



August 12, 2011

The Clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance  
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario. K1A 0A6  
Canada

Re: Input to annual pre-budget consultations

Thank you for the invitation to provide input to Canada's Standing Committee on Finance, as part of the annual pre-budget consultations.

While Canada has weathered the past economic downturn better than most countries, recent news coming out of the United States and the European Union, have shown the potential for greater impact on Canada of any international fiscal crisis. Although Canada is in the middle (38.4% of GDP) of the rest of the world, on the scale of total government spending, it is important that the government of Canada develop a clear plan to avoid any further deficit accumulation.

The Brooks & District Chamber of Commerce would like to present the following ideas for consideration in developing new strategies and action plans to direct the Canadian economy:

General fiscal discipline and management

1. Fiscal responsibility legislation must focus on controlling expenditures, not just balancing the budget. Currently there is no limit on spending as long as there is revenue to cover the increases.
2. Fiscal responsibility legislation must be specific enough not to allow loopholes.
3. Fiscal responsibility legislation must focus on long term sustainability
4. Publish (and maintain) a 5 year projection of spending and revenue.
5. Put the brakes on spending growth – limit spending increases to the annual inflation rate for the next 5 years.
6. Enshrine limits on government spending. Rein in deficits and realize the importance of sustainable government spending. Implement a strong, consistently applied spending cap.
7. Legislate allocation of unexpected increases in revenue to paydown accumulated debt, and after that return those unexpected increases to the taxpayer in tax cuts.

8. Do not raise taxes. Raising taxes has a more harmful effect on the economy than the equivalent \$ for \$ reduction in public spending.
9. Adopt and incorporate technological advances which will improve government operations and administrative productivity.

#### Small and medium sized businesses (SME's)

1. Develop and support innovation for SME's
2. Continue with the commitment to reduce the corporate income tax

#### Skilled workforce for small and medium sized businesses

1. Remove barriers to labour mobility – within Canada, and from outside Canada
2. Continue to review payroll taxes – specifically the level of EI insurance premiums, and implement the promised EI hiring credit.
3. Tax relief for SME's is a better option for SME's than minimum wage hikes.
4. Ensure Canada's personal tax system is conducive to attracting and retaining skilled workers from other countries.
5. Develop more comprehensive English literacy and language programs for new immigrants
6. Improve visa / work permit processing times
7. Speed processing of applicants documentation in most-needed occupations
8. Develop or amend legislation that will allow businesses to tap into older workers. For example remove disincentives to return to the workforce if the worker has retired before age 65.
9. Develop an 'approved employer' criteria/list with respect to processing TFW's – similar to the NEXUS system between Canada and the US

#### Agriculture

1. Continue to emphasize the elimination of tariffs
2. Continue to work on trade enhancement, and in particular to recapture some of the markets closed to Canada
3. Develop and support strategies to ensure efficient transportation of goods for export.
4. Continue to develop high standards for food safety, and take on an international role to promote and develop these standards. Continue to promote food traceability.

#### Environment/Energy

1. Review current legislation and adopt new legislation that promotes a shift from waste disposal to resource recovery
2. Increase efficiencies in environment regulation processes. Complete a review of product review standards, and if the product review meets the standardized criteria, then this is sufficient for all regulators/jurisdictions.

## Finance

1. Track and manage public sector pensions and retiree benefits liabilities, and ensure any shortfall is included in the fiscal budgets.
2. Allow severance income to be transferred into an RRSP without impacting the RRSP room

As a member of the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce we would also direct you to their policy and advocacy efforts. The Brooks & District Chamber of Commerce has been actively involved in the policy reviews and adoptions with the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, and is just now working to prepare for the Alberta Chambers of Commerce position at the CCC AGM, Sept. 17 – 19.

- Alberta Chambers of Commerce

([www.abchamber.ca/PolicyPositions/ACCsPolicies/tabid/91/Default.aspx](http://www.abchamber.ca/PolicyPositions/ACCsPolicies/tabid/91/Default.aspx))

- Canadian Chamber of Commerce

([www.chamber.ca/images/uploads/General/2011/Policy\\_Priorities2011.pdf](http://www.chamber.ca/images/uploads/General/2011/Policy_Priorities2011.pdf))

([www.chamber.ca/images/uploads/Resolutions/2011/2010\\_Policy\\_Resolutions\\_Activity\\_March\\_31.pdf](http://www.chamber.ca/images/uploads/Resolutions/2011/2010_Policy_Resolutions_Activity_March_31.pdf))

Sincerely,

Reg Radke

President

Brooks and District Chamber of Commerce

Cc: Honorable LaVar Payne, MP – Medicine Hat Constituency