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Subject: ActionAlberta #122 - PONTIFICATING PROFESSORS ARE NO HELP!
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HELLO ALL:

PONTIFICATING PROFESSORS ARE NO HELP!

“One should never do anything without skin in the game. If you give advice, you need to be exposed to losses from it.” Nassim Taleb, 2016

265 academics, mostly university professors, offered advice via an **open letter** to Prime Minister Trudeau. **Click here** That advice: **Please withhold financial aid to western Canada’s struggling oil and gas sector because, to do otherwise, would be a “regrettable decision.”**

My first question upon reading this letter, led by two professors from the University of Alberta (my alma mater): **Where is their skin in the game?** Their advice was pontificated from the **comfort of steady pay cheques** supplied courtesy of student tuitions and Alberta taxpayers, a good chunk of which comes **from oil and gas and their workers** and the many industries that support it. I for one am **grateful** to the well-site and consultant geologists, seismic crews, rig crews, truckers, and the many others who venture to remote areas in **extreme conditions** to explore for gas **to keep me warm** (and employed), and to the many small and mid-sized exploration and production companies that **take great financial risks in creating wealth for the province**. My hat off to you! But gratitude is no theme in the letter in question.

The **letter signatories**, by identifying themselves as “**Canadian researchers** in multiple fields related to the climate crisis and the economy”, claim relevant intellectual high-ground that few actually occupy. My scan of the list revealed, among others, **2 psychologists, 2 epidemiologists, 2 media/cinema researchers, 5 social work experts, 5 philosophers, 6 urban planning researchers, a neuroscientist, an artist/curator, and 3 librarians**. Their connection, as **purported experts**, to the climate/economy looks non-existent or tenuous at best. With no intention of diminishing the relevance of their research in their respective fields, I ask what is their relevance to the theme of the letter, and **why should the Prime Minister heed these individuals more than any Canadian citizen?** The public should be wary of professors engaging in **unjustified leveraging of their academic status**.

An **extraordinary feature** of the letter is the statement that government at all levels must avoid sacrificing democratic principles by involving civil society representatives, including universities (which I take to mean the signing professors) in decision making. **Professors have the publicly funded privilege** to inform and even influence public opinion and government policy through publications, lectures, or ads, even criticizing industry supporters of

through publications, lectures, op-eds, even criticizing industry supporters of their academic programs (note resource industry sponsors of Women in Scholarship at the U of A [Click here](#) - this is academic freedom. But to **demand consultation** in intergovernmental decisions? I have worked with enough **ideologically driven academics** to know **I do not want them involved in decision making** "...about how these large investments in our future will be made." This is a job for elected government leaders. **Professors are not elected.** They have their avenues of dissemination and influence, and their right as citizens to voice opinion. If they want more, **let them run for office.**

As for the letter's appeal for investment in alternative energy technology - great. I am interested in **alternative energy technologies** (some limitations of which I know personally having installed an electricity-hungry geothermal system to heat my home), if they are in fact less harmful to the environment, affordable and can perform. But I ask, **why must alternative energy investment be instead of, rather than in addition to, a strong oil and gas sector?**

Apart from **ideological posturing** from the safety of **tenure-secured offices**, what the professorial letter demonstrated is astonishing **insensitivity to the plight** of many skilled oil and gas workers, geologists, geophysicists, environmental engineers and remediation experts and support industry personnel **laid off or out of business** and struggling to pay rent and mortgages. Readers of the letter may see the proposed subsidies as aid to "big oil." **It is not big oil that will go down in the current economic crisis, it is small oil.** These resource workers create wealth so that we can afford **well paid professors** and other benefits of living in Canada. The **signatories' solution** to helping these skilled Canadians? — **withhold federal aid and let a critical industry die** a natural death along with the careers of those employed in it.

This harsh but urgent solution, the academics explain, is necessary because we are in the midst of not one but **THREE concurrent crises**: the **covid crisis**, the resulting **economic crisis**, and the **(highly debatable) climate crisis**. Crises, of course, require drastic action - "we have no more time to lose" we are told. To tackle these, **the signing professors simply offer up the livelihood of fellow Canadians** by advocating the withholding of aid to the industry. *And those losing jobs and careers? - let them be retrained (rings of*

industry. And those losing jobs and careers: – let them be retrained (rings of “let them eat cake”). But, could the professors be right about the viability of retraining? How could we find out? Opportunity has presented itself. **These professors**, well educated, spurred by multiple crises, and clearly seeing themselves as leaders, **could indeed lead - by example**. As Einstein said, **“Setting an example is not the main means of influencing others, it is the only means.”** So let them **surrender their faculty positions**, sign up for **retraining** in green industries, and lead us into a **glorious green future**.

Paul A. Johnston

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OUR READERS' COMMENTS SECTION

1. From a Reader: After watching Michael Moore's documentary called "Planet of the Humans", I was absolutely shocked and dismayed how Green Energy is detrimental, harmful and disgusting. They call for Bio Technology, which is nothing short of deforestation on a massive scale. Wind and solar technology is a farce. There is more of a carbon footprint developing these technologies and maintaining them than simply relying on clean energy like natural gas. Please watch said documentary ASAP. **See movie here**

2. From a Reader: Justin Trudeau says that now is not the time to consider how the \$250-billion-plus budget deficit will be addressed. I would remind Mr. Trudeau that a smart person digging a deep hole brings equipment along to ensure he can climb out afterward. Why should Canadians feel comfortable climbing in with him when he hasn't considered how we will climb out together?

3. From a Reader: Our prime minister appears to be nervous about Canada's "debt level underperformance" in relation to our G7 partners. When the subject of new debt is raised, he quickly points out that Canada has the lowest "debt to GDP" ratio amongst G7 members. By apparent implication, Canada must quickly strive to increase federal debt to one trillion dollars and more, in solidarity with our G7 partners. Not once have I heard him utter a single concern about spending limits, unless the "garble" that ensues when he switches to French caused me to miss this. Has someone decreed that when the PM switches to French, and then only, listeners must always be able to hear him speak both languages, so both sound tracks must be kept alive with

near him speak both languages, so both sound tracks must be kept 'live', with the unintelligible garble that ensues?

4. From a Reader: Quite a few of our family members are farmers in Alberta and Saskatchewan. This current situation at the Cargill plant in High River, is causing significant problems for those having cattle in feedlots ready for market. There is nowhere for their cattle to go. No buyers! So to everyone this probably looks like this is because of the pandemic. Sure, Cargill is closed or operating at reduced capacity because of the pandemic, but the problem is that Cargill and JBS in Brooks, together account for 70% of Canada's beef processing. So they basically have a monopoly. This problem is the result of Government incompetence, for allowing this monopoly situation to happen.

5. From a Reader: Actually, the pro forma economics of western Canada separating could be very positive, if certain things were put in place such as pipeline access to the pacific and us markets for energy. BC would have to cooperate with Alberta to ensure unrestricted trade flows in both directions and it would be hard for eastern Canada to stick us with a large portion of the national debt since Alberta has paid in most of the federal tax revenues since 1960 on a net basis. I am no longer convinced that we should resist separation.

ADDITIONAL READING/ VIEWING

In closing, here is additional information on the problems we are facing and the need for us to take remedial action immediately to right our sinking ship.

1. JOHN IVISON: LIBERALS COULDN'T RESIST ANTI-OIL PANDERING WITH THEIR BADLY NEEDED BUSINESS BACKSTOP [Click here](#)

2. NANCY SOUTHERN SLAMS 'HYPOCRITICAL' MOVE BY NORWAY'S WEALTH FUND TO DROP OILSANDS [Click here](#)

3. NELSON: KENNEY NEEDS TO CUT A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL - TRUDEAU [Click here](#)

4. IF OIL AND GAS ARE DEAD, SO IS MUCH OF QUEBEC'S ECONOMY [Click here](#)

5. ELIZABETH MAY'S 'OIL IS DEAD' CLAIM UNDERSCORES

MISUNDERSTANDING OF BASIC ECONOMICS [Click here](#)

ACTION ALBERTA - WHO WE ARE

We are a group of deeply concerned, unpaid Alberta resident volunteers. Our work is intended to educate, inform and motivate all Canadians to be visible and vocal regarding the unequal, unfair and discriminatory treatment of Alberta by our Federal Government. Alberta's energy sector is the most important driver of the Canadian economy and its health directly impacts the standard of living of every Canadian. Unfortunately, that is not happening under our current Federal government!

Please **share** this email with your contacts so we can turn this unfair, inequitable, unjustifiable travesty around for the good of all Canadians. If you would like to submit information or articles, please send them to me.

Thank you for ALL of your support and interest!

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fiduciary responsibility and a moral obligation to hear constituent voices about the problems facing Canada and the Canadian energy and equalization/transfer payment crisis.

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