

## Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)

### Pre-budget consultations 2012

## Jeffrey Torbert

### 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?*

To better navigate the financial obstacles of the current era, the federal government should invest in Canadians directly - through community-economic-development-investment-funds (CEDIFs), small-scale business start-up loans/grants, and diverse agricultural businesses that operate using ecologically-sound practices, which employs more Canadians, has a smaller operating cost, and enriches local economies and culture. Belt-tightening measures should fall primarily on the larger businesses, which already are under-taxed. Over-all, moving toward more resilient and flexible local economies rather than relying on foreign investment would be the best long-term plan for Canada's economic success.

#### 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?*

With an unstable global economy, relying on international markets for job creation will only increase the instability of Canada's economy. Direct community investment is a sustainable and affordable solution. The return on investment for small-scale businesses is exponentially greater than job creation due to foreign investment and large-scale projects.

#### 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 demographic shift presents an opportunity to welcome immigrants looking for work as well as (re)prioritize our education for young Canadians. The challenges of increased health costs of the aging population should be a message to expand our public health care, including preventative measures, to create a healthier society that costs less in the long run.

#### 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?*

Creativity is the most-needed skill in the current labour market; to ensure that Canada can meet its challenges most effectively, the promotion of diverse solutions on a municipal, provincial and federal level require innovative approaches to economic development - one important example being 'social innovation' technologies, which are seeing increased investment across the globe as an answer to increased labour market pressure.

## **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 group being most challenged is the agricultural industry. As the global food system becomes more turbulent and expensive, agriculture that is based on the export-industrial model is seeing increased input costs, lower wages, and environmental challenges due to malpractice. The solutions are to (re)invest in small-scale local agriculture based on agro-ecological methods of production, limit the ability of large foreign companies to buy land and other natural resources thus protecting these resources for the benefit of future Canadians, and cut subsidies to large agri-businesses, which are economically inefficient and environmentally destructive.