

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?

I completely disagree with the notion that in these difficult economic times, that public spending is a burden on the economy. It is not an absolute conclusion, and there is as much, or more, evidence that in times such as these, and when considering historical context, as in the Great Depression, it was found the appropriate remedy then, as it can be now, is to increase public spending and generate economic activity. Therefore I recommend a reversal of cuts to spending, and encourage my government to combat economic malaise by generating the much needed infrastructure projects sorely needed from coast to coast. Whether it is the roads and highways, water treatment facilities, sewage and energy infrastructure, these core assets of our society have been largely neglected as the burden on the municipalities and provinces have deemed them to unwieldy. Only the financial clout of the Federal Government, in partnership with the next two lower levels of government, can properly address these critical issues AND stimulate REAL economic activity in the process.

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?

Stop negotiating trade agreements. They have never yet, in the history of Canada, generated the employment that was touted at their inception. Not once. And, in regards to NAFTA and others, their affects on our economy have been of marginal benefit, loss of revenue, lead to numerous costly lawsuits, and caused the government of Canada to seek redress numerous times in the life of NAFTA, and not always with the altruistic justice one would have thought likely. So, jobs creation truly starts when you are FREE, as in a FREE MARKET, to sell your goods or resources outside of restrictions and conditions as assigned or agreed to in a Trade Agreement. The notion that trade agreements has any meaningful affect on employment is naive, and I beg the committee to prove otherwise with non-governmental, peer-reviewed data. Until such time, I personally view the signing of any trade agreement as an act of treason against the Canadian People. In order to create jobs, employers need the assurance of a fair, rational and level playing field. With this governments propensity to interfere in existing environmental regulations, labour contracts, collective bargaining and general fiscal mismanagement, seeking the assistance they truly need in order to remedy these errors is the first step. Employers require some certainties in order to appropriately plan and then expand their enterprise, generating new jobs. They do not have that now, and if unchecked, will not see a positive change in the near future.

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?

Release the still hidden report on the fiscal sustainability to the OAS and CPP programmes. Despite the unfounded assertions of this government, it is widely accepted in learned circles that the OAS and CPP systems of Canada have been well-managed and a model of solvency for other nations to review. The long game plan of the federal government in addressing the demographic shifts in Canada, and the impacts those will have on the employment picture ought to lead this government to increase, and develop, new programmes for ensuring a timely and effective transfer of skills and knowledge in the key industries showing a gap between what they have and what they will require of the workforce in the coming decades. Where are the apprenticeship programmes, where is the increased funding of training or educational opportunities? There is no such plan and that alone shows how inept this current government is in the real day to day governance of this great nation.

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?

The long game plan of the federal government in addressing the demographic shifts in Canada, and the impacts those will have on the employment picture ought to lead this government to increase, and develop, new programmes for ensuring a timely and effective transfer of skills and knowledge in the key industries showing a gap between what they have and what they will require of the workforce in the coming decades. Where are the apprenticeship programmes, where is the increased funding of training or educational opportunities? Without an aggressive plan to ensure we make every reasonable effort to train, educate and nurture the next generations of engineers, trades persons, scientists and medical professionals, we will always be looking to immigrate in the skills and scholars to fill these gaps, and it is appalling there is not yet such a programme as these issues have been known at the Federal level for more than a decade. The attacks on organized labour is also a significant concern of mine. Without the protections and stability of collective agreements, where are the solid consumers, home-buyers and community givers going to come from? Without good paying jobs, with employment stability, we are all to become a service-worker at minimum wage, seeking if not requiring tax credits and charity in order to maintain security of housing, healthy and reasonable food, give to worthy causes in their communities, save for the post secondary education of their children, have the resources to care for their elderly parents? If there are only McJobs on the offering, how does the Federal Government fund the necessary supports and programmes that the under-employed will require in greater numbers if the tax base is largely minimum wage earners? Also, with the word productivity as the main title of this component, I see no meaningful rationale for simply exporting our raw natural resources with little to no benefit to the larger populace. Why sell the oil to have Americans or Chinese companies add the value of refining and selling it back to us at a higher cost? Why sell our lumber as a raw resource when we could turn it into value-added products, which could then be exported for a higher value? And, in general, if I recall my social studies classes of high school, these have generally been good-paying jobs. Wood craftsmen, manufacturers, designers and the like. So just why are we selling the resources and not the finished products? Just imagine how much wind would have been knocked out of the opponents sails had these tar-sands oils been transported hundreds of meters, as opposed to kilometers, to a CANADIAN REFINERY, with good paying and skilled jobs. How about all the spin off industries that grow around oil refining, such as chemical companies, testing companies, safety

companies, transportation and logistics companies, security outfits, not to mention the engineers, bricklayers, asphalt layers, carpenters and even janitorial staffs that would find new opportunities. And lastly, why is it considered so negatively to see a failing business actually go bankrupt? There appears to be a new normal in some circles of power that changing the rules for businesses that cannot function without paying minimum wage rates, or that requires advantageous changes to law, regulation or policy, is something to avoid. I may not be a learned economist, but when a business fails and does go through bankruptcy, there is a lot of potential for that capital to be applied to a new entrepreneur, to make a new approach and maybe find a better use of said capital. Therefore, my recommendations in this category are as follows: Stop interfering or molesting existing Collective Agreements Respect the role Organized Labour has in Canada and in a healthy democracy

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?

The inherent dangers posed by the proposed pipelines are of significant concern, more so as a resident of Beautiful British Columbia. The recent report by the American National Transportation Safety Board is troubling at the least, and highlighting criminal malfeasance at worst. And our own Minister of the Environment, who admits to not (as of this date) read the entire report, dismissed out of hand that that report makes on iota of difference in this government's approach to developing the tar-sands. This at best is naive, and at worst, potentially highlighting criminal misfeasance and dereliction of duty as the Minister of the Environment. And let us not forget, this is the same Environment Minister who just weeks ago stated the Air Quality monitoring for Canada could be outsourced to the American EPA. So, it also appears that when the idea works for the oilsands development or cutting of scientific study and research in Canada, use of American scientific resources are a wonderful idea, no matter how ineffective or far-fetched the notion is. But, if it is contrary to the plans to develop the tar sands, or to support Canadian world class research, the expertise and insights of the NTSB are of no merit. How so sanctimonious of our Minister of the Environment to determine, at his sole discretion and with no more learned knowledge than having been a News Broadcaster/Journalist, that he can pick and choose which science, and from which organizations, suit him, his ministry or the policy developed within.