

November 14, 2019

Mr. Doug Wylie
Auditor General
8th Floor, 9925 - 109 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2J8

Dear Mr. Wylie,

We are writing to you today to express our concern about the activities of Premier Jason Kenney's Principal Advisor, Mr. David Knight Legg. Four trips to London, United Kingdom have caused us concern.

In his capacity as Principal Advisor to the Premier, Mr. Knight Legg flew to and from London four times. These trips cost Albertans at least \$18,680.77. The Government of Alberta failed to disclose the travel budget, itinerary or even purpose of travel, contravening long-established precedents for elected officials and political staff on out-of-country travel.

Good governance requires that the use of taxpayer funds be used to achieve government outcomes and deliver measurable results. Indeed, a foundation of a governments' decision to expend taxpayer dollars is an assessment of cost vs. benefit in order to achieve stated outcomes. In the aforementioned case, the government has been unwilling to provide Albertans with even rudimentary information in order to inform an analysis of the relative merits of these expenditures.

In your capacity as Auditor General, we are requesting that your Office add to its schedule a Performance Audit of Executive Council political staff foreign travel expenditures related to delivering on the government's stated objective of increasing investment to Alberta. In particular, and with respect to the aforementioned case, we are requesting that you investigate and determine whether internal processes, procedures and controls were in place and whether they were followed. While a "value-for-money" assessment of individual trips is difficult to determine, we are requesting that you examine whether it is in the public interest for Executive Council to simply refuse to disclose any purpose or desired value of an international trip.

In the event that proper procedures were not in place, or were in place but simply not followed in these four instances, we are requesting that you provide recommendations to government to improve upon their practices, in order to ensure that taxpayer funds are deployed in a consistent fashion to deliver tangible results for Albertans.

In addition, in your capacity as Auditor General, we are requesting that you undertake a review of the Energy War Room (recently rebranded and incorporated as the Canadian Energy Centre) to ensure compliance with legislative requirements for public disclosure.

While we have serious questions with regards to issues of public transparency and disclosure related to the internal operations of the Canadian Energy Centre, we are deeply troubled by the recent invocation of confidentiality by Executive Council related to all core government business as it may (or may not) intersect with the CEC.

In relation to the expenses and official government business undertaken by Mr. Knight Legg as noted above, it is the position of Executive Council that additional disclosure of his activities cannot occur because it would undermine the work of CEC.

In a free and democratic society, the core activities of government must be able to be scrutinized by its citizens. This includes the public but also the Officers of the Legislature and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. This is a central tenet of our democracy.

We request that you expedite an investigation into whether Executive Council can unilaterally declare its activities, relationships, contracting arrangements and travel purposes as "confidential", and not permissible for public disclosure, simply by invoking real and/or perceived linkages to the CEC. A provincial government is not responsible for national security, defense or intelligence – the usual reasons for limiting information and disclosure. It is deeply troubling that this provincial government believes itself to be beyond transparency.

Moreover, we request that you expedite recommendations to Executive Council for proper oversight and disclosure of core government activities as they relate to the CEC, that are in alignment with legislative requirements, the Charter, and democratic conventions imbued in our Constitution.

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

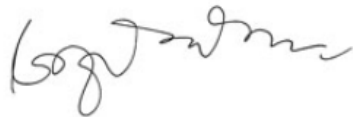


Heather Sweet, MLA for Edmonton-Manning

Official Opposition Critic for Democracy and Ethics



Shannon Phillips, MLA for Lethbridge-West
Official Opposition Critic for Finance and Treasury Board



Irfan Sabir, MLA for Calgary-McCall
Official Opposition Critic for Energy