

Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)

Pre-budget consultations 2012

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Responses

1. Economic Recovery and Growth

Given the current climate of federal and global fiscal restraint, what specific federal measures do you feel are needed for a sustained economic recovery and enhanced economic growth in Canada?

Obviously, "fiscal restraint" is counter-productive at this time. We need to stimulate the economy by investing in people and green technologies. Thus, there needs to be more income transferred to low income people, more affordable housing, more expenditures on education, child care, and public transportation. Where these are provincial or municipal responsibilities, additional federal transfers are necessary for the cash-strapped junior levels. We can stimulate green technologies and finance the expenditures by eliminating subsidies to fossil fuels, especially the Alberta tar sands. Nuclear energy is NOT a green technologies and should have its subsidies eliminated too.

2. Job Creation

As Canadian companies face pressures resulting from such factors as uncertainty about the U.S. economic recovery, a sovereign debt crisis in Europe, and competition from a number of developed and developing countries, what specific federal actions do you believe should be taken to promote job creation in Canada, including that which occurs as a result of enhanced internal and international trade?

Increased income levels for low income Canadians will increase their spending on local goods and therefore help local entrepreneurs and create jobs. Similarly, an expansion of the green economy, creating more efficient, less energy intensive products and processes will create additional jobs - there are lots of ideas to reduce carbon footprint and other forms of pollution as well as to clean up or remediate past pollution. Affordable housing for low income and seniors will also stimulate local economies. Restore government services in areas such as food safety inspection, environmental monitoring, national parks, and passenger rail services.

3. Demographic Change

What specific federal measures do you think should be implemented to help the country address the consequences of, and challenges associated with, the aging of the Canadian population and of skills shortages?

Increase education and training funding, especially where skills are need to meet local needs, e.g., housing in native communities. Unemployed people, with training and living assistance, can meet community needs and find viable jobs for the long-term. Affordable housing should include attractive facilities for seniors so that they can happily leave their larger homes which would be available for families. Universities and community colleges should be funded to provide access for seniors to attend courses to keep them mentally active. This would apply to community facilities such as libraries and church halls.

4. Productivity

With labour market challenges arising in part as a result of the aging of Canada's population and an ongoing focus on the actions needed for competitiveness, what specific federal initiatives are needed in order to increase productivity in Canada?

Tax incentives to corporations must be tied to investment in new capital equipment and tools as well and to the upgrading of skills of employees so that they are not left behind by technological change. When workers feel valued they will have an "esprit de corps" which moves the company ahead.

5. Other Challenges

With some Canadian individuals, businesses and communities facing particular challenges at this time, in your view, who is facing the most challenges, what are the challenges that are being faced and what specific federal actions are needed to address these challenges?

As stated above, skills training and education are a necessary base for all Canadians, particularly first nations, low income and the unemployed, but also the middle class which is losing ground as income disparities increase. The primary role of the government is to see that the resources of the nation are used to meet the basic needs - such as education, housing, food, and healthcare - of all. The focus of a budget must be to meet these needs and in doing so will make tackling other problems much easier and affordable.