

Intelligence MEMOS



From: Joseph Marchand

To: Brian Jean, Alberta Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development

Date: February 9, 2023

Re: **FINAL CALL TO RELEASE ALBERTA'S MINIMUM WAGE EXPERT PANEL REPORT**

In its successful 2015 campaign, the NDP [pledged](#) a \$15 minimum wage, and moved swiftly to lift Alberta's \$10.20 an hour to \$15 over three years. This was a nominal increase of 47 percent, or 44 percent in real terms. As well, the liquor server differential was scrapped, along with automatic minimum wage increases.

In the last election, in 2019, the new United Conservative Party [promised](#) to retain the \$15 minimum wage, introduce a \$13 minimum wage for a subset of young workers, and appoint a Minimum Wage Expert Panel to “analyze and publish all of the available economic data on the labour market impact of the NDP's 50-percent increase in the minimum wage.”

It was also asked to assess the abolished liquor server differential. Once elected to government, those promises were put in place, but the full panel report languishes unpublished and unseen.

The [Minimum Wage Expert Panel](#), consisting of myself as chair and eight fellow members, carried out our two primary tasks over the span of six months, from August 2019 to February 2020, meeting in person six times. In late February, just as COVID-19 arrived, we had the unfortunate timing of handing in our final report to a justifiably distracted Alberta government.

But it is now 2023, and we are still waiting for our report to be released.

For the sake of the many interested Albertans, I now call upon Brian Jean to release the report of the Minimum Wage Expert Panel. The report will help address the first two of the four primary goals mandated by new Premier Danielle Smith, which called upon every cabinet member to first, “keep the inflation and affordability crisis top of mind” and, second, to “continue to have a laser focus on job creation and strengthening Alberta's economy.”

Less than four months from now, on May 29, Albertans are to return to the polls. In the run-up to that election, we can expect the parties to lay out their policy plans. The platforms for the ruling UCP and the NDP will be of particular interest, as the polls show a two-way race.

Our panel's findings would help inform voters on the issues of job creation, inflation, and affordability. And releasing the report now, before the platforms arrive, is the best way to achieve this goal. With all the policy changes over the past few governments, the minimum wage provides much to discuss.

Over the next several months, Albertans will not only be informing themselves of election promises and policies for the future; they will also be scrutinizing the policies and promises of elections past. As you know, taking elected representatives to task on their previous choices, as well as the outcomes (or lack thereof) of those choices, is an important part of the democratic process. And only with a well-informed citizenry can the promises and policies of past and future election platforms be properly voted on.

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