

Hon. Chrystia Freeland
Deputy Prime Minister
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Feb 26,2020

Dear Minister Freeland,

Earlier this month, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce under my signature as Chair, sent a letter to the federal government asking for your swift but thoughtful action to end the rail blockades. The purpose of this letter today is to clarify the full position of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce.

In the letter issued, we referred to the blockades as “illegal” and the “undermining the rule of law”. The situation is very complex and the legal issues require a understanding of all aspects—legal rulings, historical contexts, treaties, and Aboriginal Rights and Title. The inclusion of these terms was done without taking into consideration the vast complexity involved. For this reason I retract these two references. As Chair, I do not want these words to take away from the purpose of the letter which is to voice our collective Chamber interests - advocating for positive economic results and benefits for our Saskatchewan businesses and all our citizens.

To be clear, the Saskatchewan Chamber urges all parties to do the work necessary to ensure a quick resolution, thereby mitigating economic risk and impact to economies across Canada. I am optimistic that a resolution can be found however progress forward will require significant invested dialogue and commitment with all key partners/stakeholders involved.

The Saskatchewan Chamber’s mission is to strengthen Saskatchewan’s business community and competitive enterprise system for an improved quality of life. This mission is true for all businesses, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The economic and social success of our province is based upon our ability to work together in harmony as Treaty Peoples.

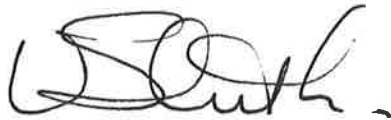
Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Final Report made 94 Calls to Action to redress the legacy of Residential Schools. Call to Action #92 is specifically related to business and reconciliation. Moving forward, this must be the foundation to building stronger, more inclusive and resilient economies with Indigenous Peoples and will help inform the work of our Chamber.

As the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, we are leaders and, as such, must be mindful to maintain and ensure we are upholding ourselves and our positions in the best interests of all our stakeholders. When facing challenges, such as that before us across the country as it relates to rail service, it is our responsibility to gather facts so that we can make informed decisions and, when we make statements on behalf of all our members, we are doing so with a fully informed position.

As a Board of Directors, in collaboration with our staff, we will continue to develop better processes through continuous learning and use of expert advice by Indigenous business leaders and others which will deliver better outcomes for everyone. I will be convening a meeting of the Board of Directors in early March at which time, we will discuss a way forward to ensure we are providing leadership to this and other issues requiring consultation.

As always, the Chamber appreciates strengthening our collective efforts to keep Canada and all its citizens fully engaged in the economy.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Sluth', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Valerie Sluth, MBA, FCMC, ICD.D

Board Chair

CC-

- SCC Board of Directors
- Minister Marc Garneau
- Minister Melanie Joly
- Minister Mary Ng
- Premier Scott Moe
- WED, DM Dylan Jones