All Hat. No Cattle.

Why The “Free Alberta Strategy” Conclusions Do Not Follow From The Facts

An Evidence-Based Review of the Economic and Historical Case for Alberta’s Grievances in Rob Anderson, Barry Cooper & Derek From’s Document, “Free Alberta Strategy”

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Foreword and how to use this document

This document collects a fact-based review of the *Free Alberta Strategy*, the 2021 publication that presents the province of Alberta's grievances, in justification of structural reforms to the province and Canada.

This critique is based on addressing errors in fact and logic in the document as presented, while also considering the very large amount of relevant, readily available economic data that the report omits – information that, when included, invalidates the report's conclusions.

It is important for all Canadians to recognize, as this report does, that Albertans have experienced real hardship. There is plentiful evidence that this is the case.

Where this report is at odds with the findings of the *Free Alberta Strategy* is on the forces that are the *cause* of that hardship – on which the case for greater sovereignty, or independence for Alberta largely rests. The omissions are not minor: the *Free Alberta Strategy* leaves out economic shocks on a global scale that dealt a devastating blow to Alberta's oil economy, namely the 2014 oil-price shock engineered by Saudi Arabia.

This report is ordered from the most public-facing material to the most technical.

- Part I – Introductory overview for general readers and for publication.
- Part II The core of the report: the sourced, plain language analysis.
- Part III The supplement estimates the impact of two omitted sources of information:
    - The impact of internal migration of Canadians from other provinces to Alberta, and
    - An estimate of the size and sectors of the Alberta economy that have been left out of the Free Alberta Strategy document.
- Part IV classifies the Strategy's own evidence;
- Part V is the verification apparatus; and the
- Appendix consolidates the references.

A note on standpoint

This aim of this analysis is to be non-partisan, by following these methods:

The model and the discussion is focused on linking events to evidence and data. The actions that people took and the impacts are what is relavant, not personalities, or pointing a finger of blame.

The analysis is an exercise in testing the rigour of the arguments by determining whether the factual claims they are based on are adequately supported by evidence that can be measured. The reason why is self-evident: an argument that is based on false premises will generate false conclusions.

The goal is to deliver a description of events and impacts that is accurate and supported by measurable data. This report is politically agnostic on the carbon tax itself: the goal is to accurately measure its impact, and whether the Free Alberta Strategy's statements can be validated by data. This is also true when it comes to accurately describing the machinery of government – taxes, transfer and equalization payments, and accounting identities.

A note on the figures: verified figures are drawn directly from the cited primary source; figures marked as estimates (the full-arc exported-profit total, the royalty-shortfall series, and the human-capital valuation) are tied to their primary statistical series in the source table and hold at the conservative end of every range. Throughout, a distinction is kept between annual flows (such as GDP or yearly profit outflows) and one-time stocks (such as accumulated human capital or cleanup liabilities); the two are never added into a single total, because doing so would be a category error. The central conclusion does not depend on precision at the margins.

1. The *Free Alberta Strategy* Document: All Hat, No Cattle

The case for greater powers and sovereignty for Alberta is built on a report that completely leaves out global economic events that had a greater impact on the province than any other factor: including the events that ended Alberta's oil boom.

With a planned referendum in Alberta, it's important that there be light as well as heat in the debate. Commentators have asserted that even if separating is the wrong answer, that Alberta still has many grievances that deserve to be addressed. Those grievances, and the evidence to support them were assembled in a report written by Political Scientist Barry Cooper, and two former Members of the Alberta Legislature, Rob Anderson and Derek From.

The document that is the basis of Alberta's sovereignty movement, the Free Alberta Strategy, is available online. In addition to blaming the Government of Canada for rising unemployment, falling incomes, and bankruptcies, one of the accusations it makes is highly inflammatory: that increases in suicide and opioid deaths in Alberta were, in the report's own words, the result of a "sustained federal economic attack" on the province.

This report is politically agnostic on the carbon tax itself: the goal is to accurately measure its impact, and whether the Free Alberta Strategy's statements can be validated by data.

To suggest that Albertans were committing suicide or being bankrupted as the result of deliberate Federal Policies is an incredibly serious charge. As Carl Sagan observed, "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence," and the report does not substantiate its claims.

Not only does the Free Alberta Strategy fail to provide any evidence for the accusation, it is contradicted by the report's own data.

A chart showing Alberta's unemployment is flat and low for years – the best in the country – during a period of sustained high oil prices on the global market: from 2011 through 2013, the price of oil was generally over $100 a barrel.

That changed in 2014 – and so did the unemployment figures, which lurch upward in **2014 and 2015**, and there can be no dispute about why: in late 2014, Saudi Arabia and OPEC opened the taps and launched a global oil price war, sending crude down by roughly 70 per cent — one of the three sharpest collapses since the Second World War. That deliberately engineered price crash is what devastated Albertan families, emptied the downtown towers and broke families across the province.

In 2014, the government of Canada was Conservative. So was the government of Alberta. Neither caused a Saudi production decision, and neither could have stopped it. To take a wave of human suffering that began with a price war in Riyadh and blame other Canadians is not analysis. It is the manufacture of a

scapegoat – that other Canadians and the Federal Government are being held responsible for the openly reported actions of another country.

It can be stated with certainty that the carbon tax could not have had an impact on Alberta's economy or oil industry from the years 2015-2017, because it was only introduced in 2018.

That is why, when we start to pull on the first string by looking at the numbers in historical context, the entire argument unravels. The entire case for Alberta's grievances against Ottawa is based on leaving out any data – excluding hundreds of billions of dollars in economic data - that contradicts the case.

The Saudi Oil Price War devastating impact is clear from the historical and statistical record:

Oil-and-gas capital investment in this country collapsed from **$81 billion in 2014 to $31 billion in 2016** — a $50-billion hole in a single industry in two years, as projects were cancelled and shelved. This is the "investment withdrawal" the Strategy blames on Ottawa, while ignoring the impact of a price set in Riyadh and Houston.

In the year after the crash, consumer insolvencies in Alberta jumped by a third, against a national average near three per cent. The same spike hit Saskatchewan and Newfoundland while insolvencies *fell* in Ontario. An alleged federal campaign against Alberta cannot explain a pattern that lines up exactly with exposure to the world oil price.

The bust also left the province holding a well-cleanup liability the regulator puts at $33 billion and internal documents put as high as $88 billion — stranded assets created by price and by the industry's own walk-away, not by Confederation.

The Strategy's headline claim is that Ottawa has "plundered" Alberta — "well over $600 billion" over sixty years through equalization and transfers. This argument has been made for decades, but it is based on an intuitive but false model — not only of the workings of government, but of the private sector and the real-world distribution of income and wealth.

Equalization is not paid by Alberta's government to anyone. It is paid out of *federal* income tax, which is progressive, which means it is paid disproportionately by high earners, no matter where in Canada they live. For years Alberta had the highest incomes and the youngest workforce in the country, so Albertans paid more federal tax — as individuals, by virtue of doing well. That is not a theft between provinces: it is a transfer from richer Canadians to poorer Canadians.

Alberta's treasury has never written an equalization cheque to Quebec, because that is not how the program works, and that is not how actual tax collection works either. The taxes of the overwhelming majority of Albertans are not going into equalization; therefore, the premise that ending equalization will be a widespread benefit is not accurate. The premise that cutting taxes will benefit most Albertans requires assuming the province, which prides itself on its free-market values, is structured as an egalitarian commune where the wealth of one is the wealth of all. The reality is that if taxes are cut for ultra-high-income earners, that money is confined to their bank accounts.

While taxes paid within Canada are singled out for criticism, the report is conspicuously silent on much larger outflows of money that leave the province, and the country, never to be returned.

While the *Strategy* directs Albertans' anger east against their fellow Canadians, there is no accounting at all for the considerable rivers of money running *offshore*.

By recent estimates, tens of billions in oil-and-gas profits — on the order of $58 billion between 2021 and 2024 alone — left Alberta for shareholders in the United States, the Netherlands, France and China. Over the full boom-to-present period, from 2003 until now, the amount of money Alberta has exported runs into the hundreds of billions — an estimate that extends the verified 2021–24 figure backward and should be tied to Statistics Canada's foreign-direct-investment income series (Table 36-10-0008-01) before publication. The honest answer to where Alberta's oil riches and wealth have gone is not Ottawa or Quebec: it is the dividend cheques of foreign shareholders and bondholders — an outflow many times larger than equalization.

One of the most striking examples of a historical event that has been ignored is even more recent than the 2014 Saudi Oil price crash. The Free Alberta Strategy was released in 2021: the next year, 2022, was the **most profitable year in the history of Canada's oil patch**. Revenues and profits soared to never-before-seen levels: One Calgary fund manager compared the windfall to a broken bank machine spitting out hundred-dollar bills faster than anyone could gather them up.

Despite the events of 2022-2023, the 2021 arguments from the Free Alberta strategy have persisted.

The argument that a province is being strangled by Confederation is difficult to square with the richest year its main industry has ever seen. The reason Albertans did not feel that windfall is twofold. The companies did not re-invest or put money into expanding production or new jobs. The money went to shareholders, who own the companies, and to bondholders, who lent money to the companies.

The reason Albertans saw no new investments in their hospitals and schools is not due to federal interference: it is because the Alberta Government chose to collect and invest remarkably little of an historic windfall. Alaska charges higher royalties than Alberta, which collected 12 per cent of its oil-and-gas production value in royalties. Norway, which charges more per barrel, saved its windfall into the largest sovereign fund on earth. Alberta's policy has been to cut royalties during the booms, and as a consequence, saved little. Provincial government policies have been passed off as a federal injustice.

All of this matters far beyond a quarrel over numbers: there is something wrong with Alberta's economy, and people have suffered, but delivering the right solution depends on accurately identifying the source of the problem – based in an impartial assessment.

If Alberta's problems truly are structural — a rigged Constitution, a parasitic transfer system, a hostile East — then those specific grievances are valid – and the solutions need to be structural too. However, if the root of the problem is economic — a global price shock, profits flowing abroad, rents left uncollected at home — then the remedies that are available can be achieved by changing policies from ineffective to effective ones.

The entire argument for separation depends on the case that the problem is structural – that Canada is not just broken, but that it is irreparable. Without the argument that the problem is exclusively structural, the call for separation or greater powers cannot be justified. Including the economic data and history would collapse the argument. This is exactly as it should be: there is no case, ever, to be made for making important decisions based on a case that has no merit.

I do not write this as a stranger to Western Canada, or to the positions and policies of the Reform party and its political descendants. My aunt and uncle were founding members of the Reform Party; my uncle, a constitutional lawyer, championed the Triple-E Senate and was there when Bert Brown was sworn in. My father, though a Liberal, stood up at the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce in the 1970s to object to the National Energy Program. The idea that the grievances of Western Canada have too often gone unheard is one I take seriously and was raised on. That is exactly why the case has to be made honestly.

Albertans have suffered. That much is true, and it deserves respect. But they have been handed an explanation for that suffering that blames the wrong people — that points at fellow Canadians – and fellow Albertans - while the impacts of a price war launched from Riyadh and decisions made in boardroom in Houston go unmentioned. Albertans deserve to have the full story. Ironically the very facts that negate *Free Alberta Strategy*'s conclusions are to be found – unread – in the report's own footnotes and charts.

D. Lamont

2. The Fundamental Nature of Treaty Rights As They Impact Canada and Alberta

1) 2.1 Alberta's jurisdiction over its resources is conditioned on the Treaties

In the increasingly heated political debate, First Nations and Indigenous rights are being treated as a further obstacle, to both economic development and to the aspirations of Alberta Separatists.

The *Free Alberta Strategy* treats Alberta's control over "its" lands and resources as an unqualified provincial birthright, and proposes to legislate away federal authority and the "duty to consult" as foreign intrusions (pp. 21–22, 39).

This position requires ignoring the legal history by which the Alberta government acquired that jurisdiction, which is entirely contingent on the Treaties. Canadian Confederation in 1867 created a national government from pre-existing governments with their own laws, language and culture. There was a "founding moment" expressed in the British North America Act, which was Canada's constitution until the reforms of the 1980s.

Manitoba was the only other province to join Canada after a "founding moment": the residents of Red River, facing annexation by Canada sought legal assurances, entrenched in Manitoba's constitution, and therefore in Canada's, that the people would have certain specific rights, and democratic representation in the form of a provincial government and by electing members of parliament to be represented in the Canadian Government.

The creation of Alberta and Saskatchewan were different. They were not existing established governments that decided to join confederation: they were outright creations of the Canadian government. The two provinces were created on September 1, 1905, by Acts of the federal Parliament — the *Alberta Act* and the *Saskatchewan Act*. Until then, the territory had been part of the North-West Territories, governed from Ottawa. The two provinces were carved out of that territory and admitted to Confederation by federal legislation, under the constitutional authority that lets Parliament establish new provinces.

The numbered treaties in the West predated the creation of those provinces, out of necessity: federal and provincial authority rest on a foundation of treaties: the territory that became Alberta and Saskatchewan is covered by Treaties 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10, signed between 1874 and 1906.

- **Treaty 4 (1874) — primarily southern Saskatchewan, extending into a small part of southeastern Alberta and western Manitoba.**
- **Treaty 6 (1876)** — central Alberta and central Saskatchewan, the band running roughly through the Edmonton–Saskatoon corridor. (Later adhesions added territory in subsequent years.)
- **Treaty 7 (1877)** — southern Alberta, signed at Blackfoot Crossing with the Blackfoot Confederacy and others.

- **Treaty 5 (1875–76)** — covers part of east-central Saskatchewan (it's mainly a Manitoba treaty, with adhesions extending it).
- **Treaty 8 (1899)** — northern Alberta, northwestern Saskatchewan, plus parts of B.C. and the Northwest Territories.
- **Treaty 10 (1906)** — northern Saskatchewan and a portion of east-central Alberta.

Alberta did not receive its lands and resources at Confederation. It was created in 1905 *without* control of its Crown lands and minerals; that control was transferred only in 1930, by the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement (NRTA), confirmed as part of the Constitution.

Even today, that Alberta and Saskatchewan did not have jurisdiction over their natural resources may come up in debate as an example of unfair federal treatment.

However, the legislation that transfers jurisdiction over natural resources to Alberta is made *subject to* the Treaties:

Section 10 of the NRTA keeps reserve lands vested in the federal Crown and requires Alberta, on request, to return unoccupied Crown land so Canada can fulfil outstanding Treaty obligations. The province's title to its resources is *downstream* of the Treaties and expressly conditioned on them.

A government cannot legislate away the instrument from which its own jurisdiction descends. Either Alberta respects treaty rights and gets jurisdiction over natural resources, or it doesn't.

> **Financial magnitude:** Every dollar of royalty revenue for the province flows from resources transferred under the 1930 NRTA — the same agreement that obligates the province to honour Treaty land entitlements. The resource wealth and the Treaty obligation arrive in the same instrument; one cannot be kept while the other is discarded.

2.2 The Treaties are the Crown's chain of title, not an addition

The claim: *The Alberta Freedom Strategy frames Indigenous rights and consultation as obstacles to development and as part of the federal "overreach" that Alberta should refuse (pp. 21–22).*

The facts: From the Crown's standpoint, the Treaties are not a *constraint* on lawful authority — they *are* the source of it. The Crown's ability to open land for settlement and resource development across the Prairies rests on the numbered Treaties. Strip them away and the Crown's own title has no foundation. Proving ownership of property requires a chain of title. Without the treaties as a foundation, there is no chain of title and no jurisdiction – and no common-law property rights.

The duty to consult, affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada, is an obligation the Crown owes to ensure that First Nations and other Indigenous groups have their rights upheld. They are still Canadian citizens, and they are residents of the provinces in which they live. Without the duty to consult, First Nations are put in a position where they would be denied what non-Indigenous Canadians can take for granted: being able to say "no." If freedom is a priority, protecting the right of people to be heard and to have a say in development on the land that they live and depend on is a basic democratic right.

It is no burden at all on private citizens, for investors it should be considered the cost of doing business, and it cannot be unilaterally repealed by a province whose jurisdiction is itself subject to Treaty.

A separation strategy compounds the problem. Treaties were made with the Crown. A province purporting to leave Canada cannot carry the Crown's Treaty partners with it by legislative fiat. The Strategy's 'final resort' section gestures at 'recognition of existing First Nations sovereignty and treaties' (p. 39) while the body treats those same rights as intrusions — an internal contradiction at the heart of the plan.

The Numbers the Report Leaves Out

The *Free Alberta Strategy's* economic case rests almost entirely on one class of number — net fiscal contribution and transfers "drained" from Alberta, while it omits entirely the two largest determinants of Alberta's fiscal position over the period it covers: the world price of oil, and the share of resource value the province chooses to collect for itself.

Omission 1 Saudi Arabia's 2014 Global Shock that Dropped Oil Prices by 70%

The claim: *Rising unemployment, falling incomes, bankruptcies, and even increases in suicide and opioid deaths were the result of a "sustained federal economic attack" on Alberta (pp. 15–16).*

The facts: The Strategy's argument is flatly contradicted by its own data. An unemployment chart (p. 16) shows Alberta's rate flat and lowest-in-Canada until it climbs steeply in **2014–15** when Saudi Arabia and OPEC launched a deliberate and very public oil price war. The result was one of the sharpest collapses in oil prices since 1945: between 2014 and 2016, crude dropped roughly 70 per cent.

In 2014 both the federal and Alberta governments were Conservative – but they cannot be held responsible or blamed for the crash: No federal policy created the price war and none could have stopped it.

> **Financial magnitude:** The price collapse drove the swing from Alberta's 2014–15 surplus to the deficits that followed, which the *Strategy* says was over $17 billion in a single year (p. 15). No federal

program was introduced to which that change can be ascribed: The one dominant variable is the oil price, not any federal program.

Omission 2 No Mention of Alberta's Outflows of Profits and Wealth

The claim: *Ottawa has "plundered" and "drained" Alberta of "well over $600 billion" over 60 years through equalization and transfers (pp. 13, 25).*

The facts: The Strategy focuses entirely on Canada as burden, while leaving out the huge outflows of money to foreign countries, never to return, namely profits paid out to *foreign* shareholders. The four biggest oil and gas companies are about 60 per cent American-owned; roughly three-quarters of their shareholders are not Canadian. That money does not stay in Canada, or Alberta: it leaves.

Financial magnitude: In just three years between 2021 and 2024, Alberta exported an estimated **$58 billion** in dividends and buybacks to foreign shareholders. (Alberta Federation of Labour / Canadians for Tax Fairness, on Statistics Canada data). In the past quarter century, from 2003–present the figure is commonly estimated at **$220–$300 billion.** It's about the same order of magnitude as the entire 60-year equalization figure the Strategy condemns, but flowing offshore, not east.

Omission 3 The $45 Billion the Alberta Government Left on the Table

The claim: *Provincial deficits were the result of changes in federal transfers and "irresponsible provincial spending"; resulting in the stagnation of Heritage Fund (pp. 14, 25).*

The facts: An obvious point about government deficits: they are, by definition, the difference between government spending and government revenue. The Strategy document ignores Alberta's own decisions about what they chose to collect. In 2024, Alberta's royalties were a smaller share per barrel than either Norway's or even Alaska's: Alberta took about 12 per cent of oil-and-gas production value in royalties — $16.8 billion out of $138.7 billion. Norway taxed its windfall into the world's largest sovereign fund, while Alberta actively cut royalties during peak booms and saved little.

Financial magnitude: Successive royalty reductions are estimated to have cost roughly $30 billion (Klein-era, 2001–2014), a further $13.5 billion below projection under the 2009 formula, and $4.3 billion more by 2022 under the 2019 changes — in a year of record profits. Together these provincial decisions — a cumulative total of foregone annual revenue, anchored to Alberta's Public Accounts and the 2007 Royalty Review (Our Fair Share) — exceed the annual transfer figures the Strategy calls a "drain."

Omission 4 The Most Profitable Year on Record

The claim: *Alberta is being driven toward "have-not" status by federal attack (pp. 14–15).*

The facts: The year after this claim was published, 2022, was the **most profitable year in the history of Canada's oil patch**, with production value of about $167 billion (Alberta Energy Regulator). A province being strangled by Confederation does not post the richest year its main industry has ever recorded.

> **Financial magnitude:** For comparison, the AER reports the 2015–2019 average production value at just $74 billion, and 2024 at $139 billion. The hardship Albertans feel in services reflects how little of the windfall the province collected and saved — not federal sabotage.

Omission 5 Cancellations, Bankruptcies, and Stranded Assets

The claim: *The collapse in investment, the wave of business failures, and the abandoned assets across Alberta are evidence of a federal campaign to "phase out" the energy sector (pp. 14–16).*

The facts: This claim rests on the premise that the collapse in the global price of oil was caused, not by the actions in 2014 of Saudi Arabia and OPEC, but by the federal government. The price shock delivered to Alberta was historic in its magnitude. All of these events are textbook consequence of a commodity-price collapse, and each one tracks the 2014 price war, not federal policy:

- **Cancelled / deferred capital projects.** Oil-and-gas capital investment fell from **$81 billion in 2014 to $31 billion in 2016 — a $50-billion annual collapse** (Business Council of Canada); ARC Financial counted 17 oilsands cancellations or delays in 2015 alone.
- **Bankruptcies and insolvencies.** Alberta consumer insolvencies rose roughly **33–36 per cent** in the year after the crash — against ~3 per cent nationally — while insolvencies *fell* in Ontario. The pattern maps onto oil exposure, not federal targeting.
- **Stranded / abandoned assets.** Alberta has roughly **466,000 wells, more than half marginal or inactive**; the regulator's public cleanup-liability estimate is about **$33 billion**, internal documents as high as **$88 billion**, and up to **$260 billion** including the oilsands.

> **Financial magnitude:** Capital cancellations alone (~$50 billion in a single year) exceed roughly two and a half years of the ~$20-billion annual transfer figure the Strategy calls a "drain." The cleanup liability is a private and provincial obligation of a scale the document never acknowledges.

Omission 6 The Jobless Recovery: Record Production, Workerless Profits

The claim: *Federal policy destroyed Alberta's oil and gas jobs, and the sector's decline is evidence of Ottawa's "strategy to phase out" the industry (pp. 14–16).*

The facts: This claim collides with two facts the Strategy cannot accommodate at once: Alberta is producing *more* oil than ever before, while employing far fewer people to do it. Canadian oil and gas production **grew by about 47 per cent between 2012 and 2023**, and Alberta's output reached a record of roughly 3.6 million barrels per day in 2024 — yet sector employment *fell* over the same period. By Statistics Canada's measure, Alberta's mining and oil-and-gas extraction industry shed about **36,000 jobs (a 21 per cent decline) in the decade to 2023**; broader sector counts put the drop since the 2014 peak at closer to **45,000–50,000 positions**. An industry being strangled out of existence does not post record output. An industry whose workers were laid off by Ottawa does not keep hiring fewer people precisely as production climbs to all-time highs.

The facts: The real explanation is structural, and it has nothing to do with the federal government. After the 2014 price crash, companies stopped building the large new projects that once created waves of employment, and instead cut costs through **consolidation, mergers, and the automation of jobs**, while directing their cash to share buybacks and dividends rather than new hiring. The number of jobs supported by each barrel collapsed: from a 2012 peak of about 38 jobs per thousand barrels per day to roughly 22 in 2023 — a **43 per cent fall in labour intensity**. The work that remains is increasingly done by automated haul trucks, remote monitoring, and digital systems supervised by far fewer people. As one economist put it, the sector simply does not need as many people as it once did, and those jobs are not coming back.

This is the decisive complement to the price-war point. The collapse of 2014–2016 was caused by the OPEC–Saudi price war; the *failure of jobs to return* during the recovery was caused by the industry's own restructuring. At no point in this sequence does federal policy supply the explanation. When production and profits came roaring back — 2022 being the most profitable year in the history of the oil patch — the windfall did not flow to Alberta workers in the form of rehiring. It flowed to shareholders and bondholders, the majority of them foreign, in the form of dividends and buybacks. The recovery was real, but it was a **jobless and increasingly workerless recovery**: record barrels, record profits, a smaller workforce.

This pattern also exposes the contradiction at the centre of the separatist economic case. The Strategy asks Albertans to believe simultaneously that the industry is being destroyed by Ottawa and that it is the engine that would sustain an independent Alberta. Both cannot be true. The industry is not being destroyed — it is more productive and more profitable than ever. What has changed is that it no longer employs Albertans on the scale it once did, and it increasingly exports its profits rather than reinvesting them at home. That is a problem of automation and corporate strategy, not of Confederation, and separation would do nothing to solve it. If anything, it identifies exactly where the province's real vulnerability lies: a maturing, automating, capital-intensive industry that produces enormous wealth for its owners while supporting a shrinking share of the workforce — and a provincial government that collects little of the resulting rent.

Financial magnitude: Forecasts cited in this research project that automation and digitalization could eliminate roughly **46,000 more upstream oil-and-gas jobs by 2040 — over half of the 2019 workforce** — with nearly 69,000 workers eligible to retire by 2035 unlikely to be replaced. The Parkland Institute links a wave of post-2019 oil-sands job cuts directly to the same $4.3-billion provincial corporate tax cut documented elsewhere in this report: public money intended to spur employment was used, in part, to finance the automation that eliminated it.

Sources: Pembina Institute, *Drilling Down: Oil and Gas Jobs in Transition* (2025), on Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey and production data (production +47% 2012–2023; jobs −17% nationally; 43% fall in jobs per barrel); Government of Alberta, *Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction Industry Profile, 2023* (−36,200 jobs / −21.3% over the decade to 2023, StatCan Tables 14-10-0037-01 et al.); Parkland Institute, *Job Creation or Job Loss?* (2022) and *The Future of Alberta's Oil Sands Industry: More Production, Less Capital, Fewer Jobs* (2020); Ernst & Young / PetroLMI automation forecasts (2020); Alberta Energy Regulator production data (2024 record output).

3. Getting the Fundamental Facts of Equalization Wrong

The claim: *Equalization "plunders" Alberta; Ottawa "took well over $600 billion more from Alberta taxpayers than it returned"; the money funds Quebec's "electoral needs" (pp. 13, 25–26).*

The facts: This is a long-standing argument in Alberta, which has been advanced for decades, but it is based on an argument that gets the history, math, and essential plumbing of the programs wrong.

The argument is contradicted by the actual accounting of who pays taxes, how much they pay, and where the money goes: the Free Alberta argument is based on a series of assumptions that are squarely refuted by facts. The general argument has been made that if Albertans are suffering or they cannot access provincial services, that it is because Alberta as a whole is paying taxes that are going to people in Quebec.

What is actually a transfer between richer and poorer *people*, has been recast as a theft between *provinces*.

Every Successful Currency Union Has Transfer Payments, Including the United States

First, the singular focus on equalization may give the impression that it is the only federal transfer program: it is not. All provinces receive transfer payments, and some provinces receive equalization payments. The argument that suggests the program was set up in this way to deliver political benefits to the province of Quebec is contradicted both by history and by currency theory.

The development of transfer and equalization payments was not due to Quebec: it was due to the prairie provinces – Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta – who in the Great Depression of the 1930s were regularly on the verge of default, and each of whom had some of their Depression-era debt discharged by the Federal Government. The reason for the suffering and then is substantially the same reason for the suffering now: provincial economies were highly dependent on a single commodity, which after years of elevated prices, crashed in value – resulting in lost income, bankruptcies of individuals, family businesses, and in political discontent.

The notion that transfer or equalization payments are just for the purpose of redistribution is not accurate. The explanation given for equalization is that it allows provinces with smaller economies to provide services, like education and health care without imposing very high taxes.

However, this is only a partial explanation. These payments are a form of macroeconomic stabilizers for the country as a whole. The idea that they were created for the sake of one province is challenged by the fact that other countries also have them – including the United States and Australia. Such payments are required in any country that operates with multiple sub-jurisdictions – states or provinces – under a single currency.

Those transfers help ensure national economic stability - for every jurisdiction, including the ones that are paying in more than they get back. Part of the reason is that the money is often recycled: "have" provinces are "haves" because they have major concentrations of industry – finance, energy, manufacturing,

corporate headquarters, food processing that the have-not" provinces do not. The money is thus returned to the "have provinces" through the private market.

3.1 The specifics of individual money transactions matter

One of the hidden assumption in the argument is that it presents all Albertans as having a shared joint chequing and savings account: it implies that money is being shared between Albertans in ways that are contradicted by the basic mechanics of banking and accounting. The unique individual experience of each Albertan is required to accurately describe what is happening.

No province pays equalization to another, and Alberta's treasury has never sent an equalization payment anywhere.

Albertans pay federal income taxes as individual Canadians. They are not being singled out by the Canadian government: they are facing the same federal tax treatment as everyone else with the same income. Individuals in every other province with similar incomes pay the same rates. The tax is progressive, so paid more by high income earners, wherever they live in Canada – and it the source of most of the federal general revenue, out of which equalization is paid.

The concentration of tax payments in the top 10% of the population is not due to progressive income taxes alone: it is because it matches the concentration of income.

In 2014, Statistics Canada figures showed that of all the provinces, Alberta had the greatest density of wealth and income concentrated in the hands of the fewest individuals – at levels higher than the U.S.: at the peak of the boom, 50% of all income in Alberta was being earned by the top 10% of the population – which means the remaining 50% is being split among the other 90%.

For years Alberta had the highest median incomes and youngest workforce in Canada, so Albertans, as individuals, paid more federal tax. The figure measures Alberta's *prosperity*, not its victimhood.

The facts: Nor is failing to receive equalization a sign of mistreatment. Resource revenue lifts Alberta's fiscal capacity above the national average; that is why it doesn't qualify. The volatility that follows is the "oil curse" of a globally priced commodity — not the transfer formula.

> **Financial magnitude:** The "$600 billion over 60 years" is a net-balance figure that any high-income region generates automatically under a progressive federal system. It is arithmetic produced because Alberta's oil economy increased the number of high-income individuals.

3.2 The Report's Inaccurate Claims on Pipelines

- **Pipelines.** The Free Alberta Strategy blames federal policy for landlocking Alberta, while omitting that the federal government *bought and financed* the Trans Mountain expansion when no private company would – directly increasing Alberta's capacity to export to tidewater and sell at global prices, instead of a discounted price to the U.S. The increased benefits from the

construction have delivered an estimated $12-billion had the expansion not taken place. Between 2006 and 2015, the prior Conservative government built no pipelines.

- **Northern Gateway:** The application for the Northern Gateway pipeline did not fail due to an excess of regulation: the court ruled that the Federal Government itself had failed to meet even the *minimum* standard of Indigenous consultation – a standard the ruling judge said the Government could have achieved with little effort or cost.

3.3 Accusing the Supreme Court of Corruption, Without Evidence

The Free Alberta Strategy presents the Supreme Court's carbon-tax decision as a rigged outcome by "federal government allies" (pp. 30–31). To return again to Carl Sagan's dictum "extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof" but this extraordinary claim is being made with no proof at all.

The paper is levelling a charge of corruption at an entire branch of Canadian government, the judiciary for a ruling that the Federal Government can raise a tax without getting the permission from Premiers.

There is not a shred of evidence presented for the allegation of corruption. The court split 6-3, as the provincial courts had, and the arguments made were all on the legal merits. The paper's own footnotes cite an Alberta Court of Appeal reference reaching the *opposite* result, but again, with a split decision. All the evidence points to genuine judicial disagreement.

The entire accusation depends on a fundamental misrepresentation of the way our courts actually work. When judges are making these decisions, they are neither endorsing nor condemning the content of the bill, any more than a judge who declares a mistrial in a murder case is endorsing murder.

Being for or against the carbon tax was not the question on the table. The question was whether the federal government had the legal authority to pass the laws they did. That question is reached by considering the bill and the arguments within a complex context of legislation, legal philosophy, and precedent. The question was not "Do you like this bill?" it was "Is this bill constitutional?"

The case was – and is – being presented as an example of Federal overreach. There is another possible interpretation from a different perspective, which is that provincial governments and Premiers were trying to claim power for themselves: the power to veto the tax policies of the Federal Government. Because Premiers are not Members of the Federal Government, these vetoes would happen without a vote in parliament and without passing a law.

Seen from that perspective, it can be seen why a court might disagree with the Provinces. You cannot have a Federal Government where, at any moment, any Premier can lunge for the reins of power and alter the direction of the state with impunity to veto a law within federal jurisdiction that has been passed by Parliament and received Royal Assent.

It should be self-evident why there is nothing legal, democratic or constitutional about that – and why it makes sense to oppose it.

The accusation that the Supreme Court's rulings were in favour of "corrupt allies," without evidence, seriously undermines the credibility of the document as a whole.

If claims of that seriousness are being made with no evidence, what other claims are unreliable?

3.4 The History of Carbon Tax Implementation in Canada Contradicts the Report

As mentioned before this report is politically agnostic on the carbon tax.

It's important to note that the idea of carbon tax was proposed by conservative-leaning economists, and introduced at the provincial level in Canada by governments that were centre right.

The carbon tax, as proposed by economist William Nordhaus, was developed as a free-market solution to climate change. The policy is developed within the same neoclassical economic formulas that are the basis of the modern conservative movement's analyses. In 2018, Nordhaus was awarded the Economics prize named for Alfred Nobel. The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) provided a summary of Nordhaus' arguments:

"Nordhaus argues the pricing of carbon achieves four objectives: it sends signals to consumers about which goods and services are more carbon-intensive; it sends signals to producers about which activities are most carbon-intensive (such as coal burning) and which are less carbon-intensive (like solar or wind); it sends signals to propel innovation to find new, affordable alternatives; and finally, pricing is the best means to convey these signals within well-functioning markets.

The early approaches of Nordhaus have been proven in both more intensive research and real-world experience. Conservative bodies that consistently support well-functioning markets—such as the OECD, the International Monetary Fund and others—have shown carbon pricing is the most effective and least distortionary way to tackle carbon pollution."

Everything about the policy is grounded in conservative, free-market models. Governments would start low, and communicate clearly that the taxes would be going up by a certain amount per year: the thinking, from an economist's point of view, is that this sends a clear signal about prices, and that the market will adjust itself accordingly.

Whether these theoretical claims of the efficacy of a carbon tax are accurate or not, there is no denying that it was developed as the most business-and economy-friendly way of addressing climate change through politically conservative economic models and principles.

Prior to 2018, there was much greater multi-partisan support for market-based policy measures to address climate change, either through carbon taxes or through "cap-and-trade" markets.

The political division around the carbon tax marks a significant political policy shift. The first governments to introduce carbon pricing in Canada were pro-business provincial conservatives.

British Columbia's centre-right Liberal government introduced North America's first broad carbon tax in 2008. The Progressive Conservative Government of Alberta brought in a form of carbon levy on large industrial emitters in 2007 — the Specified Gas Emitters Regulation, under Premier Ed Stelmach. So a price on carbon for big emitters existed in Alberta, enacted by a Conservative provincial government, years before any federal measure.

When Stephen Harper was leader, the Conservative platforms of 2006 and 2008 both endorsed a form of carbon pricing, specifically an intensity-based cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gases. Harper's government repeatedly promised to regulate emissions, including from the oil and gas sector, before ultimately never doing so. By 2012 Harper had abandoned the cap-and-trade commitment entirely.

In 2018, newly-elected provincial governments began to repeal climate policies. The Ontario Government repealed cap-and-trade, and the Manitoba Government, having introduced a carbon tax, reversed itself and voted against their own legislation to remove it from the final budget.

4. The Entire Argument Is Built on a False Premise

The deepest problem of all is that the entire Free Alberta Strategy is built on a well-established logical fallacy: begging the question. The conclusion is already assumed, so the evidence that is assembled is either included or rejected based on whether it conforms to the assumption.

The report's entire premise is a pre-existing assumption that a flawed Constitution, a parasitic equalization regime, hostile courts, an eastern "cabal" and Indigenous Rights are to blame: data that does not support that conclusion is rejected or ignored.

That means that the real problems facing Alberta, and Albertans, go ignored, and so do any effective solutions: Alberta's real difficulties are the consequence of a global price shock, hundreds of billions in profits exported abroad, resource rents left uncollected at home, a national private-debt and productivity problem. These are not problems that can or will be solved with changes to the constitution: they are measurable, economic and financial problems that need tangible economic and financial solutions. These could be effectively addressed with the powers that Federal and Provincial governments have, right now.

The report's conclusions depend entirely on an assumption of the truth– that Canada's fundamental structures are the problem. The statement "Ottawa has fundamentally breached its constitutional agreement" (p. 11) is yet another extraordinary charge that requires evidence to support it – court cases, expert legal opinion.

It is circular reasoning: Assuming that the problem is structural imposes that interpretation on the data, leading back to the conclusion that the problem is structural.

Remove that assumption, and the entire argument collapses. The oil price war, offshored profits, or royalty choices do not support the thesis, so they are omitted. By confining the debate to grievance and constitutional rupture, separation is considered the only answer: sovereignty, and ultimately separation — follows only if the missing economic facts stay missing.

5. What Remains of the Case

A fair question is whether the foregoing answers only part of the document. It does not. The claims addressed above are not *some* of the Strategy — they are its load-bearing parts, the only sections that combine a real harm with a real number.

Remove the price war, the offshored profits, the uncollected royalties, and the equalization fallacy, and what is left is a set of administrative blueprints resting on a foundation of unsubstantiated grievances, and a pension claim that repeats a fallacy, and a layer of invalid constitutional claims that are corrected by the inclusion of treaties.

Further examples of the report creating problems to solve include:

- **The CPP and EI "overcontribution."** The argument here is that Alberta is paying too much into the Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance. This is equalization fallacy in miniature. In every case, government is acting as a risk mitigator, with programs that are all a form of "social insurance" – with insurance being an exact description of the process. These social insurance programs draw on a national pool of contributors, and due to the nature of its economy, Alberta has a concentration of workers who not only have high incomes – it is one of the youngest workforces. The contribution dynamic is that young people pay into the insurance pool, then draw on the insurance later in life. That is a consequence of demographics, not a policy distortion. Any province with the youngest workforce and highest incomes will always pay disproportionately into national insurance pools — not because it is robbed, but because it has relatively fewer retirees and higher earnings. The effect *reverses* as a population ages.
- **The institutional package (Sovereignty Act, Provincial Police, Revenue Agency, etc.).** A detailed plan for leaving is not an argument for leaving. These proposals are *mechanisms, not evidence*. They describe how Alberta would withdraw, not that withdrawal is warranted.
- **The constitutional and judicial assertions.** Several of the most serious assertions are declared, not demonstrated. Any argument that the Federal Government is overstepping its bounds by insisting that Alberta respect treaty rights is flatly contradicted by the NRTA/treaty legislation that granted Alberta jurisdiction over its natural resources. There is no evidence presented for the claim of a "rigged court" – in fact, it is contradicted by the document's own footnotes.
- **The climate / "Great Reset" framing.** This a purely ideological frame, not a costed economic argument. It has to be stated that any reference to the "Great Reset" proposed at the World Economic Forum is straying into the realm of conspiracy theory. During the pandemic – when the report was drafted – a conspiracy theory circulated widely, claiming that, as the BBC put it the "Great Reset is a strategic part of a grand conspiracy by the global elite, who somehow planned and managed the Covid-19 pandemic." While it is not part of an economic argument, they are beliefs on which many people acted.

There is no separate, untouched economic pillar waiting to be addressed. Once the load-bearing claims fall, the remainder is either the same fallacy restated, an unsupported assertion, or a mechanism with no independent justification. The case for repudiating Confederation does not have a second foundation to fall back on. None of this denies Alberta's hardship. It denies that the hardship was caused by the structure of Canada — and it shows, with sources, that the largest facts were left off the page.

Sidebar: The "Great Reset" Conspiracy Theory: A Case Study in The Free Alberta Strategy's Unsourced Claims

The Free Alberta Strategy invokes "the Great Reset's climate crusades" (p. 32) as though it were an established federal-globalist plot. It is worth pausing on this phrase, because it is the clearest example in the document of a wider pattern: a claim imported from a conspiracy theory, presented as fact, with no evidence offered and none available. The same pattern recurs in related material from the same intellectual circle, and it is worth setting out plainly — briefly, because it is a side issue to the economic argument, but squarely, because it reveals how these documents are built.

1. What the "Great Reset" actually was

The World Economic Forum's "Great Reset" was a real but non-binding economic-recovery initiative, launched in June 2020 by the WEF and the then-Prince of Wales. The plan was broad and vague, and non-binding is an understatement: it was proposed by the head of an organization with no authority whatsoever to act on it. The WEF's founder, Klaus Schwab, set out three components:

- Steering markets toward "fairer outcomes" through tax, regulatory and trade policy;
- Directing recovery investment toward "resilient, equitable and sustainable" ends using environmental, social and governance (ESG) metrics; and
- harnessing technological innovation for public benefit.

It was a suggestion for proposals that governments could voluntarily accept or reject. The kind of thing reasonable people can debate and criticize on ordinary policy grounds. Many have questioned its corporate influence and its ESG agenda. The primary source is Schwab's own article, "Now is the time for a 'great reset'" (weforum.org/stories/2020/06/now-is-the-time-for-a-great-reset/). What it was not was a plan to engineer a pandemic, abolish private property, or impose a world government.

2. How a recovery proposal became a global conspiracy theory

The conspiracy version — the one the Free Alberta Strategy invokes — has a documented provenance. Its factual seed was the genuine WEF initiative. In October 2020, a fabricated chain letter purporting to come from a (non-existent) committee of "Liberal insiders" was posted to a QAnon board on 8chan, claiming to leak Canada's secret "COVID Global Reset Plan." On November 15, 2020, an authentic but misrepresented clip of Prime Minister Trudeau using the word "reset" at a UN meeting went viral and was treated as confirmation of the fabricated leak.

From there it was amplified internationally — with explicit overlap into the United States, where the theory held that only a Donald Trump victory could stop the plot — by political and media figures across several countries. Independent fact-checkers (BBC, Snopes, Reuters, AFP) examined the underlying claim and found it baseless; the theory was, in substance, a repackaging of the decades-old "New World Order"

trope, updated with COVID-era falsehoods (that vaccines "contain microchips" or alter DNA, that the pandemic was deliberately engineered).

The mechanism by which it was amplified matters more than any single name. These conspiracy narratives were propagated worldwide by bad actors whose effect — and in some cases evident aim — was to maximize internal dissent and erode public trust in governments and institutions during a global emergency. That is the relevant point for a document, like the Strategy, that reaches for the same frame: the phrase "Great Reset," used as the Strategy uses it, is not a description of federal policy. It is the residue of a debunked conspiracy theory.

There is no evidence that the pandemic or federal recovery policy was related to the WEF — and the document offers none. The document's nod to the conspiracy functions as a dog-whistle: it is heard by the people who are supposed to hear it, but not by others.

Like the conspiracy about the Supreme Court, this conspiracy also depends on a misrepresentation of a basic fact: which is that in Canada, health care and public health is a provincial jurisdiction: declaring states of emergency and running the public health response during the pandemic was performed by provincial governments. The reality of Canada's divisions of power is that the federal government taxes nationally, and funds nationally, but provides almost no actual program delivery. One of the aspects of the Great Reset conspiracy theory is that it ascribed actions and blame to the Federal Government for decisions and policies that were outside Federal jurisdiction, as all decisions and responses were run by provinces.

3. A Shared Method: Presenting an Assumption as a Finding

The Free Alberta Strategy's method of presenting an assertion as a finding can be traced through three connected documents authored or chaired by Preston Manning, a founder of the Reform Party, and a figure whose institutional network overlaps with the Strategy's milieu: they share a common publisher: The Frontier Centre for Public Policy.

- **The fiction (2022).** Manning wrote a "Report of the COVID Commission" for the Frontier Centre — an openly fictional account of an imagined citizens' inquiry that reaches predetermined anti-mandate conclusions, set in an invented "future" of mid-2023. It predicted the imagined commission would produce 75 recommendations and help topple the federal government.
- **The real inquiry (2022–23).** Manning then chaired the actual National Citizens Inquiry, built on the identical premise that a government "cannot investigate itself." By its own admission, the NCI rested entirely on volunteer witness testimony, with no government participation; it treated vaccine safety as unproven and the suppression of ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine as scandal. As one report observed, to read the fiction and the real inquiry together "is to behold the fantasy evolve into reality." In today's parlance, Manning manifested the inquiry's conclusions into existence through his fictional report.

- **The government policy (2023).** Premier Danielle Smith appointed Manning to chair Alberta's $2-million Public Health Emergencies Governance Review Panel. Its 90-plus recommendations ran counter to mainstream public-health evidence: that the premier and cabinet should hold "ultimate authority" in a health emergency, not experts in health, emergency or crisis management; that officials should weigh "alternative scientific narratives"; that school closures be effectively forbidden; and that no rights-infringement during an emergency be treated as justified "until first proven to be so in a court of law."
  The Canadian Paediatric Society, the Canadian Medical Association and the Alberta Medical Association condemned it, and roughly 70 doctors and researchers signed an open letter stating it "inaccurately reflects the body of scientific evidence."
  Manning then emailed Conservative MPs suggesting the report could be "useful in attacking the record of the Liberal/NDP coalition" — confirming, to its critics, that it was never an exercise in the public interest.

4. The common thread: the plural of anecdote is not data

What links the *Free Alberta Strategy,* the "Great Reset" framing, and the Manning reports is not their subject matter but their method. Each violates a basic principle of honest analysis — that *the plural of anecdote is not data* — assembling grievance, selected testimony, and assertion in place of evidence, and making no serious attempt at the balance or due diligence that real recommendations require. A document that gathers only the witnesses who agree with its conclusion has not investigated anything; it has staged a confirmation. As a consequence, none of these documents is built to inform or educate the public so that citizens can make their own, informed decisions.

5. Demanding That Courts Always Be Consulted Before Emergencies Are Declared

One recurring proposal in this material is that, before limiting rights in an emergency, governments should be required to obtain judicial approval. The idea here is there is presumption that any infringement of rights is unjustified "until first proven to be so in a court of law". As a proposal, this manages to be cumbersome, slow, bureaucratic, dangerous and undemocratic, all as it misunderstands the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

There are a couple of principles that need to be understood here. A right isn't unlimited permission to speak and act however you please without facing consequences, including people getting you to stop what you are doing. One limit to freedom is that we have to respect other's freedoms as well.

One way of understanding Individual Charter rights is to consider that they are balanced by responsibilities – specifically, the responsibility to follow the law. The Charter itself states that citizens cannot be deprived of rights "except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice" – the laws cannot be arbitrary; they must follow fair legal processes and respect core values of justice. This "the state's conduct in the course of enforcing and securing compliance with the law."

Charter rights are exercised in a real context, and they are balanced against the law and against the rights of others. This is not a pandemic novelty; it is the ordinary condition of every freedom. The right to free expression has never been a defense against deliberate libel, malicious defamation, fraudulent contracts, or organizing a criminal conspiracy — limits that have existed for decades or centuries and that no one regards as tyranny. Section 1 of the Charter says so explicitly: rights are guaranteed subject to "reasonable limits" that are "demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society."

A state of emergency changes the context in which rights are exercised because it changes the facts on the ground. Ordinary, innocuous activities can become dangerous. You cannot safely strike a match inside a building with a gas leak. You cannot safely drive a loaded truck over a bridge that is failing. A public-safety order closing that building or that bridge is not an attack on your freedom of movement — it is a recognition that the freedom to move has met a fact that makes its exercise lethal. A communicable, sometimes-fatal virus is exactly such a fact: in a pandemic, gathering indoors is the match and the gas leak at once. Disregarding a public-health order on the ground that one has a right to associate or to move freely is no more defensible than driving over the failing bridge on the ground that one has a right to drive.

The practical objection is just as serious: emergencies demand rapid, flexible decisions made in real time on scientific and medical facts. Requiring a government to litigate each measure to a final court ruling before it could act would make timely public-health protection impossible — the order would arrive after the harm it was meant to prevent. The law already provides the correct safeguard: governments act, and their measures are then subject to judicial review, in which a court tests whether the limits were justified. That is the existing, functioning balance between authority and accountability — not a gap the Manning panel discovered.

6. What Canada's Courts actually ruled about rights

The argument above is not just legal theory. When Manitoba's public-health orders were challenged on precisely these grounds: freedom of religion, expression, and peaceful assembly. The courts addressed the question directly, and the orders were consistently upheld as reasonable and constitutional.

On October 21, 2021, Chief Justice Glenn Joyal of the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench held, in Gateway Bible Baptist Church et al. v. Manitoba (2021 MBQB 218 and 219), that the delegation of authority to the Chief Public Health Officer was constitutional. Although the orders did infringe Charter freedoms, those infringements were "reasonable, proportionate and justified" under section 1 to address "a serious public health emergency: a global pandemic with grave, sometimes deadly consequences." In Manitoba, the second wave of the pandemic was the deadliest in Canada, and during the third wave, Manitoba was the North American hotspot for cases that overwhelmed the capacity of the health care system.

Joyal was explicit that rights endure in a crisis: "fundamental freedoms do not and ought not to be seen to suddenly disappear in a pandemic," while also recognizing that "the factual underpinnings for managing a pandemic are rooted in mostly scientific and medical matters … that fall outside the expertise of courts," warranting a "margin of appreciation" for decisions made quickly for the public good (para. 292).

In June 2023, The Manitoba Court of Appeal upheld that result, and on March 14, 2024, the Supreme Court of Canada declined to hear a further appeal — leaving the rulings as the settled outcome. The challenge had been run by the Calgary-based Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, the same advocacy milieu from which much of this anti-restriction litigation and argument originates. The courts, in other words, did exactly what the law provides: they reviewed the measures after the fact, weighed the rights against the emergency, and found the orders justified. The system the Manning panel says is missing already exists — and it has already answered the question.

Sources

WEF: Klaus Schwab, "Now is the time for a 'great reset'" (World Economic Forum, June 2020); WEF press releases, Sustainable Development Impact Summit (Sept 2020). Conspiracy provenance: BBC Reality Check, "The 'Great Reset' … and a false vaccine claim debunked" (21 Nov 2020) and "What is the Great Reset — and how did it get hijacked by conspiracy theories?" (23 June 2021); Snopes (Oct 2020). Manning documents: P. Manning, "Report of the COVID Commission" (Frontier Centre for Public Policy, 2022); National Citizens Inquiry, Final Report (Nov 2023); Alberta Public Health Emergencies Governance Review Panel report (2023), as reported by CBC, the Globe and Mail, the Tyee, and Global News (Nov 2023); open letter of ~70 physicians and researchers (2024–25). Manitoba rulings: Gateway Bible Baptist Church et al. v. Manitoba et al., 2021 MBQB 218 and 2021 MBQB 219 (CanLII); Manitoba Court of Appeal (June 2023); Supreme Court of Canada leave denied, 14 March 2024.

SUPPLEMENT:

The Alberta Economy the *Free Alberta Strategy* Ignores

Two missing pieces — the human capital that migrates in, and the activity a neoclassical 'barriers and transfers' frame cannot see

This supplement answers two questions: what internal migration has been worth to Alberta since 2001, and whether the economic activity the *Free Alberta Strategy* omits can be given an approximate dollar size. The second cannot be answered with a single precise figure — it is important to say so plainly — but it can be bounded, and the bounding is revealing: the activity left out is several times larger than the grievance figures.

Part A — The value of internal migration to Alberta since 2001

The grievance narrative says people and wealth are drained *out* of Alberta. On the largest measure of human movement, the opposite is true. Since 1971 Alberta has been the single largest net per-capita recipient of interprovincial migrants in Canada, and that continued across most of 2001–present. People moved *to* Alberta — from Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan, Ontario and B.C. — drawn by jobs and housing affordability.

- July 2022–June 2023: net interprovincial gain of about 56,000 people — the highest in the country.
- 2024: roughly 36,000 more, net — a third consecutive year of gains — with Ontario (44%) and B.C. (28%) the largest sources.
- Even subtracting the 2015–2021 bust years (when the price collapse briefly reversed the flow), the cumulative net gain over 2001–present runs to several hundred thousand people.

The economic point is what these movers *carry with them*. Interprovincial migrants are disproportionately young and of working age, and many arrive already educated. Each represents roughly two decades of child-rearing, schooling, and often post-secondary training — paid for by *another* province's taxpayers — who then arrives ready to work and pay Alberta taxes. This is a transfer of human capital *into* Alberta, running opposite to the "plunder" the Strategy describes.

> **Order of magnitude: The cost to raise and educate a person to working age in Canada is commonly estimated at $250,000–$400,000. At even ~350,000 net interprovincial arrivals since**

2001 and a conservative $250,000 each, the embedded human capital Alberta received — and did not pay to create — is on the order of $85–$140 billion: a one-directional subsidy from the rest of Canada that appears nowhere in the Strategy's ledger. This is a one-time stock, not an annual flow, and is not added to the flow figures elsewhere in this report; the underlying counts are from Statistics Canada Table 17-10-0022-01, valued at standard cost-of-raising-a-child estimates.

Part B — The 75% of the Economy the Report Ignores

The deeper answer is not a list of forgotten line items — it is that the Strategy's method only counts two things: net fiscal transfers between governments, and modelled trade 'barriers.' A neoclassical 'transfers-and-barriers' lens, by construction, leaves out most of what an economy is.

The denominator: the whole economy

Alberta's GDP is on the order of **$400+ billion** a year. Oil and gas — the sector the *Strategy* treats as nearly the whole story — is about **$88 billion, roughly one-quarter**.

The other three-quarters of the economy is largely absent from a document that frames Alberta almost entirely as an energy province wronged by Ottawa: the great majority of the economy is agriculture and agri-food, construction, real estate, finance and insurance, health care, education, trade, professional services, transportation, manufacturing, tourism, and a fast-growing technology sector – an omission of over $300-billion a year.

What the transfers-and-barriers lens omits, and its rough scale

Economic activity outside the frame	Rough scale	Why the frame misses it
Non-energy GDP (finance, real estate, health, construction, agri-food, tech, services)	~$300B+ per year (≈3/4 of GDP)	Alberta is treated as an energy economy; the larger non-energy economy is not modelled.
Human capital received via in-migration (2001–present)	~$85–$140B (one-time stock)	People are counted as population, not as the funded human capital another province built.
Profits exported to foreign shareholders	~$58B (2021–24); ~$220–300B (2003–present)	A private outflow, not a government transfer, so a transfers-only lens cannot register it.
Royalties foregone by provincial choice	~$30B + $13.5B + $4.3B (illustrative)	A provincial revenue decision, not a federal action; invisible to a 'blame-Ottawa' frame.
Stranded-asset / well-cleanup liability	~$33B–$88B; up to ~$260B with oilsands	A future private/provincial liability, not a current intergovernmental flow.
Federal financing of Trans Mountain	Multi-billion; ~$12B narrowed price discount	A federal action that helped Alberta — omitted because it cuts against the thesis.

Part C — Putting a Number on It: Included vs. Omitted

The *Free Alberta Strategy's* economic case is built on a transfer figure of roughly **$20 billion per year** (its "$600 billion over 60 years"). Contrast that with the activity left out:

- ~$300+ billion/year of non-energy GDP it never engages (annual flow);
- ~$58 billion (2021–24, verified) to ~$220–300 billion (2003–present, estimated) in exported profits (cumulative flow);
- ~$85–140 billion in human capital received (one-time stock);
- ~$30–48 billion in foregone royalties (cumulative flow);
- ~$33–260 billion in stranded-asset liabilities (one-time stock).

> **Order of magnitude:** against an annual transfer figure of roughly $20 billion at the centre of the Free Alberta Strategy's case, even counting only items that can be sourced, the economic activity and value omitted runs into the hundreds of billions annually for the GDP component, cumulatively for the stock items. These are not marginal figures; what is left out is an order of magnitude larger.

Part D — The Methodological Point Underneath the Numbers

A neoclassical 'transfers-and-barriers' analysis is designed to measure flows *between governments* and frictions *between jurisdictions*. It is structurally blind to private capital flows (profits leaving the country), to stocks of human capital (educated people arriving), to provincial revenue choices (royalties not collected), to future liabilities (wells not cleaned up), and to the great majority of value creation in the non-energy economy. Those blind spots are not random: every one, when filled in, points away from the conclusion that Ottawa is the cause of Alberta's troubles. A method that can only see transfers will only ever find a grievance about transfers.

A necessary caution. The Part B figures are orders of magnitude, not precise sums, and should not be added into one total — they mix annual flows (GDP, profits) with one-time stocks (human capital, liabilities). The honest claim is not 'the omission equals $X.' It is: measured against an annual ~$20-billion transfer figure, the activity left out is larger by roughly an order of magnitude, on every reasonable way of counting — robust even at the conservative end of each range.

6. Where is the Free Alberta Strategy getting its numbers?

A classification of the document's 57 endnotes by source type — and what it reveals about the economic case

The *Free Alberta Strategy* has 57 numbered endnotes, giving the impression of a heavily evidenced document. When it comes to evidence, quality matters as much as quantity.

Classifying each citation reveals a sharp split:

- The **legal and constitutional** claims are supported by genuine primary sources
- The **economic** claims supporting grievances and the case for separation rest almost entirely on advocacy think tanks, newspaper opinion columns, government-funded industry promotion, and the authors' own calculations. Peer-reviewed scholarship is nearly absent, and where it appears it concerns narrow legal or historical points, never the economic core.

6.1 Primary sources — legitimate facts, but no case made

About a third of the notes are genuine primary sources: federal statutes (the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, C-69, the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act), the Constitution Acts of 1867 and 1982, Alberta statutes, Supreme Court and appellate decisions, and official data (Statistics Canada, the federal Historical Transfer Tables, a Library of Parliament primer).

While these are strongest citations, they only establish that laws and rulings *exist*, not that they constitute the "attack" or "plunder" alleged. A statute is a fact; the claim that it is economic warfare is an interpretation the source does not supply.

6.2 Think tanks provide the backbone of the economic case

The **Fraser Institute** alone is cited at least seven times — for the "outsized contribution" figure, the "have/have-not" gap, the CPP claim, the "fair deal" rethink, the "end of the Alberta tax advantage," and the Teck commentary. Add the **Macdonald-Laurier Institute**, the **Manhattan Institute**, and the University of Calgary **School of Public Policy**. These are mission-driven advocacy organizations, not peer-reviewed research bodies.

The report's load-bearing economic numbers come from advocacy, not independent or refereed analysis.

6.3 Opinion and commentary doing the work of evidence

A large share of the economic claims trace to opinion columns: **Jack Mintz** in the Financial Post (cited twice for the "taken Alberta for granted" framing), **Ted Morton** in C2C Journal, **Lawrence Solomon** and **Lorne Gunter**, and a **Pierre Poilievre** article in Policy Options.

Opinion columns are arguments, not evidence.

6.4 Government-funded and industry advocacy cited as if neutral

The Canadian Energy Centre is the Alberta government's own "energy war room," a provincially funded corporation. Canada Action is cited twice and Resource Works once: both are industry-aligned organizations that receive some industry funding to promote oil and gas. The irony is that the Free Alberta Strategy elsewhere condemns government funding of media and advocacy, while drawing on government-funded advocacy for its own claims.

6.5 Peer-reviewed scholarship is nearly absent: none of it is on economics

By a generous count there are two genuinely peer-reviewed sources: **Asher Honickman** in the *Alberta Law Review* and **Jennifer Smith** (1983) in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. Both are legal or historical; neither supports the economic grievance. The remaining "academic" citations are an edited trade book (*The Moment of Truth*, by the same circle of authors), a Cooper trade book that he cites himself, and an SSRN working paper.

The closed citation loop

The economic case is not built on a broad base of independent evidence — it circulates within a small, like-minded network whose members cite one another and themselves: Jack Mintz, Ted Morton, Tom Flanagan and Barry Cooper recur as authors, co-editors, and subjects throughout. Cooper cites his own book; the co-edited volume *The Moment of Truth* is cited for several propositions; Morton appears at least three times.

Summary

Source type	Role in the case	Examples
Primary — statutes, rulings, official data	~1/3 of notes; concentrated on legal claims	GGPPA; C-69; Oil Tanker Moratorium Act; Constitution Acts; SCC/ABCA/ONCA references; StatCan; Historical Transfer Tables
Think tanks (advocacy)	Backbone of the economic claims	Fraser Institute (×7+); Macdonald-Laurier; Manhattan Institute; School of Public Policy
Opinion / commentary	Key framing figures	Mintz (FP ×2); Morton (C2C); Solomon; Gunter; Poilievre
Government-funded / industry advocacy	Environmental & LNG claims	Canadian Energy Centre; Canada Action (×2); Resource Works
Peer-reviewed scholarship	Nearly absent; never on economics	Honickman (Alta. Law Rev.); J. Smith, CJPS (1983)

Source type	Role in the case	Examples
Self-citation / closed loop	Recurring	Cooper citing Cooper; Mintz/Morton/Flanagan, The Moment of Truth

7. Table of Sources for "All Hat, No Cattle" Figures and Verification

Each figure used in this review, matched to a primary or named source. "Verified" indicates checked against the cited source.

Price shock and direct fiscal effects

Figure	Magnitude	Source / status
2014 OPEC–Saudi price war	~70% crude collapse (2014–16)	Three sharpest declines since WWII. IEA/EIA price series; CBC (Dec 2015). Both governments Conservative in 2014.
Single-year fiscal swing	Surplus to ~$17B deficit	Strategy's own chart, p. 15; Alberta budgets.
Capital cancellations	$81B (2014) → $31B (2016)	Business Council of Canada; ARC Financial (17 oilsands cancellations, 2015). VERIFIED.
Bankruptcies / insolvencies	AB +33–36% vs ~3% national	Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy; National Observer; CBC. Fell in Ontario. VERIFIED.
Stranded-asset liability	~$33B public; ~$88B internal; ~$260B w/ oilsands	Alberta Energy Regulator (via The Narwhal, Globe and Mail); ~466,000 wells. Range contested.

Where Alberta's wealth went

Figure	Magnitude	Source / status
Profits to foreign shareholders (recent)	~$58B (2021–24)	AFL / Canadians for Tax Fairness, "Exporting Profits" (2025), on StatCan Tables 33-10-0500-01, 25-10-0065-01, 33-10-0570-01 + Compustat. Big four ~60% U.S.-owned. VERIFIED.
Profits to foreign shareholders (full arc)	~$220–300B cumulative (2003–present) — ESTIMATE [flow]	Estimate extrapolating the VERIFIED 2021–24 figure (AFL/CTF on StatCan 33-10-0500-01, 25-10-0065-01, 33-10-0570-01) backward across the boom. Primary anchor: StatCan Table 36-10-0008-01 (foreign direct investment income / profits) and 36-10-0468-01 (FDI by industry). To be summed only as an annual flow series; not a stock.
Most profitable year	2022 record ($167B production value)	Alberta Energy Regulator, Energy Outlook (2024 = $139B; 2015–19 avg = $74B). VERIFIED.

Royalties and equalization

Figure	Magnitude	Source / status
Royalty share (2024)	~$30B + $13.5B + $4.3B foregone (cumulative) — ESTIMATE [flow]	Estimate; anchor to Alberta Public Accounts (annual royalty revenue, alberta.ca) and the 2007 Alberta Royalty Review Panel report (Our

Figure	Magnitude	Source / status
		Fair Share), plus Parkland Institute royalty analyses. A cumulative flow of foregone annual revenue; not a stock.
Royalty reductions, foregone revenue	~$30B + $13.5B + $4.3B	Estimate; tie to Alberta public accounts and royalty-review analysis.
"$600B over 60 years"	~$20B/yr net balance	Constitution Act 1982 s. 36(2); Dept. of Finance; Historical Transfer Tables. Net-balance artifact, not a payment.

Migration and the wider economy

Figure	Magnitude	Source / status
Net interprovincial migration	~$85–140B embedded — ESTIMATE [one-time stock]	Illustrative: net interprovincial arrivals (StatCan Table 17-10-0022-01) × per-person cost to raise to age 18 (StatCan/agriculture cost-of-raising-a-child estimates, ~$250k–$400k). A one-time human-capital STOCK; must NOT be added to annual flow figures.
Human capital received	~$85–140B (stock)	Illustrative: ~350k net arrivals × ~$250k cost to raise/educate. Order of magnitude.
Non-energy share of GDP	~3/4 of ~$400B+ GDP	StatCan GDP by industry (Table 36-10-0402); oil & gas ~$88B (~25%).

Legal and constitutional

Point	Authority	Status
Alberta's resources transferred 1930, conditioned on Treaties	NRTA, S.C. 1930, c. 3, ss. 1, 10, 12; Constitution Act, 1930	Primary.
Duty to consult is a Crown obligation	Haida Nation v. B.C., 2004 SCC 73; Constitution Act, 1982, s. 35; Gitxaala Nation v. Canada, 2016 FCA 187	Primary.
Carbon-tax courts disagreed	Reference re GGPPA, 2020 ABCA 74; 2021 SCC 11	Primary; both cited in the Strategy's own notes.
Federal financing of Trans Mountain	Government of Canada / TMC public record (2018)	Primary; dollar figure to be sourced.

8. An Annotated Edition of the Free Alberta Strategy

This section examines the Free Alberta Strategy in the order it presents its own argument, page by page. For each significant claim, the Strategy is quoted in a short excerpt — the specific assertion under examination — followed by a category label and a sourced correction. The full text and figures behind each correction are set out in the report above; here the purpose is to show, claim by claim, how the document is built.

How to read the category labels

Factual error — the claim is contradicted by sourced evidence.

Unsupported assertion — the document offers no evidence for the claim, and none is known. There is no basis to believe or act on it.

Contested interpretation — a legal or political opinion presented as settled fact. Legitimate to hold; not legitimate to assert as proven.

Misleading framing — individually true statements arranged to imply something false.

Omission — the claim depends for its force on leaving out a material fact.

Executive Summary and the "Burden of Confederation" (pp. 9–16)

> *"Successive Federal Governments in Ottawa have relentlessly attacked our province's economic interests … and pillaged the resources and wealth of Alberta's citizens."*

CATEGORY: UNSUPPORTED ASSERTION

Annotation. The document offers no evidence of deliberate "attack" or "pillage," and none is known. The language imputes hostile intent to the federal government without establishing it. The measurable facts point elsewhere: the downturn began with the 2014 global oil-price collapse, and the largest outflows of Alberta's wealth went to foreign shareholders, not to Ottawa. There is no basis to believe or act on the claim of a deliberate federal campaign.

See: *Report §1, §3; Omissions 1 and 2.*

> *"Ottawa has fundamentally breached its constitutional agreement with Alberta. The Alberta government, therefore, has a right … to repudiate this arrangement."*

CATEGORY: CONTESTED INTERPRETATION

Annotation. This is a legal-political opinion presented as established fact. No court has found such a breach, and the constitutional record runs the other way: Alberta's jurisdiction over its own resources was conferred only in 1930, by the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement, and was made subject from the outset to the Crown's Treaty obligations. A province cannot lawfully "repudiate" the constitutional order from which its own authority descends. One may argue the politics; the assertion of a settled "breach" is not a fact.

See: *Report §2.1, §2.2.*

> *"Through the equalization formula and numerous national transfer programs, Ottawa has taken well over $600 billion more from Alberta taxpayers than it has returned to the Province over the last 60 years."*

CATEGORY: MISLEADING FRAMING

Annotation. The figure is a net-balance artifact, not a sum anyone "took." Equalization is paid from federal general revenue — chiefly progressive income tax — not from any provincial treasury; Alberta's government has never written an equalization cheque. The number reflects the fact that Albertans, with the highest incomes and youngest workforce in Canada, paid more federal tax as *individuals* — a transfer between richer and poorer people, recast as a theft between provinces. The framing converts Alberta's prosperity into a grievance.

See: *Report §3, §3.1.*

> *"The social cost of this sustained federal economic attack on our province has already been unleashed on Albertans, including increases in suicide, bankruptcy, and opioid overdoses."*

CATEGORY: FACTUAL ERROR

Annotation. This attributes deaths to federal policy for a downturn caused by a global price war. The Strategy's own unemployment chart shows the rise beginning in 2014–15, when Saudi Arabia and OPEC drove crude down roughly 70 per cent and both the federal and Alberta governments were Conservative. The hardship was real; its cause was a commodity-price collapse, not an act of Ottawa. To assign the resulting deaths to the federal government is contradicted by the document's own evidence.

See: *Report Omission 1; the price-war timeline.*

> *"a withdrawal of hundreds of billions in investment dollars by world capital markets."*

CATEGORY: OMISSION

Annotation. True that investment fell — capital spending dropped from about $81 billion in 2014 to $31 billion in 2016 — but the omitted cause is the global price collapse, not federal policy. Investment is set by the world oil price; when it crashed, capital left, exactly as it did in every other jurisdiction exposed to the same price. The Strategy reports the effect and omits the cause.

See: *Report Omission 5.*

> *"Alberta is destined to become a "have-not" province, rather than an economic engine … with one of the most successful economies on the planet."*

CATEGORY: MISLEADING FRAMING

Annotation. These two states are presented as a coming catastrophe, but Alberta posted the most profitable year in the history of its oil patch in 2022, with production value of roughly $167 billion, and reached record output in 2024. A province producing and earning at record levels is not being reduced to "have-not" status by Confederation. What Alberta collects from that wealth — about 12 per cent in royalties — is a provincial choice, not a federal imposition.

See: *Report Omissions 3 and 4.*

The Alberta Sovereignty Act and the enforcement proposals (pp. 20–28)

> *"the Alberta Sovereignty Act, granting the Alberta Legislature absolute discretion to refuse any provincial enforcement of federal legislation or judicial decisions …"*

CATEGORY: CONTESTED INTERPRETATION

Annotation. Presented as a lawful provincial power, this is a contested constitutional claim, not a settled one. A province refusing to enforce valid federal law, or to recognize court rulings, runs against the basic architecture of Canadian federalism and the rule of law. Whether such an Act could survive a court challenge is precisely the question — the document asserts the answer it prefers. This is a proposal resting on an unproven legal premise, not an established right.

See: *Report §5 (mechanisms are not evidence).*

> *"a business operating a gas station could … refuse to collect or remit carbon taxes … and would not be in danger of being shut down by police, having their property seized, or even having their bank accounts garnished."*

CATEGORY: CONTESTED INTERPRETATION

Annotation. This describes a hoped-for outcome of the banking and enforcement scheme as though it were a reliable legal fact. Federally regulated banks remain within federal jurisdiction, and federal tax law remains enforceable; whether the proposed provincial workarounds would actually shield anyone is untested and doubtful. Presenting a speculative legal strategy as a guarantee is an assertion, not a fact.

Equalization Termination and Tax Collection (pp. 25–28)

> *"the fraud that is equalization and federal transfer programs"*

CATEGORY: UNSUPPORTED ASSERTION

Annotation. "Fraud" is a serious word with a specific meaning, and the document supplies no basis for it. Equalization is a constitutionally recognized program (s. 36(2)) funded from federal general revenue and administered transparently by formula. Disagreeing with a policy does not make it fraud. No evidence of fraud is offered, and none is known.

See: *Report §3.*

> *"Nowhere in the Constitution does it … grant the federal government the authority to plunder tens of billions of dollars a year through federal transfer programs from one province, to largely fund the electoral needs of the country's second-largest province (Quebec)."*

CATEGORY: MISLEADING FRAMING

Annotation. Two moves here mislead. First, "plunder … from one province" mischaracterizes a transfer funded by individual taxpayers across the country, not extracted from Alberta's treasury. Second, the claim that equalization exists to fund Quebec's "electoral needs" imputes motive without evidence; the program's formula is public and applies to all provinces by the same rule. The technically accurate point — that the Constitution does not specify the formula — is wrapped in language designed to imply theft and conspiracy.

See: *Report §3, §3.1.*

> *"Alberta's hardworking and comparatively young population has contributed approximately $28 billion more into the CPP than Alberta pensioners have received back."*

CATEGORY: MISLEADING FRAMING

Annotation. The figure is real but its meaning is inverted. A province with the youngest workforce and highest incomes in the country will always pay disproportionately into a national pension pool, because it has proportionally fewer retirees drawing benefits and higher earnings on which contributions are levied. This is a demographic and income effect that reverses as a population ages — not evidence of unfair treatment. It is the equalization fallacy applied to pensions.

See: *Report §5 (the pension claim).*

The Judicial Independence Act and the courts (pp. 30–31)

> *"That conflicted judicial body predictably performed the legal contortions necessary to declare the carbon tax constitutional, and send Alberta packing."*

CATEGORY: UNSUPPORTED ASSERTION

Annotation. This alleges judicial bias and a predetermined outcome, and offers no evidence for either. The Supreme Court's 2021 carbon-tax decision was a 6–3 ruling with three substantial dissents, resting on the "national concern" branch of the peace, order and good government power — a doctrine the Court expressly described as strictly limited. The Alberta Court of Appeal had reached the opposite conclusion below; both are cited in the Strategy's own footnotes. A captured court does not divide 6–3 or generate reasoned dissents. The accusation of corruption is unsupported.

See: *Report §3.3, §3.4.*

> *"it is clear that Justin Trudeau and his advisors now view new court appointments as an opportunity to spread their partisan ideologies."*

CATEGORY: UNSUPPORTED ASSERTION

Annotation. Asserted as "clear," with no evidence. Judicial-appointment processes can be debated, but the claim of a deliberate partisan capture of the courts is an imputation of motive presented as established fact. None is demonstrated.

International Relations and the "Great Reset" (pp. 32–33)

> *"the federal government's … active participation in the Great Reset's climate crusades and its goal to phase out Alberta's energy sector from existence"*

CATEGORY: UNSUPPORTED ASSERTION

Annotation. The phrase "the Great Reset," used this way, imports a conspiracy theory for which there is no evidence. The real World Economic Forum initiative of that name was a non-binding economic-recovery proposal with no authority to compel any government. The conspiracy version — a coordinated elite plot using the pandemic to seize control — originated in a fabricated "insider" letter posted to a QAnon board and was spread internationally by bad actors seeking to inflame distrust during the pandemic; every independent fact-check found it baseless. Invoking it as a description of federal policy has no factual foundation.

See: *Report Sidebar: The "Great Reset" Conspiracy Theory.*

Federal Opposition and Final Resort (pp. 34–40)

> *"living under the rule of a cabal of eastern political elites that Albertans have not and will never elect, and whose goals and agenda mean economic and societal devastation for our people"*

CATEGORY: UNSUPPORTED ASSERTION

Annotation. This is the document's rhetorical core — a "cabal" bent on Alberta's "devastation" — and it is supplied with no evidence whatsoever. Albertans elect Members of Parliament who sit in the federal government like all other Canadians; from 2006 to 2015 the Prime Minister of Canada represented a Calgary riding. The image of an unelected eastern cabal engineering Alberta's ruin is an assertion of intent that the document never substantiates and that the facts contradict.

See: *Report §1; price-context note (a Calgary-based PM governed during much of the grievance period).*

> *"recognition of existing First Nations sovereignty and treaties"*

CATEGORY: MISLEADING FRAMING

Annotation. This single clause, in the secession blueprint, sits in direct contradiction with the body of the document, which treats the duty to consult and Indigenous rights as federal "intrusions" to be overridden by the Sovereignty Act. A province cannot carry the Crown's Treaty partners out of Confederation by legislative fiat, nor honour Treaties while discarding the constitutional instrument (the 1930 Transfer Agreement) that conditioned its resource jurisdiction on them. The reassurance is incompatible with the plan it accompanies.

See: *Report §2.1, §2.2.*

What the annotation shows

Read claim by claim, a pattern emerges. The document's genuine primary sources — statutes and court rulings — appear where it makes legal points, and they establish only that laws and decisions exist, not that they are an "attack." Its economic and motive claims, which carry the entire case for separation, fall almost entirely into three categories: unsupported assertions of hostile intent, misleading framings that convert prosperity into grievance, and contested legal opinions presented as settled fact. Outright factual errors are comparatively few, because the method is more disciplined than simple falsehood: it states true things and draws conclusions that do not follow from them.

That is the precise defect named in the title of this report. The facts, taken one by one, are often real. The conclusions do not follow from them. A reader persuaded by the Free Alberta Strategy has not been lied to so much as *led across a bridge with no middle span* — confident footing at each end, nothing connecting them. Once the missing economic facts are restored and the unsupported assertions set aside, the case for breaking up the country has nothing left to stand on.

Appendix — References and Works Cited

Sources are grouped by type. Items marked "estimate" in the source table rest on public reporting or prior analysis and should be tied to the primary series indicated before publication. Where a source is the Strategy's own (i.e. cited in the Free Alberta Strategy), it is noted; these are reproduced for traceability and their categorization is discussed in Part IV.

A. Legislation and constitutional instruments

Constitution Act, 1867 (UK), 30 & 31 Vict., c. 3, ss. 91, 92.

Constitution Act, 1930 (UK), 20 & 21 Geo. V, c. 26 (confirming the Natural Resources Transfer Agreements).

Alberta Natural Resources Act / Natural Resources Transfer Agreement, S.C. 1930, c. 3, esp. ss. 1, 10, 12.

Constitution Act, 1982, ss. 35 (Aboriginal and treaty rights) and 36(2) (equalization principle).

Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, S.C. 2018, c. 12, s. 186.

Impact Assessment Act / Canadian Energy Regulator Act (Bill C-69), S.C. 2019.

Oil Tanker Moratorium Act, S.C. 2019, c. 26.

ATB Financial Act, RSA 2000, c. A-45.2; Credit Union Act, RSA 2000, c. C-32.

B. Court decisions

Reference re Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, 2020 ABCA 74.

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Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests), 2004 SCC 73.

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Alberta (Attorney General) v. Moloney, 2015 SCC 51; 407 ETR Concession Co. v. Canada, 2015 SCC 52; Saskatchewan (AG) v. Lemare Lake Logging, 2015 SCC 53.

C. Government and official data

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Statistics Canada, Table 36-10-0402, Gross domestic product (GDP) by industry, provincial.

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Reporting in CBC News, The Globe and Mail, National Observer, and The Narwhal on oil-patch profits, insolvencies, and well-cleanup liabilities (2015–2025).

E. Sources cited by the Free Alberta Strategy (categorized in Part IV)

Fraser Institute publications: "A Friend in Need"; "The Great Convergence"; "The End of the Alberta Tax Advantage"; "Albertans Make Disproportionate Contributions … CPP"; "Any 'Fair Deal' … fiscal federalism." (Advocacy think tank.)

Jack Mintz, "Canadians have taken Alberta for granted" (Financial Post); "Scrap Equalization …" (Macdonald-Laurier Institute). (Opinion / think tank.)

Ted Morton, "Why Alberta needs a fiscal constitution" (School of Public Policy); "Referendum Time?" (C2C Journal); "The Status Quo Must Go" (in The Moment of Truth). (Think tank / commentary.)

Mintz, Morton & Flanagan (eds.), The Moment of Truth; Barry Cooper, "Challenges for Western Independence" (therein) and It's the Regime, Stupid (Key Porter, 2009). (Edited/trade books; self-citation.)

Lawrence Solomon (Financial Post); Lorne Gunter (Edmonton Sun); Pierre Poilievre (Policy Options). (Opinion columns.)

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Prior to becoming an elected official he lectured at the University of Winnipeg, teaching Government-Business Relations in Canada, a non-partisan, ideologically pluralist course that covered Canada's divisions of powers. fiscal, tax and monetary policy, economic history and theory. He has presented papers on the distributional impacts of monetary policy and the application of information theory to the analysis of financial transactions.

He has a B.A. and an M.A. from the University of Manitoba. He has been a member of the University of Manitoba Board of Governors, and worked in communications at the International Centre of Infectious Diseases' (ICID), on pandemic business preparedness during the H1N1 pandemic.

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