

Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)

Pre-budget consultations 2012

Eric Doherty

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 do not believe that 'economic growth' is a reasonable objective. As David Suzuki has long asserted, infinite economic growth on a finite planet is impossible and attempting it may prove suicidal. New objectives for well being and economic stability are needed and available. The Genuine Progress Indicator is just one of the models.

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?

The number one job creation priority should be shifting public spending from capital and carbon intensive transportation infrastructure such as freeway and airport expansion to low carbon transportation including public transit, passenger rail, and cycling infrastructure. The jobs created from low-carbon transportation are much greater per unit of government or consumer spending than freeways and airports.

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?

Many older people, particularly in rural areas and small communities, are no longer able to drive long distances to access essential services and visit friends and family. Canada needs a national passenger rail and highway bus program so Canadians, including older Canadians, can travel to and from smaller communities and rural areas while reducing their carbon footprints.

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?

Canada needs to do more per unit of energy, and greatly reduce GHG emissions. We need to shift emphasis from the industries of the past, such as coal, gas and oil, to efficiency and renewable energy. Improving productivity in the industries of the past is futile and counterproductive, we need to look forward.

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?

The biggest challenge we face is global warming and ocean acidification. For example, the levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere are already so high that oysters no longer reproduce on Canada's pacific coast. A strong program to quickly reduce Canadian GHG emissions, and exports of fossil fuels, is needed.