

Every Woman's Centre Association

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?

The Government of Canada should remain focused on jobs and the economy. In order to do this focus must remain not only on skills and training but building other supports needed to allow women to take advantage of programs that may be offered. Child care, affordable housing and food security must be addressed if we are going to have women reach their full potential. Preparing women for jobs that are only available in large urban areas or in Western provinces does nothing for the economy and in fact often adds to the problem. Families with absentee parents, drug and alcohol addictions created by the isolation of living great distance from home and an excess of money for short periods of time helps to create a lack of stability that is needed to make Canada strong. Most women are not portable. They may do it for short periods of time but this life style is not sustainable. There needs to be a strong strategic direction for the continued economic recovery of Canada that is visible for the average Canadian, those who are living in poverty and women. In my area a success story is certainly the money that was awarded by the Federal Government to support the cleanup of the Sydney Tar Ponds. This initiative created employment for hundreds of people, some women and was a major boost to the economy for an area that has had many setbacks over the years. Panel recommendation #34 stated that the Sydney Tar Ponds Agency would implement a strategy to increase the number of women in non-traditional areas proving that when wanted the Federal Government can enact such stipulations to accompany funding. We at Every Woman's Centre would recommend this be done in the granting of all Federal Funding for major infrastructure projects across Canada.

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?

We believe that as Canadian companies face pressures resulting from such factor as uncertainty about the U.S. economic recovery, a sovereign debt crisis in Europe and competition from a number of developed and developing countries it is increasingly important to ensure that Federal policies focus on making all of Canada economically strong. A pocket of support to large urban areas is not the only answer. Most of Canada is rural. Initiatives must be developed that allow for economic growth in rural areas. A strong national housing strategy could be such an initiative. In many urban and rural areas, people are not able to access safe, affordable housing. Increased funding to Community Colleges is necessary. A number of trades and technologies can be adapted to fit local needs around housing. This type of revitalization in housing would have multiple economic benefits. The forestry industry could be revitalized. Women can be trained in non-traditional jobs. The more people participating in the economy the more potential there is to attract business to rural areas. The Federal government could ensure programs are available to support housing initiatives that guarantee safe, affordable housing and are identified at the local community level. Women are waiting 4 and 5 years to access subsidized

housing and in some rural areas subsidized houses are non-existing. Housing is the second largest issue we work with at Every Woman's Centre, Poverty being number 1 and employment being number 3. Funding of Women's Employment Agencies has been quite successful but can be fairly redundant when the majority of employment available is entry level jobs that pay minimum wage with no hope of advancement. A national housing strategy could change this.

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 guess one would have to wonder why there are skills shortages. How do we make it attractive and possible for everyone to participate in the economy through skill development. As in most pursuits, reward and success are the answer. Training for new skills must bring employment and an improvement in life. It must be seen as being better than what a person has now. If it is too difficult to take training because child care is not available or you are worried about unsafe housing and don't have enough food to feed your family and know that at the end of your training you will need to move thousands of miles away to find employment, there is really no incentive. Too many barriers make it very difficult to convince people that it will be worth their while. Choosing the right skills development and getting employment can be very challenging. Labor Market information can be helpful but it does not give the whole picture. I have seen many women who have struggled to go to Community College only to find out that the course they took is not valued in their local community. For the senior populations to continue to work it should not be done by moving up the age when one can apply for old age pension. It can be done through other methods. If a senior is expected to work beyond 65 then there should be some tax break for them. Collecting Canada Pension, OAS and working means that you are in a tax bracket that will cost over 23% in income tax or higher. Most who continue to work cannot claim any age exemption. While I believe most people over the age of 65 would like to continue to work there must be a benefit to it.

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?

In order to increase productivity there needs to be a national effort to build the economy. People need skills training to fill the many jobs that will be created over time and building the economy needs to be distributed throughout Canada, not just urban centres. Women need to be part of increasing productivity in Canada. Supports must be in place to allow this to happen such as child care, skills training, safe affordable housing and poverty relief.

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?

In my opinion youth are facing the most challenges and if not addressed youth will become Canada's greatest challenge. There isn't a community, rural or urban in Canada that had not felt the effect of youth addictions, school drop outs because of a school system that does not tolerate youthful behavior, mental health issues, no prospect for employment and poverty. What is needed to address these issues, I really don't know. What I do know is early childhood development programs work, youth clubs help, skills development is a must for those who do not fit into the academic school system and most of these initiatives are underfunded. I know that since the ship building contract was announced for Halifax there

is now a 3 – 4 year waiting list for relevant community college courses. (what hope is there for the new high school graduate to have to wait this long). I know that unemployment in Canada is highest among youth. I read an article recently about Alberta which said the Conservatives, if re-elected, promised to adopt a 10 year plan to reduce poverty and a 5-year plan to end child poverty. This concept always interests me as I know of no way to end child poverty unless we move the whole family out of poverty. I do have a recommendation. The Federal government should develop a national poverty reduction strategy. As each province struggles to address poverty there is no national framework. Whatever the provinces can do to address poverty it won't be enough without national support. A Guaranteed Livable Income would only be possible on a national scale.