

The Sandbox Project

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?

Sustained economic recovery and enhanced long-term economic growth require a healthy, active, and productive workforce. Canada and our global economic competitors understand that one source of long-term and sustainable competitive advantage is healthy and active young people. Just like Canada, our competitors are investing in the health, education, and training of their children and youth. But for continued health and improved economic growth, we can and should do more. To accomplish this, The Sandbox Project recommends that the Government of Canada provide \$5 million in seed funding over five years for a research-based think tank dedicated to driving change in the social and physical behavior of Canada's youth to impact their health today, and Canada's economy tomorrow. Through evidence-based best practice methods, this independent organization would bring together important players in the field of child health to provide tangible and realistic results that would put Canada at the forefront of this important field. After the initial five years the organization would become self-sufficient and no longer require direct government support. We need to change the paradigm of how we think about investing in the health Canada's youth - investments that will help promote a strong economic future for our country. In fact, every dollar invested during childhood is worth 3 to 18 dollars in savings later in life. Although we are all aware that it is good social policy to invest in the health and education of children— it must be recognized that it is also good economic policy.

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?

Job creation is an important component of economic recovery. The Canadian government's aggressive international trade agenda will result in massive opportunities for Canadian companies to further expand into foreign markets, creating jobs for Canadians here at home. In today's increasingly competitive global economy, we must invest in the health and wellness of our children and youth in the same way that we invest in infrastructure or science and technology. Indeed, our children and youth are our future, and they are also fundamental to our nation's economic success in an ever more competitive world. A more productive work force critical to Canada's future success. Productivity requires a healthy and active population. That is what this organization will accomplish: helping children to be healthier, so that they can live more active and productive lives. We want Canada's children and youth to be a source of global competitive advantage. By planning carefully and using evidence-based best practices that create strong foundations, we can help ensure sustained productivity for long-term economic success.

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?

With Canada's "baby-boom" generation nearing retirement, there will be more Canadians at the age where they can leave the labour force than Canadians at the age where they can begin working. With the increased demand that comes with an aging population, this dynamic will affect the ability of Canada to fund social programs. How the government continues to fund Canada's social programs is a key concern. An important part of the solution is a healthier and more productive workforce. Productivity can help balance the heightened pressures that will come to burden governments of all levels. The Canadian economy needs a healthy workforce to replace the retiring population, as well as to provide a viable social structure that can assure our social security system is secure going forward. This is long-term thinking with short-term benefits, too. The adoption of healthy living practices by Canada's youth will have external benefits. Just as media and education campaigns aimed at youth targeting anti-littering in the 1970s and pro-recycling in the 1980s and 1990s proved, the benefits of influencing children's behaviour impacts the practices of adults. By leveraging proven external benefits, The Sandbox Project's proposed think tank and outreach to youth will have both long-term and short-term impact.

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 starts with a healthy and active workforce. Canada needs to take a long-term view with respect to our future labour market needs. By planning carefully and using evidence-based best practice methods to create strong foundations, we pave the way now for our 'human' infrastructure to last longer and be more productive. That human infrastructure will then require fewer 'repair' costs in the future, and will pay out financially compared to other government investments. The proposed think tank aims to ensure that Canada's youth act as this country's source of global competitive advantage, ensuring sustained productivity and long-term economic success. These are investments that will improve Canada's quality of life and standard of living, as well as improve productivity and expand economic activity.

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?

Canada's children and youth are our future. They are also one of our most vulnerable demographic groups. Ensuring their safety and well-being is integral to ensuring the ongoing economic success of Canada's economy: an investment in the health of Canadian children will give them the best opportunity to become a productive employee in the future. Protecting Canada's children and youth is not only a challenge, but also an opportunity. Developing a child's health will have positive externalities on the rest of the economy in the medium- and long-term by decreasing the strain on health care as well as adding to the productivity of the Canadian workforce. This \$5 million investment by the government will bring about positive change to Canada's youth through healthier choices and lifestyles today and help ensure the long-term health and productivity of our future workforce.