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Honourable Nathan Neudorf

Minister of Affordability & Utilities

Office of the Minister

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Dear Minister Neudorf,

I am writing to build on the concerns raised by Honourable Jason Nixon, MLA, in his March 19, 2025, letter to you and Mr. Kyle Surgenor of the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) regarding Decision 28295-D01-2025 for the PACE Solar Project in Caroline, Alberta. While I strongly endorse his request for a review of that decision under AUC Rule 016, I believe the issues he identified—land use conflicts, inadequate community consultation, and procedural fairness—reflect a systemic problem across Alberta’s renewable energy approvals that demands urgent action.

MLA Nixon rightly pointed to the amalgamation of the Village of Caroline into Clearwater County as a case where shifting municipal structures have outpaced the approval process, potentially sidelining local voices and misaligning with current governance frameworks. However, this is not an isolated incident. Across the province, the AUC’s handling of renewable energy projects consistently disregards core UCP mandates, including the protection of agricultural land, preservation of viewsapes, incorporation of meaningful municipal

input, and enforcement of robust reclamation standards. Communities from Rimbey to Brooks have voiced frustration over projects that encroach on prime farmland, disrupt iconic Alberta landscapes, and proceed without genuine consultation—all while developers appear to receive preferential guidance from the AUC itself.

Compounding this, the AUC's practices raise serious questions about impartiality. When projects are declined, it is well-known that the AUC often coaches developers on how to address deficiencies and reapply, effectively ensuring eventual approval rather than upholding the public interest. This pattern undermines the integrity of the review process and erodes trust in a system meant to balance innovation with Alberta's foundational priorities. Over the past 12 months, this approach has fueled a proliferation of renewable developments—solar, wind, and beyond—that too often prioritize corporate interests over the needs of rural Albertans.

I urge your office to take decisive action beyond a single project review. I propose an immediate province-wide pause on all new renewable energy project approvals, coupled with a comprehensive assessment of the AUC's decisions over the last 12 months. This review should examine:

1. The extent to which agricultural land protections, viewscape preservation, municipal input, and reclamation requirements—key UCP commitments—are being ignored or undermined.
2. The AUC's practice of coaching developers, including specific instances where declined projects were restructured for approval, and whether this compromises procedural fairness.
3. The cumulative impact of renewable projects on Alberta's rural communities, economy, and natural heritage, with a focus on restoring accountability to the approval process.

A pause and reassessment would not only address the specific concerns in Caroline but also realign renewable energy development with the values Albertans expect their government to uphold. It would signal a commitment to transparency, fairness, and the long-term well-

being of our province over unchecked expansion guided by an AUC that too often acts as a facilitator rather than a regulator.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I look forward to your response and am eager to see leadership that ensures Alberta's renewable energy future respects our agricultural roots, stunning landscapes, and community voices.

Sincerely,

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