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**Panel to discuss implications of Premier Kenney's
promised assault on critics of the Alberta oil and gas industry**

EDMONTON. – Tonight, a panel of experts from across Canada will explore the question of whether Premier Kenney's announcements of a \$30-million "war room," a \$2.5-million public inquiry into environmental advocacy activity, and threats of possible defamation suits against critics of the Alberta oil and gas industry are legitimate government initiatives or actions that chill free expression and undermine democracy.

The panel, **Defending Alberta – At What Cost?**, takes place from 7:00–9:00 pm in Room 150 of the TELUS International Centre on the University of Alberta campus (11104 87 Ave NW). Panelists include Laurie Adkin (University of Alberta), Eriel Tchekwie Deranger (Indigenous Climate Action), Tim Gray (Environmental Defence), Alex Neve (Amnesty International Canada) and James Turk (Centre for Free Expression, Ryerson University).

"The measures Jason Kenney is aggressively pursuing to intimidate and silence Indigenous rights defenders, environmentalists and others who are raising legitimate concerns about the human rights implications of his agenda for unconstrained growth of the Alberta oil and gas industry should trouble all Canadians," says Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada. "Alleging that critics are liars and that Alberta-based groups are somehow under the sway of foreign funders are tactics increasingly used by authoritarian governments around the world as an excuse for vilifying, threatening and jailing human rights defenders, often exposing them to violent attacks."

"The Alberta government is using tactics that were previously rolled out by the Harper government at the federal level—a government in which Jason Kenney played a key role," says University of Alberta political scientist Laurie Adkin. "There has been no meaningful public deliberation about the benefits and costs of the government's directions, only efforts aimed at manipulating public opinion and discrediting and weakening civil society actors that simply want discussion of their alternatives to get a fair hearing."

"Canada's democracy depends on freedom of expression, as our *Charter* recognizes," says James Turk, director of Ryerson University's Centre for Free Expression. "We must not stand by when any government threatens to bring the force of the state in an attempt to silence critics of its policies. That's how democracy dies."

The event is co-hosted by the University of Alberta's Parkland Institute and Ryerson University's Centre for Free Expression. **Panel experts will be available for interviews with accredited media during the day and at the event.**

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For more information or to schedule interviews:

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