

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?

Economic growth should be focused on investment in alternative energy sources. The tar sands should be wound down and solar / wind / tidal / geothermic sources of energy developed. The subsidies to oil companies should be reduced as these areas of growth become established. Furthermore, Canada should invest in research and development. In order to protect our agricultural communities and our ability to feed the Canadian population, the economic consequences of climate change should be evaluated and measures taken to protect us from its effects.

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?

Like everyone I know (without exception and regardless of political persuasion), I am concerned about how almost everything we buy is now made in China or other countries where labour is cheap. I am concerned because of the impact on Canadian manufacturing, also because of the nonsensical pattern of constantly shipping goods all over the planet, causing pollution, and finally because of the working conditions of the workers in those countries. I do think Canada should create jobs in the energy sector but not the oil sector. We should be investing in alternative energy sources and becoming a world leader in this area. Both in expertise and production. The US will always need energy.

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 taxes for the most wealthy. Reduce tax breaks for rich corporations. Strive for a more equal distribution of wealth which will increase the health and happiness of the poorest part of society, and everyone else. This country is rich enough to pay for an aging population if we distribute our wealth more fairly. Investment should be made in homecare and social services for the elderly. Tax breaks for families that look after their elderly relatives. Encourage immigration to renew the workforce. Good daycare for families to encourage them to have another child.

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 tyranny of globalisation seems to mean that it's no longer legal to indulge in protectionism, but I would like to buy products made in Canada, at their "real" price, that is to say a price that reflects the cost of making things here, including paying workers a living wage. It seems obvious to me that we

cannot be competitive with China or other countries where labour is so cheap. So globalisation is not working for this country. We should invest heavily in alternative energy as energy is a product that will always sell, and should be produced close to home. Canada should become a leader in energy production sourced from alternative sources. Phase out the tar sands because climate change is the thing that will hurt economies more than anything else, much more than another recession, and this fact seems to be ignored at the moment. There is not only a strong economic argument for stopping the tar sands, but a moral one as Canada should take responsibility for its contribution to climate change. Polluters should pay and we should be trying to force China and the US to agree to strict carbon reduction plans, effective immediately.

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?

What I see around me is old people and families who do not have enough money to live on. They are poor, their lives are miserable. They can't afford dental care and medication, let alone leisure activities or decent food. So investment in public healthcare is a top priority for me. There is a two-tier health system in operation and the government does not seem interested in enforcing medicare, but is allowing a parallel system to develop. Politicians are so far removed from the reality of the poor, it's disgraceful. I would like to see the finance minister come and spend a few days in an area like Verdun or St-Henri and see just how poor people really are, then justify the huge tax breaks for corporations. Trickle-down economics does not seem to be working.