

Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)

Pre-budget consultations 2012

Sparks Eggs

Responses
1. Economic Recovery and Growth
<i>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>
The use of GST rebates to help the poorest Canadians needs to be expanded. Stimulus that isn't directed at the working poor dis-proportionally helps the wrong groups.
2. Job Creation
<i>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?</i>
In Alberta, we have a tough time recruiting workers. Grants towards robotics as well as job fairs in the auto-belt to recruit unemployed Canadians in Eastern Canada. As part of our EI reform, Employers who require foreign workers should be able to see the rolls of resumes of any person claiming EI and offer them a job through the job bank.
3. Demographic Change
<i>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>
CPP retirement age should be raised to 67 (just like OAS). However, Employees should be able to use their RRSP to "Buy" a smaller early reduction factor. i.e. allow for CPP to accept RRSP money for additional benefit. This money should only flow to the CPP at date of retirement (i.e. each person bears some of the investment risk).
4. Productivity
<i>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?</i>
Grants for Natural Gas trucking is key. In addition, more Natural Gas fuel stations need to be considered. For confined feeding operations and manure disposal, the provinces legislation is too wide ranging. A competitive study of agriculture from the environmental perspective should be commissioned federally comparing the Mid-West Agriculture States to Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. In Alberta, our NRCB has put too much regulation in place on us that makes our ag sector less competitive. We need regulation that is equal to the US or need assistance when our regulation is greater than the cost of business in the US. Otherwise, the Canadian consumer bears the cost.

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?

Labour continues to be a challenge. Further, the need for federal dollars to support infrastructure projects continues. EVERY business in Canada drives the roads, uses the rail network, the internet etc. These systems need to be iron-clad. I would argue finance is also an area that we need to be iron-clad. We need to expand our deposit insurance program and require banks to take on a higher level of capital to get this insurance. This way those holding a deposit of cash do not feel the need to go outside of the country for security. 100k is not sufficient. Deposits should be insured to 100m if held in a bank that meets the stricter capital requirements i.e. Basel III. Further, a derivatives trading desk must be legislated. The idea that farmers cannot hedge their inputs with Canadian banks without paying ridiculous margins is nuts. We need to allow everyone access to financial instruments to exercise prudent business risk management. Our banks have been given too much leeway (albeit less than their American cousins). We cannot appeal to the lowest common denominator when it comes to our financial infrastructure.