

SPEAKING NOTES
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MINISTER, ALBERTA MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

Alberta Forest Products Association AGM and Conference

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The logo for Alberta Municipal Affairs features the word "Alberta" in a grey, cursive script font. A small blue square is positioned at the end of the word. Below "Alberta" is the text "Municipal Affairs" in a grey, sans-serif font.

Alberta
Municipal Affairs

- Good afternoon, everyone.
- It's a pleasure to join you today on Treaty Six territory.
- Thank you to the Alberta Forest Products Association for inviting me to speak this afternoon...
- ...and my thanks to all of you for the work that you do to further our understanding of the economic, environmental, and social values of Alberta's forests.
- As your provincial government, it's important that we do everything we can to ensure your industry continues to drive our economy.
- As the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake, a riding right in the heart of the Boreal Forest...

- ...I know firsthand how important the industry is to our province.
- In Slave Lake alone the forest industry creates about 400 direct jobs and another 800 spinoff jobs.
- Province wide, it directly employs 15,000 Albertans and contributes \$5 billion to the economy.
- As a government we recognize the importance of the relationship between municipalities and this vital industry.
- Close to 70 communities rely on it...
- ...and we are committed to working with you – to create even more jobs and build a diversified, value added economy.

- You are our partners, and we want to see that relationship continue, as together we navigate the challenges our province is facing.
- 2016 has certainly seen us take on many of those challenges.
- We are currently facing a once in a generation economic and fiscal situation.
- To put this in perspective, there has not been such a steep decline in oil prices in recent history.
- In the 2014-15 fiscal year Alberta collected nearly \$9 billion in resource revenue.
- Two years later we anticipate only \$1.4 billion in revenue. A drop of almost 90%.
- On top of that...in May, we faced one of the worst natural disasters in our country's history...

- ...when a fire...best described as “the Beast” ...swept through Fort McMurray.
- The fire engulfed over 500,000 hectares of land...
- ...to give you a visual example, that’s about the same size as Prince Edward Island.
- While the fire is now out...
- ...this disaster continues to have an impact on Alberta’s families and businesses...especially those in the forestry and oil and gas sectors.
- Unfortunately, we cannot control Mother Nature or the international price of oil...
- ...but what we can control is how we respond.
- Our government has met with leaders from energy, agriculture, tourism, post-secondary,

and of course – forestry – to get their insight and advice on how we can work together to create a more diversified, and resilient economy.

- I want to thank the Alberta Forest Products Association, and you as individuals in this room, for your advice on economic development and diversification.
- By working together, and focusing on evidence-based, scientific research...
- ...we are taking steps to diversify the economy, create jobs and get our province out of the boom and bust cycle.
- We are listening to Albertans to make sure they have the support they need to grow and create opportunities...

- ...and I'm confident that we can and will overcome the current challenges to create a better future for Albertans.
- Part of moving forward to promote a healthy economy is ensuring our legislation; regulations and codes are up to date...
- ...and that includes the Alberta Building Code.
- Previously wood-framed buildings were limited to 3 or 4 storeys, depending on the building design...
- ...but last year changes came into force to allow for wood construction of buildings up to six storeys high.
- In recent years, mid-rise wood construction has been used in jurisdictions across Canada to reduce project costs, shorten construction timelines, and increase sustainability.

- It's no secret that Alberta is growing.
- More than four million people now call our province home and Alberta's population is expected to jump by another million within the coming decade.
- This creates increased pressure on the natural and built environments.
- By revising the building code, our government is giving municipalities and developers the option to use wood to build larger buildings that address these challenges.
- Municipalities across Alberta are starting to take advantage and are promoting densification as a responsible way to use land and as a sustainable way to deal with population growth.

- Wooden midrise buildings are also faster and more economical to construct.
- Wood is 12 to 20 per cent less expensive than other building materials...
- ...and can be erected more quickly than concrete or steel buildings.
- Of course, safety is always our top priority.
- The code requires all buildings – regardless of material – to perform to the same level of health and safety...
- ...which means wood mid-rise buildings must meet the same requirements as buildings made out of any other material.
- Builders are also required to meet stringent fire mitigation standards – including installing sprinkler systems.

- Beyond meeting safety requirements, speeding up construction and lowering costs...
- ...the move towards wood construction also helps us achieve our environmental goals.
- Wood is a renewable, locally-sourced material.
- Last year alone – you – Alberta's forest industry...planted 65 million trees.
- That's 16 trees for every person in our province.
- With the responsible forestry techniques you practice...
- ...Alberta and Canada will be able to rely on this sustainable resource far into the future.

- Wood is not only renewable; it also has a much lower carbon footprint than many other building materials.
- Wood framed structures actually store carbon...
- ...and the energy to manufacture wood products is much lower than other materials.
- 1 ton of manufactured wood products store 1 ton of carbon and help avoid 2 tons of greenhouse gasses that other materials would create.
- Since it's harvested and processed locally, wood also has lower transportation costs and emissions than other building materials.
- In exactly two months, it will have been a year since our government announced Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan.

- The goal of that plan is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions throughout the province...
- ...and make Alberta a leader in protecting the environment and growing the economy.
- I know those are goals your industry shares as you have been working hard to:
 - reduce your carbon footprint...
 - ...create energy from wood waste...
 - ...pursue bio-energy projects...
 - ...and ensure that the forest stays healthy and is able to act as a natural carbon sink.
- We know the forest industry creates thousands of jobs in Alberta and is a major source of economic diversity.

- You heard earlier from my colleague Minister Carlier about opportunities for you and other AFPA members to develop strategies to increase the use of wood in provincial, commercial, and non-residential buildings...
- ...while at the same time ensuring reduced greenhouse gas emissions.
- I'm eager to hear your thoughts and feedback, and look forward to working together to continue diversifying the forest industry.
- A sector that already has a tremendous impact on the Alberta economy...
- ...and holds even more potential for the future.
- Of course, there are already great examples of innovation and improvement in Alberta.

- In fact, there's one right in my own home town.
- West Fraser's Slave Lake Pulp Mill is a tremendous example of how the forest product industry is leading by example.
- Earlier this year, the mill introduced a biomethanation power plant that converts onsite waste into methane to generate heat and electricity.
- It's the first system of its kind in Canada.
- The plant produces enough electricity to power more than 4,000 homes for a year...
- ...and will reduce natural gas use by 164,000 gigajoules annually.
- Doing this will cut greenhouse gas emissions by 45,000 tonnes annually...which will improve air quality and in turn...improve the health of Albertans.

- This is exactly the type of action that is making Alberta a leader on combating climate change.
- I'd be remiss if I didn't talk a little bit more today about what we went through last May...
- ...as communities, as a province, as Albertans.
- It's been just over four months since our province faced the biggest evacuation in its history.
- Four months since thousands of people were forced to flee their homes as wildfires raged in Fort McMurray and surrounding areas.
- As a province – we proved who we are.
- How strong we are in the face of adversity, but most of all we proved how generous we are to our neighbours in times of need.

- I know many people and companies in this room were instrumental in proving how strong we are.
- We heard a great deal about the wildfire's threat to the energy industry...
- ...but we know the forest industry also felt the impact.
- Northlands Forest Products saw their mill stop, their employees displaced, and their timberlands damaged.
- But amongst the destruction, there are countless examples of people and organizations working together to respond to "the Beast" ...
- ...and to support the people, industries and communities impacted by this devastating disaster.

- It truly speaks to the character of these companies and the dedication of the forest industry to Albertans and Alberta.
- Today so much has changed and there has been a great deal of progress in the community.
- More than three quarters of the population has returned...
- ...and more are making their way home every day.
- School has started and life is slowly returning to a new sort of normal.
- As someone who lived through a devastating wildfire in my own hometown of Slave Lake...
- ...I know recovery takes years, not months.

- And I know we still have to rebuild the community and get some people home.
- In particular, three neighbourhoods in Fort McMurray suffered incredible damage.
- 90 per cent of the structures in Waterways were destroyed, while 70 per cent in Beacon Hill and close to half in Abasand were lost.
- Our government is committed to ensuring these communities are supported throughout the entire rebuilding process.
- It's our hope that our revised building codes for taller wood construction will give the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and developers the option to rebuild more quickly.
- ...so more people can return to their home community and more businesses can once again open their doors.

- No one ever wants to go through a disaster, but it's important that you learn from it, so you can better prepare for it should disaster strike again.
- The fact is, given climate change, chances are greater that disaster will strike again.
- An important part of our government's plan to support recovery in the Wood Buffalo region is mitigation...and taking the steps necessary to prevent and prepare for future disasters.
- This means making sure homeowners are aware of programs such as FireSmart, which takes a proactive approach including a balance of wildfire prevention, mitigation, and preparedness activities.
- Our plan for the recovery of Wood Buffalo includes enhancing Alberta's preparedness, helping not just the residents of this region,

but people all across the province, be better prepared for future events.

- Alberta is a resilient, pioneering province with a history of being resourceful.
- I know Albertans and Alberta companies will continue to come up with solutions that will succeed.
- Whether a complex biomethanation system, or a simple, common-sense construction policy shift...
- ...together we have the power to move our province forward, and build a brighter, more prosperous future for Albertans.
- Our government is grateful to have a partner in the Alberta Forest Product Association...
- ...and we will continue to listen to you, and to support the tremendous work that you do in our province.

- Thank you.

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