

Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)

Pre-budget consultations 2012

Claire Paradis

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?

Building and filling new prisons and crowding the justice system with first-time mandatory minimum sentence-servers is an enormous waste of money. Prosecuting white collar criminals rather than bailing them out makes far more sense, particularly because they make our streets more unsafe by impoverishing people already on the financial edge, such as seniors. Removing resources that will enable individuals to develop their own businesses rather than shunting them into any job opening is a short sighted move that looks to the immediate benefit rather than a sustainable solution. Community futures programs, for instance, are key in areas where local industry is failing, but there are opportunities which could be taken advantage of for those with the creativity and wherewithal to pursue them. This is very true rurally where opportunities are everywhere, but resources to develop them are scarce. Unless there is an immediate threat to Canada's sovereignty (perhaps from Denmark over Hans Island, but it is unlikely to result in aggression), spending enormous amounts on fighter jets but cutting back on emergency response funding to the Canadian Coast Guard or support to Search and Rescue groups or Conservation Enforcement Officers who save lives every year without fail appears to be missing the forest for the trees. I understand that serving the public is a difficult and demanding job, but the benefits of being a member of parliament seem too rich to most Canadians. It would be amazing to see politicians cut back on their own budgets, and would likely restore some faith in our elected officials, particularly in this current climate of federal and global fiscal restraint.

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?

Canada does need to ensure its domestic economic health by developing concrete strategies such as a real food security plan and a more vibrant culture of entrepreneurship and "Canadian pride." Our ties with other nations are extremely important, but are we stuck in relationships that are not flexible or that we must continue because we haven't developed the resources at home, and are therefore at the mercy of an international market? Perhaps it's time to see what we need now rather than what has historically been in place. Some of our resources are precious and need to be seen as such, including "human capital."

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?

Where I live, there isn't much of a culture of legacy planning. Most people don't know what it means. Others who do know what it means, particularly the people who will be leaving their jobs shortly, find it deadly boring, and some avoid it for as long as possible (i.e. until they're retired). Legacy planning should

be made part of any job, as should awareness of policy development and modification, but it just isn't. In terms of a federal plan, I would suggest an increase on mentor/apprentice partnerships, beginning at the level of government and working down into guidelines and programs for all employment venues. The New Horizons program is a good start in getting older and younger generations to mix, and the federal government should support as many project that allow that to happen as possible. Access to education is extremely important, of course, to increase the skilled population, but so is the ability to confer credentials on people who already possess skills but not the paperwork to go with them, such as skilled new immigrants or informally-trained individuals. Determining evaluation systems for these people would also increase the pool of skilled workers.

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?

I assume the question refers to competitiveness as a nation, because competitiveness at the individual level will defeat us in the face of the aging population if we don't have a plan to pass on the retiring generation's legacy knowledge. In my rural area, there are two main challenges. One is gaining access to the resources that will allow people to develop or keep viable businesses in the area. These resources are improved or simply maintained transportation infrastructure, both virtual and real. The key is getting products to and from my area, an issue I'm sure the government of this great and wide nation is keenly aware of. Many of these products could be virtual, including education, which would allow the community to grow without experiencing a loss of families who move away in order to gain the skills they need. The federal government could support this through supporting virtual and real education and infrastructures. The second challenge is building a culture of self-motivated people who will build their own employment that capitalizes on the resources available to them in the area. An industry-based community whose industry has dried up, many people are used to being hired and laid off rather than taking advantage of opportunities to create their own work. This could be a public school curriculum issue for the federal government.

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?

Again, the problem with being the government for a huge and diverse country: each community's issues will be slightly different. To generalize from the problems faced here, planning ahead and implementing for the impending labour shortage with legacy planning is a start. Ethical checks to professional practises of all sorts, a tall order to be sure, would be a good start to controlling white collar crime. Frankly, how one checks the greed of individuals in order ensure the well-being of all is a mind-bending puzzle, but one that should be attempted. Diversion from the courts as well as the abandonment of mandatory minimum sentences would also alleviate the burden on the justice system.