

**Vancouver Board of Trade Keynote**

**Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson**

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*Check against delivery*



Thanks for the warm introduction. I am grateful to the Vancouver Board of Trade for its kind invitation. It is a pleasure to be speaking to you.

We were fortunate this morning to be a guest of the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority and its President and CEO, Robin Silvester. Robin, please convey my thanks to your team for making our whirlwind tour so informative and enjoyable.

**A Changing Edmonton**

One-fifth of the port's volume is made up of products going to and from Alberta. It was a reminder that international trade is vital to Alberta — an Alberta that is changing, anchored by two large globally competitive cities.

I often say that Edmonton is North America's most underestimated city. We are a city of risk-takers, entrepreneurs and community builders who are often too humble to brag.

We are also the youngest city in Canada, and this energy is creating a sea change in how we plan and build a city for everyone.

There is a confidence in Edmonton that has not been felt in a generation.

For example, we were the first city in Canada to legalize ride-sharing companies like Uber. We are the first major city to develop a comprehensive winter city strategy to create better year-round urban design and cold-weather recreation opportunities for

residents. And the 260 health innovation companies which call Edmonton home are attracting national and international investment.

Compared to the rest of Alberta, our economic fundamentals are relatively solid. While our province's unemployment rate hovers at 8.5 per cent and Calgary has entered double-digit territory, ours stood at 6.9 per cent last month — in part due to an economy less directly dependent on commodity price swings and new deal flow, and more connected to the energy industry's project lifecycle, from commissioning to operations and maintenance. Edmontonians also offer logistics and services to enable much of the economy of Northern Canada, from food and fuel to health and education.

Part of what underpins our resilience in this down cycle is the renaissance of Edmonton's downtown, anchored by the breathtaking Rogers Place. Our new arena is North America's most advanced by almost every measure — but it is also a catalyst at the epicentre of \$5 billion worth of investment. (I should note that Vancouver's hometown hero Milan Lucic is glad to be back in Canada and is making himself right at home. So far, I'm optimistic about his chances of making the playoffs this season.)

Construction is keeping Edmontonians working and our economy going — including residential high-rises, a new 13-kilometre light-rail transit line to downtown, and Western Canada's tallest skyscraper — a new headquarters for our homegrown global engineering and design giant, Stantec.

Edmonton's blue collar roots — those that have helped to build and run Alberta's resource economy — have informed a national narrative about our city that is like most myths: part truth and part over-simplification. Though our history is one of hard hats and hard work, our city has become a hub of manufacturers and artists, engineers and researchers, builders and designers who — at their very core — are scrappy entrepreneurs and serial innovators.

Through the lessons learned from past commodity price swings, we have become stronger, more creative and more diverse. A whole new generation of builders and risk takers — homegrown and those attracted to our city from around the world — are a big part of our diversification story. Every day, they work on ways to be better custodians of our resources, lessen our hydrocarbon footprint and pioneer new ways to satisfy the world's need for energy and goods.

### **Proven Green Innovation Record**

Edmonton has been leading in green innovation for some time, and we are showing Canada and the world what is possible when good environmental policy and dedicated people come together.

Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than with Edmonton's garbage and recycling program. Yes, garbage as a game-changer.

A generation ago, we started what was then a revolutionary idea: diverting waste from our landfills with curbside recycling. Edmontonians have become staunch advocates for how they deal with their household waste. Next came building the world's largest industrial composter. Now, we are on track to be able to divert 90 per cent of our waste from landfill. This is due in part to an anaerobic digestion facility that converts compost to renewable energy, and to the world's first industrial-scale waste-to-biofuels facility. This Canadian biofuel technology will turn the leftovers, after composting and recycling, into 32 million litres of biofuel. It looks like a refinery and it makes methanol today, and ethanol soon. By preventing the waste from rotting, it avoids methane — one of the most serious greenhouse gases. When people say "waste to energy", it is usually a nice way of saying "we burn our garbage", but in Edmonton it means leadership.

And we are about to set another green example for the world through our Blatchford development, just 10 blocks north of downtown. Soon, these 500-plus acres will showcase how sustainability and quality of life can intersect in a community that will be home to 30,000 people. Once built, it will be one of the planet's largest carbon-neutral communities.

With the Blatchford development, we will build the kind of uplifting, complete community that demonstrates how a city can adapt to massive pressures like climate change, social isolation and shifting demographics. Cities around the world are looking for ways to rise to these problems, and our vision is that Blatchford will be a living example other cities can learn from. Whether it is how district energy can provide heating and cooling on a large scale — or the ways in which bioswales and rain gardens can help manage stormwater runoff — the communities of tomorrow are going to look a lot like what we are building at Blatchford right now. In Edmonton.

We are also sharing our green building expertise with the world. Edmonton is the hub of high-performing home construction in North America. In fact, we host Canada's largest concentration of net-zero homes. Industry is working alongside academia to explore cutting-edge material and design that will reduce construction's carbon footprint. Homegrown construction giants like PCL are behind a new generation of LEED-certified, high-performance structures around the world, including Canada's first LEED arena: Rogers Place. And on Edmonton's south side is the Mosaic Centre, Alberta's first net-zero commercial building — proving that being a green pioneer can make good business sense.

### **Energy Transition Commitment**

Arguably Edmonton's most transformational action occurred in early 2015, when City Council unanimously approved our community energy transition strategy. This is one of

the most comprehensive such strategies of any city in North America, and it positions Edmonton to, by 2035

- reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 35 per cent
- reduce per-person energy consumption by a quarter, and
- produce one-tenth of our own electricity needs within city limits.

In more immediate terms — tomorrow, in fact — City Council will discuss the widespread integration of electric buses into our transit fleet. Initial testing has demonstrated significant greenhouse gas emission reductions and a solid business case with carbon pricing coming into effect as part of Alberta’s climate leadership plan. That said, reducing our fleet’s dependence on fossil fuels and converting it to an all-electric fleet will require a generation to achieve. These are transitions after all, not revolutions.

Nevertheless, these are examples of how a city that is as resource-dependent as Edmonton can transition to a low-carbon future in real and meaningful ways. And while Edmonton’s economic successes have relied on the world’s dependence on fossil fuels in the past, Edmontonians know our future depends on producing new sources of energy.

These are not divergent paths. Our ability to move away from fossil fuels depends on our making the most of our non-renewable resources today.

### **Expanding Export Capacity**

Let’s be frank. Canada is a trading nation. Our future — our very prosperity — depends on our exports and imports. To grow export destinations and, more importantly, to enable access to market, Alberta — and Canada — require more capacity. This need for capacity to carry our product to market is best met by pipelines — a conclusion that both science and our lived experience support.

We know the urgency of this, first hand. Metro Edmonton, after all, is the epicentre of Canada's pipeline network. The science, and evidence, affirm that transporting fuel over pipelines is a far safer alternative than by train. And with hundreds of thousands of barrels a day — or roughly a pipeline's worth — moving by rail, we see an opportunity to increase efficiency and reduce risk. After all, travelling through the heart of our cities and along our lakes and rivers, railroads were laid out not to minimize risk as they were built to carry people, grain, iron and wood to market.

The rigour with which the National Energy Board has considered, and is considering pipelines, is quite appropriate. Placing dozens or hundreds of conditions on approvals ensures that we are talking about the best energy infrastructure being built anywhere in the world.

By expanding pipeline capacity to tidewater and reaching international markets, we would create Canadian jobs at a time when many are struggling.

So what we must ask of the federal government, working alongside provinces, is to determine — based on evidence — what is in the national interest. That is, what is best for the country's cities, what is best for the country's environment, and what is best for the country's economy and future prosperity?

No matter where you stand on the pipeline conversation, we have more in common than we may think across the spectrum. After all, our views and perspectives are informed by our common desire to protect our quality of life, our homes, our families, and our ecosystems — in whatever part of this great country we call home.

A new approach to this challenging conversation is absolutely possible. I know we can strike a reasonable accord between safely reaching new energy export markets, while

also achieving national, provincial and local leadership toward reducing our reliance on fossil fuels — all while growing our national economy. This is not an either-or conversation. And, as Canadians, we know this country is too complicated for either-or conversations.

But let's be clear. Without a strong economy as our foundation, we will struggle to build the green future we all desire. To date, we have not taken full advantage of the tremendous economic opportunity that our resources provide — not taken full advantage of that wealth to drive fundamental change in this country. How can we, when we as Canadians, cannot even get a world price for what we already produce? And for that reason, greater access to global markets for Canada's oil and gas is a critical part of this pathway to a smoother economic transition and long-term resilience.

Without the best and safest energy infrastructure for Canadian products, other economies will continue to outperform us — and Canada's ambition to be one of the world's most prosperous, inclusive and sustainable places will be needlessly harder to achieve. The discussion about whether or not to approve market access must be reasonable and rooted in fact, and it must lead to a more prosperous and resilient Canada.

## **Closing**

Edmonton stands prepared to remain a leader in enabling and growing Canada's greener prosperity. Combining policy tools with vision, we have demonstrated to the world that we can take a reasoned and practical approach to lowering our hydrocarbon dependency, while also being a major energy producer and exporter.

I have often said that cities like Edmonton, Vancouver and Toronto will be the cauldrons where we address the most pressing issues facing our planet. Nowhere is this more evident than in how we respond to the climate change imperative. In fact, as the source

of half the country's greenhouse gas emissions, Canadian municipalities have been talking about the need for action on climate change for more than two decades.

Our path to economic and environmental resiliency will be achieved only through leadership and innovation in every order of government, and through the reasoned voices of Canadians who care enough to speak up for our long-term prosperity.