



Alberta Chambers of Commerce

Annual General Meeting

Speaking Notes for the Hon. Perrin Beatty

May 13th, 2016

Please Check Against Delivery

I was delighted when my Ken invited me here today. It's a chance to renew friendships and, most of all, it's an opportunity to thank you for your support and for your tireless efforts to make Alberta and Canada as a whole a more prosperous and better place to live and work.

We have a perfect illustration of that commitment right now. I know that many of you have been affected by the wildfires, perhaps even personally. And you've no doubt seen friends, family, colleagues, maybe a supplier or a client, lose their house or their business over the past week.

This is a real tragedy – a natural catastrophe like none other that we've seen. The stories we have heard have touched the hearts of Canadians in every part of the country.

But when I look at the business community I represent and all the efforts you've put in to help our friends and neighbours in Fort McMurray and the other communities affected by the wildfires, I feel a tremendous sense of pride.

You have all stepped up in an inspiring way in recent days, by giving generously, by welcoming people into your homes and businesses, and by providing necessary basic services.

For that, I want to take a moment here to thank all of you for your support and commitment in helping the affected communities and the people who live there. And I particularly want to salute Ken and his team for their leadership.

A situation like this reminds us that despite our best efforts, we are all still vulnerable to Mother Nature's unpredictable ways. We cannot prevent the effects of natural catastrophes, but we can hope for the support of our neighbours and friends when we do fall victim to such tragic circumstances. In this regard, you have once again gone well beyond what could have been expected.

To be honest, I'm not surprised. After all, this is Alberta, where three years ago we saw people who had themselves been flooded out rolling up their sleeves and helping their neighbours.

Alberta has a proud tradition of standing proud and tall when faced with adversity. You are a strong and resilient people.

But the greatest strength comes in numbers. And after the difficult year you've had, the recovery efforts that will be necessary and the challenges that still lie ahead, you'll need to be able to count on friends. To me, that's what Confederation is all about: knowing that we have each others' backs.

I saw it yesterday in Saskatoon when I spoke to the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. They are looking for ways to make a contribution to our colleagues in Fort McMurray. And I saw it in the security lineup at the Saskatoon Airport, where people had stuffed \$20 bills into a collection bin for the people of Ft. Mac.

It's not just in times of natural disaster that we need to stand together. We also need to know that Canada as a whole is always stronger when all of its regions are strong. That's why I'm calling on the business community from the whole country to stand with you in asking government to give you the tools you need to grow Alberta's and Canada's economies by approving the pipeline projects that will allow your oil to reach international markets.

It's ironic that the discussion in Ottawa today is about how much money we should borrow to build infrastructure. Yet, what western Canadians have been asking for from Ottawa is not a cheque, but a decision that will unlock billions of dollars of private sector investment without costing taxpayers a cent. And those private sector investments will create jobs and generate economic growth for generations.

Three weeks ago, I was in Tokyo for the B7. Prime Minister Abe invited a few of us to his official residence for dinner. What I've been hearing from the Japanese and from other potential customers is very straight-forward. They say, "We'd like to buy our energy from Canada, but you have no way to get it to us. That's an issue only Canadians can resolve. But you should know that we need to sign contracts soon, and if you can't deliver, other suppliers are knocking at our door."

I told the Prime Minister that the Canadian Chamber network was determined to get our resources to global markets and that we are convinced it can be done in a way that is environmentally responsible and that respects community rights.

If we're serious about restoring Canada's economic health, we need to be serious about unblocking pipeline construction. It's easy to see why: first, pipelines play a crucial role in today's economy. They foster international trade, generate investment in research and development and create jobs, a fact that is not to be taken lightly in the current economic landscape. Most importantly, they are also part of the jump-start the Canadian economy needs right now.

In fact, last year, the Canadian Chamber identified access to markets, including building trade infrastructure such as pipelines, as one of four key election planks on which we want to see federal government act.

Pipelines matter because they are crucial to the competitiveness of the energy industry, a sector that supports the livelihood of so many Canadians.

When times were good, the energy sector provided opportunity to people across the country. Back in 2014, before the slide in oil prices, Canada's oil and gas industry supported 500,000 jobs across Canada. The sector paid \$17 billion to Canadian governments, supporting essential public programs like health care and equalization.

As job cuts dominate the headlines, it is easy to forget how important the oil patch remains as a source of opportunity to folks not just here in Alberta, or in Saskatchewan but also in distant parts of the country like Newfoundland and Labrador.

The hidden economy of oil sands suppliers is suffering as well. Firms like Tenaris Algoma Tubes in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario have had to lay off hundreds of workers.

We need Ottawa to set a clear and unequivocal policy: that we will responsibly bring Canada's resources to market. We need to shift the discussion from whether that should be done to how we are going to do it. Together, we can make that case and we can provide an important boost to our national economy.

We're all more successful when we work together, and your efforts at the local level to advance our common policy agenda are essential to Canada's prosperity, especially with this new government in Ottawa.

While each province differs in its geographies, economies, histories and cultures, we have decided to live as one people. We put in place a system of equalization payments to ensure that all Canadians share a similar level of public services no matter how well or how poorly each individual province is doing. Western Canadians have willingly paid billions of dollars over the years to make sure other Canadians are not left behind. That's what it means to be citizens of one country.

But why shouldn't the same principle apply when it comes to creating the wealth that we are sharing? Why should provinces and municipalities not work together to help Canadian business succeed, instead of standing in the way of their neighbours' ability to do commerce?

This principle is particularly important for provinces that are landlocked, like Alberta. You have no choice but to cross provincial boundaries to get your products to global markets.

Call it 'equalization of opportunity' to go along with our equalization of public services. We need to stop asking "what's in it for me" and start talking about "what's in it for us" if we want to be one country in more than just name.

And successful collaboration is possible: the Prime Minister has recently returned from the United States, where he announced a new agreement with our southern neighbors to cut methane emissions by half. The Canadian Chamber was there to let him know that we support a global initiative to fight climate change while maintaining the competitive position of Canadian businesses. A policy resolution stating that position was adopted at our last AGM.

That partnership between government and business is essential. Without it we run the risk of driving business out of Canada to lower-cost jurisdictions, with no benefit for the global environment.

The example that I just gave is but one way that your support and engagement also provide us with the advocacy ammunition that we use when we meet with politicians and public servants. These folks in Ottawa feel bombarded with advice right now. It seems like everyone has an opinion. But when the Canadian Chamber speaks, they

know our positions come from business via the provincial and local chambers – this gives them weight and credibility.

By continuing to work together, we can press government for policies that will help us reach our objectives.

Canadian and especially Alberta businesses have many challenges ahead, but I'm optimistic. At the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, we'll keep working to restore economic growth. With your help and continued support, we can make this country more competitive and more prosperous. We can get the projects and infrastructure we need put in place. We can, and we will, build a more competitive Canada – a Canada that wins.