

Impact Recap

Highlights and outcomes from your Chamber events



Impact Recap: Q&A with The Honourable Brian Jean, KC, ECA Energy, Infrastructure & Economic Opportunity in Northern Alberta



The Honourable Brian Jean, KC, ECA, Minister of Energy and Minerals, MLA Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, shared a confident and forward-looking perspective on Alberta's economic future, highlighting the province's vast natural resources, expanding global relevance, and the critical role Northern Alberta plays in energy security, infrastructure development, and long-term prosperity.

Throughout the discussion, Minister Jean emphasized that Alberta is entering a pivotal moment - one defined by renewed confidence, strategic investment, and the opportunity to unlock growth through collaboration between government, industry, Indigenous partners, and local communities.

Key Highlights

1. Alberta's Economic & Resource Advantage

Alberta is uniquely positioned as a global leader in energy and critical minerals. With a population of approximately five million, the province holds:

- The fourth largest oil reserves globally
- Significant natural gas resources
- The third largest lithium reserves
- Major titanium potential capable of meeting a meaningful share of global demand

Minister Jean also highlighted the growing significance of the Clearwater Play, reinforcing Northern Alberta's importance as a long-term engine for investment, job creation, and rural economic development. Over the next one to two decades, major projects and memorandums of understanding are expected to bring tens of billions of dollars in investment into Alberta, particularly benefiting northern and rural regions.

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2. Energy Strategy & Market Access

A central theme of the discussion was Alberta's strategy to strengthen its role in Canadian and global energy security. Minister Jean outlined a long-term vision that includes:

- Doubling oil production by 2035–2040, largely through SAGD projects
- Expanding market access beyond the United States
- Building new infrastructure to avoid landlocked resources

The province's Bitumen Royalty-In-Kind (BRIK) approach was highlighted as a strategic tool that allows Alberta to bring its own oil to market, create flexibility in supply, and help incentivize new pipeline and refinery investment. Minister Jean stressed that expanding access to global markets is essential for Alberta to realize the full value of its resources.

3. Infrastructure to Unlock Growth

Significant infrastructure development is seen as critical to supporting Alberta's next phase of growth. Priority projects discussed included:

- A new, privately funded pipeline to the British Columbia coast
- Expanded rail capacity in the north, including potential access to Fort McMurray
- A proposed Clearwater River bridge to reduce truck traffic and support industrial development north of the river
- Continued investment in highways, power infrastructure, and transmission interties

Minister Jean noted that modern infrastructure projects are being designed with advanced safety and environmental technologies, including enhanced pipeline monitoring and protections at water crossings. Strong business cases and industry partnerships will be essential to moving these projects forward efficiently.

Local Perspective

"There is a strong sense of optimism in our region right now, and that momentum matters. When confidence, investment, and opportunity align, entrepreneurs are uniquely positioned to lead – by innovating, expanding, and turning possibility into progress for our entire business community."

– Dianna de Sousa, President & CEO, Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce

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4. Indigenous Partnership & Long-Term Ownership

A key takeaway from the discussion was the importance of early, meaningful Indigenous engagement. Minister Jean emphasized that successful infrastructure projects must be built with Indigenous communities from the outset.

Proposed partnership models include:

- Indigenous ownership stakes in major infrastructure projects
- Government-backed financing to support long-term participation
- Revenue-sharing opportunities that provide lasting economic sustainability

Examples such as Fort McKay were highlighted as models of reconciliation through economic partnership, creating generational benefits while supporting project success.

5. Investment Climate & Emerging Opportunities

Alberta continues to position itself as a destination for large-scale, long-term investment by fostering a business-friendly environment that includes:

- Regulatory reform and fast-tracked approvals
- “Concierge-style” support for major projects
- Collaboration between municipal and provincial governments

Fort McMurray was identified as particularly well-positioned for data centres, industrial redevelopment, and supply-chain expansion due to its cold climate, available land, excess utility capacity, and access to affordable natural gas. These opportunities have the potential to generate thousands of construction jobs and hundreds of permanent, high-paying roles.



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6. Workforce, Housing & Education

Building sustainable communities alongside economic growth was a strong theme throughout the conversation.

Minister Jean spoke to:

- Reducing reliance on the fly-in/fly-out workforce model
- Encouraging local residency and housing development
- Aligning education and training with industry needs

Keyano College was highlighted as a critical partner, with continued momentum toward a polytechnic designation and a focus on ensuring graduates leave with clear pathways to employment in the region.



What This Means for Fort McMurray & Wood Buffalo

As Alberta accelerates investment in energy, infrastructure, and emerging industries, the Wood Buffalo region is uniquely positioned to benefit. With its established industrial base, skilled workforce, available land, and proximity to major projects, the region can play a leading role in Alberta's next phase of growth.

For local businesses and entrepreneurs, this environment presents meaningful opportunities – from supply-chain expansion and service innovation to real estate development and long-term investment. Continued collaboration across industry, Indigenous partners, and all levels of government will be essential to ensuring growth translates into lasting prosperity for the Wood Buffalo region.