

Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)

Pre-budget consultations 2012

Engineers Canada

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?

Canada's economy benefited from significant investments made by the federal government in 2009 under Canada's Economic Action Plan, which helped stimulate the economy. Also, the Building Canada Plan and other infrastructure initiatives have made some improvements to the state of infrastructure across the country creating jobs while strengthening and improving border crossings, highways, short-distance rail and shipping and regional and local airports. Engineers Canada believes that a continued economic recovery and enhanced economic growth are possible through a sustainable, strategic long-term infrastructure plan if in place by 2014. This will help maintain Canada's economic competitiveness and maintain our quality of life. A long-term infrastructure plan that includes requirements for proper asset management of core public infrastructure and that considers the vulnerability of key assets to extreme climate events, can support increased investment and attract talent. Engineers Canada also believes that the federal government must continue to update the immigration system to ensure that Canada is attracting the talent it needs to grow our economy. In consultation with stakeholders, including regulated professions like engineering, the federal government must align application and assessment practices efficiently to integrate immigrants into our economy and society in a timely manner. Along with helping immigrants to integrate, the federal government must work with provinces and territories to focus on supporting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education at all levels and with special emphasis on promoting diversity. Engineers Canada and our constituent associations are committed to improving the representation of both women and indigenous peoples in the engineering profession.

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?

By making consistent investments in core public infrastructure that communities can count on for the long-term, the federal government can make Canada the place for businesses to invest, creating jobs and promoting innovation. The federal government must set the stage for provinces and territories, stakeholders and businesses to be successful on the international stage. Also, Engineers Canada believes that the federal government must aim to attract and retain the best and brightest talent by continuing to build on the success of professions like engineering in recognizing foreign credentials. The federal government must also work with provinces and territories, universities and colleges, and other stakeholders to promote diversity in professions and trade. Studies have shown that a diverse workforce is appealing to businesses and can help drive job creation. Finally, the federal government must continue to improve its support for research and development. The recommendations of the Expert Review Panel on Research and Development were aimed at improving the commercial potential of research and development in Canada. By providing support, the federal government can help our

innovators create products and businesses that promote growth and job creation. Engineers Canada also supports the federal government's pursuit of bilateral trade agreements, and would continue to recommend that professions and stakeholders remain part of that process. These trade agreements allow Canada to promote our engineering talent all over the world.

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?

In order to address the consequences of, and challenges associated with the aging of the Canadian population and of skills shortages, the federal government must support the work of professions working to promote diversity. Engineers Canada and our constituent associations are working to address this shortage by looking to underrepresented groups in engineering to help fill the skills gap. According to the 2006 Census, women comprised 47 percent of the total workforce in Canada but only 13 percent of the engineering workforce. Engineers Canada believes aiming for a 30 percent representation by women by 2030 is possible. Federal support in developing programs to help women study and work in this area would be beneficial to our economic growth. We are also forming partnerships with national and provincial indigenous-focused organizations, and working with our constituent associations to develop tools to promote engineering to indigenous students. Federally supported targeted outreach and support programs for women and for indigenous people that run from kindergarten to university would give the country access to a previously untapped human resources. Filling the skills gap and labour shortage can only be achieved by tapping all of our potential as a nation. The federal government must also continue to implement changes to the immigration system that ensure that labour market needs are being met. Continued work on foreign-credential recognition and labour mobility within Canada can help put the right people in the right jobs, at the right time.

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?

Engineers Canada believes that productivity in Canada can be increased by making Canada an attractive place to live and to invest. The federal government must work with other levels of government to sustain our quality of life, and to attract the best and brightest to our country. Core public infrastructure like buildings, storm water/wastewater systems, roads and associated structures (e.g. bridges and culverts) and water supply and management systems are the backbone of Canada's economy. When Canadians can safely and efficiently get to work, move the goods they produce and provide the services their clients need without being impeded by traffic congestion or the results of infrastructure neglect, productivity improves. Engineers Canada also believes that the federal government must continue to update the immigration system to ensure that Canada is attracting the talent it needs to grow our economy. In consultation with stakeholders, including regulated professions like engineering, the federal government must align application and assessment practices efficiently to integrate immigrants into our economy and society. For our part, Engineers Canada has been working diligently over the past ten years to improve foreign credential recognition. We are now leaders among regulated professions in Canada, with the time for a decision on an application for licensure well-within the time frames required by the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications.

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?

Engineers Canada has been working closely with many stakeholders to provide advice to the federal government on how to move forward with a long-term infrastructure plan to replace the expiring Building Canada Plan. Most municipalities employ professional engineers to assist with infrastructure planning and maintenance. Through our work as part of the long term infrastructure plan consultation process announced in November 2011, it has become clear that Canadian communities need predictable funding for infrastructure. Engineers Canada believes that a sustainable, strategic long-term infrastructure plan, in place by 2014, will help maintain Canada's economic competitiveness and maintain our quality of life. A long-term infrastructure plan that includes requirements for proper asset management, which emphasizes the importance of core public infrastructure, and considers the vulnerability of key assets to extreme weather events, can support increased investment and attract talent. Strong, healthy communities attract investment, attract talent, and drive economic prosperity.