

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?

Targeted investment in the future of our people, the land and infrastructure. - Quality and availability of education, especially for First Nations. - Strengthening unity and understanding across the nation, with the CBC as the main recipient of funding, - Technology of the future - replacement of fossil fuels with other energy technologies - Expansion of preventive medicine and health promotion, including diet and nutrition. Properly deployed, these will significantly improve the fiscal situation of our country over the medium and long term. Short term solutions will just burn up what we have without developing alternative strategies.

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?

This can be achieved by investing in jobs to achieve the measures outlined in my submission in Part 1: Funding, support and subsidies for employment opportunities in education; the CBC; alternative energy technologies; and preventive medicine / health promotion. This way employment and economic recovery are parts of an integrated solution and will likely bring a greater sense of unity/teamwork to our experience as a nation.

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?

Invest heavily in bringing standards of education for First Nations into line with that of the country as a whole. Restore the plan to extend OAS to 67. We have sufficient in the fund to cover from age 65. By the time the planned extension is applied, it will make a relatively small difference anyway. Treat refugees with compassion and generosity from the start then those who qualify to stay will be loyal and strong supporters of our nation. Restore confidence in our immigration system by investing in trained staff and an efficient system. If we want the best to come here, we cannot again afford to simply cancel a waiting list. We're losing some of the best to other countries with similar demographic needs.

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?

- Invest in improving online immigration job-approval services so they don't break down again. - Invest in education. - Apprenticeships. - Mentoring in applicable work, where outgoing retirees can work alongside newly-qualified workers, easing them into their responsibilities and setting a mature standard.

- Support for leading edge technologies that will take us into a planet- and people-friendly future. Our contemporary skills and related knowledge will help Canada and make our contributions sale-able to other nations. Meanwhile, we can slow down the over-hasty sale of our resources, sell them over a longer time-frame and thus receive a significantly higher price. This will also allow time to support and encourage value-added options.

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?

- First Nations: education, housing and respectful engagement. Let's provide an example for the world and pride in our nation. (See previous comments for economic benefits of this.) - Small business. Put the experts to work on finding ways to make life easier for small businesses, which provide so much for our economy. - Child poverty. Lots of talk here but no real change over the years. As long as we can't feed our children, we will always be a second-class nation. As an immediate measure, a program of morning healthy snacks. Especially among the poorer communities, this will engender an immediate increase in learning. Move on from there. - Farmers. Land and food production is increasingly owned by corporations and speculators. Support local food and the communities they feed and we will be a stronger, healthier country. Note: International economic treaties rarely have any real benefit to our farmers. They usually bring more competition from countries with cheaper labour, longer growing periods and hidden subsidies.