

Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)

Pre-budget consultations 2012

Funeral Service Association of Canada

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?

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?

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 Funeral Service Association of Canada (FSAC) is the leading national funeral service association representing 85% of all deaths in Canada through numerous funeral homes, cemeteries, and funeral service professionals across the country. The funeral service industry will be directly affected by changes in Canada's demographics. The aging population will require increased services, and more funeral directors will be required than are currently being trained in the profession. The certification of funeral directors is under provincial jurisdiction; however the federal government will need to partner with the provinces in order to create incentives for people to enter into the funeral service industry to ensure that the high level of service enjoyed by Canadians can continue despite added pressures from an aging population. In addition to a skills shortage, FSAC is also concerned with the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) Death Benefit, as Canada's demographics change. The CCP Death Benefit was reduced from a maximum of \$3580 to a maximum of \$2500 in 1998. .FSAC is .concerned that the rate reduction will not be reviewed in the future. These issues will only become more prominent as the change in demographics occurs over time, and more CPP Death Benefits are claimed. FSAC strongly encourages the federal government to review the CPP Death Benefit and ensure that all Canadians will be able to have access to funeral services, and businesses in funeral service industry are able to receive the necessary payments, particularly as the population ages.

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?

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 Funeral Service Association of Canada (FSAC) is currently very concerned about the challenges faced by Canadian veterans. FSAC strongly feels the current funding rates for the Last Post Fund are inadequate, and this lack of funding has a significant impact on both the families of veterans and Canadian business owners. The Last Post Fund is a non-profit organization that delivers the funeral and burial assistance program for financially challenged Canadian and Allied veterans. Primarily, the Fund delivers the Veterans Affairs Canada Funeral and Burial Program, which offers financial benefits for funeral, burial, cremation, and grave marking to eligible Canadian and Allied veterans and disability pensioners. Funding rate levels for Last Post Fund funerals have remained at the same levels since 2001, despite a significant rise in funeral costs. FSAC recently conducted a national survey which found that members of the association provide comparable services to financially challenged veterans for much less than what is paid by the general public. This discrepancy means funeral directors across Canada are in essence subsidizing the cost of veterans' funerals. It is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the necessary and warranted level of dignity for Canadian veterans as funding continues to lag behind the real costs of funeral arrangements. An increase to the Last Post Fund wouldn't represent a large cost, since the number of eligible veterans is small, and is decreasing over time. Funeral directors across Canada believe that our veterans deserve to be laid to rest with the utmost respect and honour befitting their contributions to the nation. Federal government action is needed to address the challenges faced by financially insecure veterans and their families, to ensure that Canadian and Allied veterans are able to receive the funerals they deserve.