



LETHBRIDGE
CHAMBER of COMMERCE®

News Release

Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce calls for economic impact measurements before more increases to minimum wage while Alberta Chamber of Commerce calls for a halt to increases so that businesses can adjust.

For Immediate Release

Lethbridge, Alberta, March 6, 2017 – Two years ago the Government of Alberta resolved to increase the minimum wage from \$10.20/hr to \$15.00/hr by 2018 – an increase of almost %50 in only four years. In 2015 the minimum wage was increased to \$11.20/hr, and in 2016 it rose another dollar to \$12.20. For businesses of all sizes, these increases have put pressure on their finances at a time that they have been struggling to cope with the downturn in the economy, rising regulatory fees, and the additional burden of the carbon levy. With all these factors contributing to costs for businesses, the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce and the Alberta Chamber of Commerce are both calling on the Provincial Government to delay further increases so that we have time to assess the impacts and give businesses time to adjust.

“Our current minimum wage of \$12.20 per hour is the highest of all the provinces in Canada,” explained Harry Gross, President of the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce. “It’s fantastic that Alberta can lead the country in this way, but we have to make sure that we’re striking the right balance so that businesses can keep offering quality employment while also being competitive with competitors in other provinces.”

Feedback from the businesses that the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce represents has made it clear that the situation for many companies is deteriorating.

“We’ve been hearing that many of our members are having trouble making ends meet,” said Gross, “and the minimum wage increases are what’s at the top of their minds. Many businesses have had to cut back worker’s hours, cancel plans to expand or grow, or reduce benefits. We’re worried that the people these increases are trying to help are actually being hurt and we’re calling for the government to measure the impacts before doing further increases.”

The Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce has called on the Provincial Government to delay further increases until a system of metrics can be put in place to measure the effects of the increases on factors like poverty, the cost of living, food bank usage, unemployment, the cost of doing business, employment vacancies, and business start-up to closure ratios.

Last week, the Alberta Chamber of Commerce released the results of its third survey of employers across the province regarding the impacts of minimum wage increases.

In a publicized letter addressed to the Hon. Christina Gray, Minister of Labour, Ken Kobly, President of the Alberta Chamber of Commerce said:

“The key message employers have communicated through the series of surveys is that increases in minimum wage are having negative impacts on more than employers’ profit margins. From those in entry level positions to senior leaders, many Albertans are paying for these increases through lost benefits, hours, advancement opportunities, and – most importantly – jobs.”

In light of these results, the Alberta Chamber of Commerce is calling for the Provincial Government to defer further increases to reduce the pressures on employers so that they can provide realistic and sustainable opportunities for job creation and employment which support all Albertan’s prosperity.

The full Policy from the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce can be found online at:

<http://www.lethbridgechamber.com/policies>

The full Policy from the Alberta Chamber of Commerce can be found online at:

<http://www.abchamber.ca/pages/PolicySubmissionsandMaterials>

The Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce

The Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce is *The Voice of Business*, promoting and enhancing a healthy economic and social environment in our region by serving the interests of business. We represent over 750 businesses and over 10,000 employees in the Lethbridge area.

For more information on this initiative, please contact Peter Casurella at 403-327-1586 or by emailing policy@lethbridgechamber.com

The Alberta Chamber of Commerce

The Alberta Chamber of Commerce is *The Voice of Business for the Province of Alberta*, advocating to the Provincial Government on behalf of over 24,000 businesses across Alberta.

For more information on this initiative, please contact Jason Leslie, Manager of Communications, at 780-425-4180 ext. 4, or by emailing jleslie@abchamber.ca