

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 would recommend increasing funding for basic and applied research in the universities to ensure the Canadian economy is based on science, technology and creative innovation for the long term. However, no increase for applied research must be introduced to the detriment of basic research, which must not only be maintained at its current level, but also increased. That will guarantee long-term success.

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?

To support prosperity on an ongoing basis, we must make sure we innovate because job creation cannot be sustained without a renewed contribution from new businesses. This advance must be achieved through programs that match businesses with university laboratories in research and development alliances. We must also continue creating networks of centres of excellence.

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?

The demographic change currently under way will keep growing. We must immediately ensure that experienced researchers transfer their knowledge to the next generation before they retire. The way to do that is to encourage young people to choose general scientific careers (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and so on) by guaranteeing them financial support (through a significant increase in the number of available scholarships) and a promising professional future. Consequently, the number of post-doctoral fellowships must also be increased. New large-scale infrastructure will have to be built to show these young people that they can find good jobs in their country. To that end, federal programs must be enhanced: measures must be taken now to expand training in order to produce a highly skilled workforce and then to retain it in Canada.

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?

Productivity can be improved only by promoting exchanges with other countries. We must therefore encourage and assist businesses and universities in conducting more exchanges to expand markets and increase knowledge transfer. A minister entirely dedicated to science, technology and innovation will be able to put those policies in place with a greater degree of openness and efficiency.

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?

One challenge that must be addressed now is to maintain and even develop more federal research and technology facilities because they are essential complements to university laboratories. Past success in this field will guarantee a viable future.