

## Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)

### Pre-budget consultations 2012

**Linda Leon**

#### 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?*

Good environmental stewardship is the foundation of a long term, sustainable economy at any time. Bill C-38 gutted environmental protection thereby presenting to the natural resource sector a license to pollute. A healthy ecosystem is the birthright of our descendents. Let's not get rich by robbing our grandchildren. Restore environmental regulations. It is better to have slower, reliable growth based on conscientious stewardship than extravagant growth within a culture of greed and recklessness. Industries need to be held 100% accountable for all clean up costs. They should be forced to compensate those experiencing long term job losses and poor health due to industrial pollution and accidents. Cleaning up is a legitimate cost of doing business. Let's enact a polluters-pay policy. Eventually; China is going to collapse under the weight of its own bad practices. We should not count on international trade alone. I would like to see incentives that encourage local manufacturing and internal trade. Where we can, we should be processing our own national resources in Canada. We should look to the future and develop renewable energy. We should be tightening our belts. Here are a few suggestions. • Repeal the shockingly expensive Crime Bill C-10 which has more to do with vindictiveness than justice. We would save billions. • In the Privy Council alone, the number of employees working in communications and media are now twice as large as they were under Jean Chrétien. Cut the communications staff in the Privy Council, the Prime Minister's Office and ministries by half. If the government were transparent; they wouldn't require so much spin. Special interest groups such as the petroleum industry, foreign multinationals and the Conservative Party should pay for their own advertisements anyway. • Cut the \$8million dedicated to the persecutions of charities. • Various ministers have been sent across the country this summer in order to bribe and frighten Canadians into accepting Bill C-38. Have them use SKYPE instead. • Failure to listen to expert advice is costing tax payers money. See below. • Stop the purchase of the F-35s. • Stop subsidizing the non-renewable energy sector.

##### 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?*

A diversified economy is more likely to withstand the economic and environmental storms we will face in the coming years. I would like to see more small businesses and industries; particularly ones that serve local or niche markets. China and the developing world are producing increasingly limited and poor quality products. What is the point in buying a \$15.00 shirt made by child slaves that doesn't survive its first laundering? Here is an opportunity for smart Canadians to start manufacturing quality products to be sold at home and abroad. Cultural industries are increasingly an important part of our lives and our economies. They should be encouraged. The CBC has been producing internationally celebrated programs as well as providing an irreplaceable public service. They should have their funding

maintained. Small organic farms, small manufacturing companies, tourism and technology companies should be encouraged. Renewable energy companies serving communities should also be encouraged. I believe that the search for alternative energy is not going to result in a magic bullet but an array of technologies that suit unique situations. This is an area where Canada could shine.

### **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?*

It is a good idea to plan for demographic changes. But I believe that the Harper Government is using the aging population as an excuse to push its agenda forward on the backs of those who are least able to defend themselves. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, Kevin Page, is on record for saying that the reasons for increasing the age for eligibility for Old Age Security are not evidence based. Restore the Long Term Census while there is still time. Reliable long term knowledge is money in the bank when it comes to demographics and the economy. We will need solutions to increased pressures on health care. These need not be more expensive; just smarter. This government should put aside its well documented aversion to knowledge and expert advice that cripple its ability to come up with effective solutions. By working with, rather than intimidating those employed in the health sector, I am confident that we can come up constructive plans. We should increase the GST to 7%. It is the fairest tax we have and is preferable to saving money at the expense of seniors and other vulnerable persons. Many senior professionals like me will continue to work after 65; out of boredom. This is a result of the far-sighted policy of providing affordable education to the baby boomers. See below.

### **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?*

A well educated population is more likely to be a competitive one. I believe that one of the reasons we are weathering the current economic storm better than the Americans is that there were a plethora of grants and affordable student loans for Canadian baby boomers when we needed it. Let's find ways to educate more of our youth. It is well documented that malnutrition adversely affects normal brain development in children. In remote northern communities; children are beginning to suffer from malnutrition due to the high cost of healthy food and, in some cases such as Fort Chipewyan, the lack of uncontaminated wild food. Looking to future productivity of these communities, we should invest now in practical food programs that work. We are being panicked into behaving in ways that may have negative long term consequences. Productivity isn't necessarily tied to out of control expansion and reckless depletion of our resources. Modest steady growth is a better goal. Rather than becoming the economic pariah the IMF claimed that it would be; Iceland is rising out of the ashes of the 2008 economic crisis. Its citizens told their government that they wanted the banks to bail themselves out. Not only is Iceland's economy growing; it is one of the most democratic countries of the world. All this is happening while western counties such as Canada are deliberately re-building themselves as de-facto oligarchies. I would prefer to live in a country with modest growth that is democratic. It is not unreasonable to ask that our government serve rather than manage its citizens.

## 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?*

Climate Change is the biggest challenge Canadians will face in the next three generations. At a time when we need them the most; Research Canada employees are having their jobs cut and funding for environmental research laboratories terminated. I would ask the government to restore funding for scientific research on the environment. If we let go the Soviet style minders hired to keep our scientists muzzled; we could perhaps afford to keep the Polar Environment Atmospheric Research Laboratory and the Experimental Lakes Laboratory. Fisheries are in trouble. Here in Yukon; the salmon population has collapsed and no-one know why. American scientists tell us that the Pacific Ocean is becoming acidified. Fish diseases are on the increase. Does this government have a plan other than to keep us as ignorant as possible? Stop this unhelpful tactic. Tourism in the Yukon took a big hit in Bill C-38 when jobs in Parks Canada were cut. Does this government want to see tourism die in Yukon; leaving resource extraction the only viable industry? Restore those jobs lost in Parks Canada. Farming is another sector that is taking a hit from unpredictable weather likely caused by climate change. The destruction of the Wheat Board has seriously hurt the family farm while benefiting foreign owned agribusinesses. These two factors alone will negatively affect food security and Canadian families. The government should listen to and work with experts in agriculture and science. Restore the National Roundtable on the Environment and Economy. Their contributions are invaluable. Enlightened employers know that a cowed workforce is an inefficient workforce and that employees who feel valued are the most productive. Will this government reconsider its anti-labour policies? Omnibus budget bills are an undemocratic way to push through policies that wouldn't pass otherwise. Given this government's past behaviour; are we to expect unwarranted attacks on women's rights, human rights, the arts, privacy, seniors, the CBC and who knows what in the next omnibus budget bill? I would ask this government to behave better.