



06 February 2023

Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister
Government of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6
chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister Freeland:

We are writing today for three reasons.

First, we want to thank you for your strong commitment to consultation and collaboration. You and your cabinet colleagues – most notably, in our case, Labour Minister Seamus O’Regan – have treated us with respect and it’s clear that your government is taking suggestions from Alberta workers seriously.

Dealing with a government that believes workers deserve a seat at the table is refreshing, indeed!

Second, and perhaps more importantly, we are writing to urge you in the strongest possible terms to make the upcoming budget a definitive response to the American *Inflation Reduction Act* (IRA). As we have discussed in previous meetings, it’s clear to us that the world is in the early stages of the biggest economic paradigm shift since the Industrial Revolution. Our American allies have responded to this shift by earmarking \$738 billion to support an industrial policy that will pivot the American economy and position American workers for increased prosperity in a world that’s changing fast.

For the sake of the workers we represent, we urge you to match the scale, scope and ambition of the American IRA. If we don’t, we’re worried that our country and our citizens will be left behind.

As you know, we released a comprehensive industrial policy proposal in fall 2022, titled “Skate to Where the Puck is Going.” It urged the Alberta and federal governments to collaboratively pursue an industrial policy similar to the one used by former Alberta Premier Peter Lougheed when his government helped create our province’s two biggest industries, the oilsands and the petrochemical industry. We believe that a similar approach – government-led industrial policy developed and implemented in the public interest – is needed today.

Our economic modelling suggests that at least 200,000 jobs could be created in Alberta if we “learned the lessons of Lougheed”. And these aren’t just any jobs: they would be family-sustaining and community-sustaining jobs.

Gil McGowan, President

Karen Kuprys, Secretary Treasurer



#300, 10408 – 124 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5N 1R5



1-800-661-3995



780-483-3021



afl@afl.org



www.afl.org



Some of these jobs would be in renewable energy industries like wind, solar and geothermal. Some would be in new industries like small modular reactors, and carbon capture and storage. Still others would be in the construction trades as we triple the size of our electric grid and retrofit buildings. Taken together, we're talking about an infrastructure project on a scale that our country has never seen before.

But that's not all. Despite the naysaying from certain politically-motivate groups and individuals in our province, we also think that thousands of jobs would be created in Alberta's oil and gas industry, as the sector invests to reduce emissions and pivot towards producing hydrogen and advanced materials like carbon fibre.

That leads us to our third and final point, which has to do with the proper framing of the jobs challenge facing Alberta and, indeed, the rest of the country. We are convinced that if the federal and Alberta governments embrace the kind of industrial-policy approach being advocated by both the Alberta labour movement and the Alberta business community, the issue won't be job losses; instead, the real problem will be finding, training and mobilizing enough workers to get all of the work done.

That's why our report, "Skate to Where the Puck is Going", calls for a labour force strategy to compliment and support the industrial strategy. It's also why we continue to demand that labour conditions be attached to all investment incentives; and why we're calling for seats at the decision-making table for the labour movement. The best way to attract and retain the workers needed for these huge projects is to ensure that all the new jobs are actually good jobs, in terms of pay, training, working conditions and respect. And the best way to do that is to make workers real partners in the planning process.

In conclusion, we'd just like to emphasize that our biggest fear is NOT job loss, but rather that our province and our country will miss out on the historic and unprecedented opportunities for job creation and broadly-shared prosperity that are inherent in the unfolding global energy transition.

It's frustrating to us that some actors on Alberta's political stage are trying to spread fear, rather than nurture hope and confidence. It's also frustrating that those same actors are ignoring the consensus on the need for transformational industrial policy that has emerged across so many sectors in Alberta society, including both labour and business.

But that shouldn't stop you and your cabinet colleagues from proceeding with the federal portion of a Loughheed and IRA-style industrial policy. Obviously, such a policy will not be able to live up to its full potential without the participation of the Alberta government. But by putting serious money on the table – with strings attached to ensure that the desired investments are good for both Alberta workers and Alberta communities – you will be showing good faith and commitment. That will make it easier (and more likely) for the Alberta government, led by whoever wins the upcoming election, to respond in kind.

Gil McGowan, President

Karen Kuprys, Secretary Treasurer



#300, 10408 – 124 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5N 1R5



1-800-661-3995



780-483-3021



afl@afl.org



www.afl.org



Thanks for taking the time to read this letter and consider our suggestions. We look forward to continuing to work together with you on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Gil McGowan
President
Alberta Federation of Labour



Keith Stevenson
Business Manager/FST
Ironworkers Local 720



Gavin McGarrigle
Western Regional Director
Unifor



Scott Lunny
Director, District 3
United Steel Workers



Chris Flett
Business Manager
IUOE Local 955



Michael A. Reinhart
Business Manager/
Financial Secretary
IBEW Local 424



cc: Right Hon. Justin Trudeau, M.P.
justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Hon. Seamus O'Regan, M.P.
seamus.oregan@parl.gc.ca

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson, M.P.
jonathan.wilkinson@parl.gc.ca

Jagmeet Singh, M.P.
jagmeet.Singh@parl.gc.ca

Charlie Angus, M.P.
charlie.angus@parl.gc.ca

Heather McPherson, M.P.
Heather.McPherson@parl.gc.ca

Blake Desjarlais, M.P.
blake.desjarlais@parl.gc.ca

Hon. Danielle Smith, MLA
premier@gov.ab.ca

