

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?

Continued cutting of government services creates more unemployed and does not contribute to a healthy economy. Austerity has never solved fiscal problems - it only creates more problems. For example, more unemployed citizens (caused by government cuts) are 1) unable to buy goods and services that keep the economy going and 2) require financial assistance, i.e. unemployment insurance. Taxpayers money well-spent on government services creates a strong economy.

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?

First, stop cutting government jobs. Second, provide incentives for employers to hire people and disincentives for letting people go - which is the main, overused and unimaginative way for companies to save money. Perhaps some guidelines need to be worked out for the ratio between CEO/senior management and employee salaries/wages; CEOs should not be earning 150 times as much as employees, as is the case in some companies. More regulation of the stock market and investment capital is also needed, so that the prime economic motivator is NOT ever-increasing, unrealistic and unsustainable returns on investments, but rather a healthy economy is the goal.

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?

First, reinstatement of the complete census is vital to provide accurate information needed for future planning. Health care and living arrangements are key issues associated with the aging population. More support to enable seniors to remain living in their homes for as long as possible is needed. More long-term care facilities are required; also openness to and support for alternative living arrangements which pool resources - and strengths of inhabitants - to maximize resources and allow seniors to remain independent as long as possible. Seniors who are willing and able to continue working should be encouraged to do so, to help alleviate some of the employee shortages. Skills shortages can also be addressed by providing other forms of education/training - for the trades, for example. This would do much more to alleviate skills shortages than continuing to create more universities. Learning from the German system of apprenticeship and training might be helpful.

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?

Government should take a longer view to sustainability rather than focussing solely on increasing productivity - which is unsustainable. Instead of exporting our resources, such as oil, wood, and raw agricultural products, we should seek to create jobs in transforming those goods into products: wood into furniture, oil into petroleum products, cattle into beef. etc. Also we need to diversify - for example: not to focus only on oil, but to develop other, more sustainable forms of energy.

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 greatest challenges are being faced by citizens living in poverty, or teetering at the brink of poverty. Affordable housing, affordable healthy food, and a living wage for all employees are the only ways to solve this problem. It will only happen with government guidance and incentives. In the long run this will save not only health care dollars, but reduce the costs associated with homelessness, including drug problems and criminality.