS tell us that COVID-19 patients are using 66 ICU spaces, which is 5 per cent of the 1,300 total ICU capacity. And we are to accept the destruction of businesses, livelihoods and mental health because of some danger of the health care system being “overrun”?

With COVID-19 patients occupying 4 per cent of hospital beds and using 5 per cent of ICU

capacity, there is obviously no danger of our health care system being overrun. We are now hearing in November the same misinformation that Jason Kenney and Deena Hinshaw told us in March and April.

Media-supported fearmongering about large numbers of “cases” is misleading in the extreme. Aside from the small number of people who actually require hospitalization, 97 per cent of these “cases” concern healthy people experiencing no symptoms, and a small number experiencing symptoms which they can take care of themselves at home. Not my opinion; check the data for yourself.

There is no excuse for Premier Kenney and Deena Hinshaw to ignore AHS data on COVID-19 deaths and hospitalizations. There is no excuse for fearmongering about meaningless and irrelevant numbers of “cases” of perfectly healthy people.

If George Orwell were writing his novel in Alberta today, he could have added a fourth slogan to his government’s list of mantras: “War is peace; Freedom is slavery; Ignorance is strength; There is no lockdown.”

Lawyer John Carpay is a columnist for the Western Standard and President of the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms (jccf.ca).