

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 believe the federal government needs to take a more active role in supporting the development of energy resources. Currently the Prairie Provinces are resource rich primarily in the area of energy and we have limited our oil and gas exports to (essentially) one customer, the US. The opportunity to create high paying jobs exists for all Canadians by establishing pipelines or transportation routes to export the resources overseas. The spin-off and profit of creating additional exports could then be used to invest in technology to support future energy developments (outside O&G) and create jobs. I also believe that by having the federal government take a pro-active role in promoting energy development in a concerted and country focused effort we, as a country could build a strategic program to establish job creation, in manufacturing, mining, construction, development and other industries across the country. The spin off effects to other industries would be immense. As an example if we promoted energy exportation across the country we could maximize and use skills and expertise from all of our provinces and territories i.e. Manufacturing could be completed in Ontario and Quebec. Pipelines could be built in BC, ports could be built in BC. Resources (metals i.e. Copper) would be needed and could be mined from the northern territories and other mines across Canada, as well as ships could be built in the Maritimes using resources from Canada. The opportunity to leverage the knowledge, experience and skills of all Canadians is immense if our elected officials have the courage to work together, develop a meaningful and egalitarian mechanism for creating economic and thus social prosperity for all Canadians. Lets not forget that Canada's energy reserves are one of the largest in the world and produced in one of the most environmentally and socially conscious manners.

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?

I believe that as a country we have a huge number of resources that we are not maximizing, agriculture, minerals, oil, gas, water, etc. I also believe that we can leverage these resources to a greater extent by developing the infrastructure to refine, manufacture and / or export the resources which would create jobs, adding to the country's household income, which creates a larger tax base to fund more services as well as adding to the standard of living for all Canadians. So simply put the federal government needs to be driving and support resource development and commercialization to create more jobs. This is low hanging fruit.

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?

I believe the government should be investing in technology to drive efficiency so that we can do more with less as well as invest resources into post secondary so that as a country we are training and developing and retaining leading global talent to support the demographic shift in Canada. In addition I believe we should be re-evaluating our immigration policy and making it easier for professionals from other country's to take on similar roles in Canada. We need to develop national standards for Professionals, particularly in the engineering and healthcare sectors and put in place the support programs to enable new immigrants the opportunity to practice in their fields quickly.

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 immigration process for skilled labour is critical. I was very happy to see the Federal government instituting a revised work permit process for select trades earlier this week. I believe this will assist with our labour shortage. From a productivity standpoint, my perception is that we are needing more resources to do the same volume of work. There is significantly more documentation, authorization, procedures, regulations, etc which slows processes down. I certainly understand that much of this is needed to ensure safety, compliance, etc however there needs to be a happy medium. In addition many of the municipal and provincial processes are creating bottlenecks which is also slowing down the process. To drive productivity we need to ensure industry standards are established, maintained and monitored but the increased flow through could drive higher productivities amongst industry.

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?

I don't believe there is one particular group that is facing greater or more challenges than any other. I think there continues to be a perception of West vs. East disparity and unequal treatment and representation between provinces from the federal government and I believe the Federal Government as the ultimate leader needs to begin addressing and dealing with that perception. Whether it is a business, a family or an institution when groups begin to fall into a silo or smaller group, efficiency and the greater good gets lost. It is the Federal governments responsibility to begin addressing and managing change to create cohesion across the country. If cohesion can be built specific challenges can be addressed with collective power. As an example, in the Prairie provinces, access to labour is a challenge, in other parts of the country employment or the lack there of is a challenge. Lets look at ways of bringing the two together through creative tax structures, transportation etc and not just cash transfers as equalization payments just compound the resentment as opposed to deal with the route issues.