

## Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)

### Pre-budget consultations 2012

## Heather Looy

### 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 urge the government to focus less on 'growth' and more on quality of life. Support and encourage (financially) the development of alternative, sustainable means of enabling people to live well. For example, instead of building pipelines to ship our raw oil/bitumen to other countries for processing and then buying it back, focus on processing it right here in Canada so our fuel is ground-to-consumer all Canadian. Do the same for livestock production. Support and encourage local systems: farmer-to-table systems that don't involve long distance shipping systems. Support the development of alternative energy sources AND the development of effective means of using LESS energy. Think really long term; oil and gas are finite resources. Also, enable more people to have a living wage--they will then be able to contribute more effectively, supporting businesses, paying taxes, utilizing fewer health-care resources and social services. Think creatively about supporting seniors, the mentally ill, the disabled, the poor in ways that honor and enable their contributions. Focus on cradle-to-grave support--PREVENTION, not treatment. Take money from prisons and put it in programs that prevent or rehabilitate--they really work!

#### 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?*

Enhance internal trade. We are resource-rich and innovative. Why can't we supply all or most of our needs internally? Be creative; support alternative ideas...not all may work but we can't know until we try. Better that than trying to prop up a system that is obviously failing us, that has been shown to be deeply corrupt. If you keep doing the same things as in the past, we will keep getting the same negative results as in the past.

#### 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?*

Invite Canadians (not just rich, powerful, or connected ones) to share their stories and ideas on this matter. I have experience caring for aging parents, and wish there was a lot more support for enabling families to care for them as long as possible. Fund effective home care (especially in rural areas), give tax breaks to people supporting aging parents, support health care that is preventive. For example, my mother is an intelligent, active, independent 75-year old who lives on her own, volunteers extensively in the community, and teaches on-line courses. However, when she fell and damaged her back, health care options only allowed her access to a family doctor and specialists in rheumatology and orthopedics. What she actually needed, and what actually helped her heal, was access to good physiotherapy/chiropractic services. She happens to be financially able (just) to pay for it herself, but if

she had not been able to, this woman would have become rapidly housebound, dependent, depressed, and in need of much more expensive care. This is short-sighted. As for skills shortages, don't just throw money at 'job-training' institutions. What you'll end up with is a population of people trained in highly-specialized areas...as soon as things change, they will need re-training. Instead, support education (secondary and post-secondary) that gives our young people a sense of the 'big picture'(history, our place in the world, the big ideas that shape our world, etc.) and give them excellent general, flexible skills--critical thinking, speaking & writing, eco-literacy, numeracy, good information-evaluators. Also, a lot of older people can and would like to continue to contribute--let them! Finally, let adolescents who clearly are not ready to remain in standard schools seek skill development (along with the broad skills noted above) and allow them to join the work force.

#### **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?*

Why do we need to be 'competitive'? We all just want to live with security, mental and physical health, and meaningful work when possible. The world is increasingly using media, online and other, in new ways. Support people who work in these areas--e.g., the CBC, actors, film-makers, producers, etc. Support access to information (uncensored) in rural and remote northern communities. Support people and organizations who are trying to make a difference throughout the world--let's return to the reputation we ONCE had, that of a nation that cares, that provides leadership and support to others, as peacekeepers, generous sharers of our resources, etc.

#### **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?*

A major challenge most of us face right now is access to information that is uncensored and unfiltered by various 'stakeholders' (whether that be government, industry, advertisers). This access needs to be free, accessible to all, and invite open dialogue. This will support at a foundational level our ability to be innovative, to change and adapt. Another major challenge is the state of our planet. Our impact is now so significant and wide-ranging that we are straining the 'carrying capacity' of our world. This cannot be fixed through a few tweaks. We are truly on the verge of, if not already beyond the point of, catastrophe. Rapid changes in climate and resource availability will require a flexible, innovative, adaptable population and fresh new ideas. Let's make Canada a leader in this innovation, and at the same time build a capacity for sustainable living for the next generations. So: support public media (CBC). Support the universities, NOT as 'job-training centres,' but as places where new and innovative ideas form, where rich repositories of knowledge through libraries and databases are maintained and kept as accessible to as many as possible. Support public libraries. Support innovative research--and don't hamstring researchers by forcing them to work with industries that 'own' their data, but allow the free exchange of ideas. Add a tax for practices that are unsustainable (e.g., driving cars, especially those with high emissions, poor efficiency) and use that money to reward those who try things that are (more) sustainable (using solar panels, building public transit). Public television and radio and online media: this is a really important means by which information,