

Conservatives will roll out plan to address business concerns, says Scheer

By Brock Weir

When Finance Minister Bill Moreau met with local business owners in Aurora last week, he criticized the Conservative opposition for not having a concrete plan to make a difference, but Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer, in an interview last week with *The Auroran*, said their plan will look at 'lowering the tax burden on small and medium sized businesses' across the country. The first step on that road, said Mr. Scheer, is eliminating what he described as a 'carbon tax' being proposed by the Liberal Government and tackling tax changes brought in by the present Government impacting small and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurs.

'One thing that has struck me since the Liberals took office is it is always the little guy that ends up paying more. It is always the Mom and Pop operations and local business,' said Mr. Scheer. 'It is never the guys on Bay Street that are affected by the Liberal changes.'

'When you look at the carbon tax, it's the little guy who that is paying 100 per cent, it is the commuters in suburban areas that are going to pay 100 per cent of the carbon tax on their drive to work. Large industrial emitters have negotiated themselves a massive exemption. Once again, we see the Liberals giving special favours and special deals to their friends and hardworking individuals and families paying the price.'

During his speech to the Chamber on Tuesday morning, Mr. Morneau said it was incumbent on the Conservatives to outline what their plans were to address climate change and, if they weren't telling people, questioning whether they were 'assuming that people don't have the capacity to understand.'

'It's that condescending, arrogant nature that Bill Morneau has become famous for,' countered Mr. Scheer. 'Let's keep in mind that people are still waiting for the Liberal environmental plan. People are still waiting for Justin Trudeau to come up with a plan to reduce emissions. Every single analysis of this carbon tax has shown that it will not have a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions.'

'The Environment Department's own studies show that the tax will have to increase up to \$300 a ton in order to be effective. That is what's coming if the Liberals are given more time in office. They will raise this carbon tax higher and higher and that will have a devastating impact on our economy. It is not an environmental plan, it is a tax plan, it is a cash grab. We will be unveiling our environmental plan with plenty of time for Canadians to make an assessment about it, to judge it on its merits. It will actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions, unlike the Liberal plan which is just providing the government with new sources of revenue.'

What will also be included in the platform, he said, is a plan to address what was for many local business leaders the elephant in the room: trade with the United States, lingering tariffs on steel and aluminium, the negative impact that is having on local manufacturing, and just what lawmakers intend to do about it.

'When it comes to steel and aluminum, we have been very critical of this Liberal government for failing to get an end to the steel and aluminum tariffs as part of the NAFTA negotiations,' said Mr. Scheer. 'We saw Justin Trudeau take virtually every concession that Donald Trump rammed down his throat and he got nothing in exchange. He got no assurances on timelines for tariffs and that is causing real hardship in our economy. We believe in order to give the Canadian auto sector a fighting chance against our global competitors, we have to work very hard to get rid of those tariffs, stop treating small and medium-sized business owners as tax cheats, but recognize that they are the engines of the economy, that create jobs for people, and help our companies compete by lowering taxes and limiting excessive regulations.'

'We were successful as a government in previous governments when we had protectionist measures coming up from the US [and] Buy American. We were successful in negotiating an exemption for Canada. Unfortunately, the Trudeau Liberals have failed to get a guarantee on that. We were successful in getting a softwood lumber deal outside of NAFTA but extending deals around softwood lumbers. There are a number of areas where we feel we can strengthen our position around the tariffs and address some of the trade concerns that would lead to an elimination of those tariffs. Right now, all Justin Trudeau has been doing is taking concessions from Donald Trump. He hasn't done anything to actually strengthen our position and address any of the issues or justifications that have been used for the steel tariffs in the first place.'

When it comes to manufacturing and competitiveness, it is important to understand that people and capital can go 'anywhere in the world these days' and it is equally important to create an environment that makes Canada an attractive place to have homegrown talent succeed at home.

'We don't want to train highly specialized individuals in various fields only to see them driven out of the country and providing

service to Americans. We don't want to subsidize the American economy by creating high quality professionals here in Canada and then forcing them out of the country. Taking that into account, we are going to be unveiling a comprehensive list of tax measures that we believe will lead to a more compelling case for people to stay in Canada.

?I have heard directly from medical professionals who have spoken to me about the impacts of the attack on small businesses having on doctors working in clinics or at hospitals. There are many hospitals that have a number of doctors who have come together in a way to ensure that doctors have everything from maternity leave to medical benefits and now that is all coming under attack. It has taken away the incentive for professionals to provide services within hospitals. The unintended consequences of the Liberal tax hikes are yet to be fully seen and that is why we need a Conservative government come October to reset the government's approach to small and medium-sized businesses, including professionals.?