

March 14, 2016

Premier Notley,

We write to you today about the dire economic situation impacting all Albertans.

We are an alliance of business associations and employer groups that is unprecedented in scope. Collectively we represent virtually every sector of the Alberta economy and employ hundreds of thousands of Albertans. Individually we have unique and often competing challenges and priorities, but we all share a common concern for Alberta's future.

Albertans from all walks of life are experiencing hardships not seen in decades. Low energy prices have crippled Alberta's energy industry, affecting businesses both directly and indirectly associated with energy production. Business and consumer confidence are nearing all-time lows and the provincial unemployment rate is soaring.

We acknowledge that this downturn is beyond any government's control. However, we have also seen the rapid deployment of a series of ambitious government policies that have further undermined business confidence and competitiveness. Rising corporate and personal taxes, a costly carbon tax and an historic increase to the province's minimum wage are impacting Alberta's economy when it most needs a boost.

We also acknowledge that the Alberta government is facing a significant budget shortfall. Together, we must find a way to balance the provincial budget while at the same time setting the conditions for economic success. One cannot happen without the other.

We applaud your government's efforts to secure better market access for Alberta energy. The recent royalty review process wisely maintained Alberta's existing oil and gas royalty structure, acknowledging that the industry needs long term cost certainty. This pragmatic approach should prevail in other aspects of policy-making. The establishment of the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy is also a positive step that acknowledges the severity of the challenges faced by Albertans and promises action.

Beginning with the upcoming provincial budget, we ask for two things. First of all, a moratorium on major new public policies that will have a detrimental impact on the ability of businesses to create and preserve jobs, attract capital or effectively compete in a global market until the economy recovers. Specifically, we ask that tax increases be categorically ruled out, that the proposed increase in the minimum wage be delayed, and that the coming carbon tax be made truly revenue neutral with offsetting tax reductions.

Secondly, we ask that the government move quickly on a number of other areas that will allow businesses and their employees to confidently make decisions with certainty about the environment within which they operate. For instance, the details about a potential job creation strategy and the program aimed at mitigating cost increases on businesses imposed by the forthcoming carbon tax should be immediately unveiled.

As a first step toward identifying and implementing meaningful solutions, we respectfully request a meeting with you and your Cabinet colleagues to begin a dialogue on these issues and identify a path forward. In the coming days, we will be in touch with your office in order to arrange a suitable time to meet and further lay out our ideas for preserving jobs and prosperity for Albertans.

Sincerely, the undersigned:

Alberta Enterprise Group

Alberta Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association

Canadian Federation of Independent Business

Canadian Association of Geophysical Contractors

Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors

Canadian Home Builders' Association-Alberta

Canadian Institute of Steel

Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters

Landscape Alberta

Merit Contractors Association

Petroleum Services Association of Canada

Progressive Contractors Association of Canada

Restaurants Canada

Retail Council of Canada

The Talent Pool

Cc:

Hon Joe Ceci, Minister of Finance

Hon. Deron Bilous, Minister of Economic Development

Hon. Christina Gray, Minister of Labour