

What is Important for People in Kitchener?

2015 Pre-Budget Consultation Input

Co-hosted by Stephen Woodworth MP, Kitchener Centre and
the Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo

December 13, 2014

BALANCING THE FEDERAL BUDGET TO ENSURE FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	
Recommendations from the Standing Committee on Finance	Related Kitchener Consultation Input
1. Return to budgetary balance and introduce balanced budget legislation	Budget based on addressing income inequality Can the budget address common values such as: Fairness and equality, legacy for the future, compassion, community of voices?
2. Maintain commitment to fiscal sustainability	Commitment needed to measuring the well-being of Canadians using the Canadian Index of well-being and recognizing the disconnect between the GDP growth and the actual well-being of Canadians and their communities
3. Scrutiny of spending taxpayers' dollars and eliminate inefficiencies	
4. Make federal public sector compensation and benefits more competitive with other public- and private-sector employees	Smaller police and more efficient police force Need national wage guidelines (dependent on the actual cost of living in different areas) to help working poor out of poverty
5. Federal Government and the Bank of Canada continue to support the current inflation-targeting framework	No more bailing out banks in recession but investment in citizens so their debt can be alleviated – people are job creators and consumers spending in economy The government should be borrowing money through Bank of Canada with low interest rates, not private banks
6. Continue with an aggressive trade agreements agenda and bring Canadian Goods and services to new international markets	

**SUPPORTING FAMILIES
AND HELPING VULNERABLE CANADIANS BY FOCUSING ON HEALTH, EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Recommendations from the Standing Committee on Finance	Related Kitchener Consultation Input
7. Maintain record high transfers to provinces for health care, social services and education	<p>More funding for social programs in municipalities that would decrease burdens on the health care system and reduce crime rates.</p> <p>More rent geared subsidies for people on social assistance</p> <p>More funding for housing repairs and renovations so people can keep living in their homes even if on low-income</p> <p>More money for the Social Transfer for Ontario so social assistance rates can actually cover the cost of living</p> <p>Transferring investment from the justice sector to social services – investment in prevention</p> <p>Universal access and quality of health care has to be sustained</p> <p>Everyone has to have access to health care, homeless and non-status people</p> <p>Low-income workers should receive the same health related benefits as people on social assistance to maintain their health</p> <p>Social inclusion reduces risk of living in poverty – more social programs</p>
8. Continue with promotion of sport and active lifestyle	<p>Physical activities plan for seniors has to be put in place – a Seniors fitness grant</p> <p>Social inclusion happens when everyone is able to participate both physically and culturally – invest in arts and recreational facilities</p>
9. Continue to support health-related research	
10. Continue to fund health, disease and disability charities	<p>There are many different income security programs, and people with mental health or addiction problems need supports in accessing income security – more funding for social agencies</p> <p>Support charities promote active participation of vulnerable populations in defining and implementing solutions</p>

	regarding poverty related issues
11. Help Canadians save for long-term care – example, support retirement security for seniors and modify registered retirement income fund withdrawal rates	
12. Evaluating success metrics for post-secondary education and improve labour market information with provinces and territories	Better tracking of the job creation: long-term and full time employment vs. short-term and part-time employment Employment rate has to be reported on accurately
13. Consider an exemption for additional in-study income for the purpose of the Canadian Student Loan Program applications	
14. Provide funding to increase participation of First Nations Land Management Regime	
15. Adjust funding to on-reserve housing to promote jobs and skills training	
16. Increase the Universal Child Care Benefit and introduce family tax cut.	
17. Encourage charitable giving through measures such as a stretch tax credit	
18. Promote financial literacy	

INCREASING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF CANADIAN BUSINESSES THROUGH RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION	
Recommendations from the Standing Committee on Finance	Related Kitchener Consultation Input
19. Continue with funding of research, innovation and development – expand Canada First Research Excellence Fund	
20. Aiding small and medium businesses to access the Scientific Research & Experiment Development investment tax credit	Want to see jobs created in Kitchener (Waterloo Region)
21. Help small and medium size enterprises through access to capital funds and pre-commercialization support	
22. Consider increase in the College and Community Innovation Program for polytechnics and colleges	
23. Enhance research and project development in aerospace industry	
24. Renew targeted Geoscience initiative	

ENSURING PROSPEROUS AND SECURE COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING THROUGH SUPPORT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE	
Recommendations from the Standing Committee on Finance	Related Kitchener Consultation Input
25. Continue to promote public-private partnerships for public infrastructure	
26. Encourage infrastructural projects across the country under the New Building Canada Plan	Taxpayer dollars need to go back to build local infrastructure
27. Continue to invest in infrastructure for municipalities and small communities, with special consideration to the natural disaster mitigation	More investment toward municipalities
28. Enhance electricity and energy infrastructure	
29. Encourage private-sector investment in natural gas vehicles and related infrastructure	
30. Build contribution to environment and remain committed to its National Conservation Plan	Need a protection act for natural resources, clearly formulated and enforced – stop dismantling environmental protection to build oil pipelines Actions needed to address climate change National parks are our heritage and not to be ceded to business and corporate ventures

IMPROVING CANADA'S TAXATION AND REGULATORY REGIMES	
Recommendations from the Standing Committee on Finance	Related Kitchener Consultation Input
31. Keep taxes low and not impose new taxes, like carbon tax, and promote job creation through low taxes for small businesses	Carbon tax needed to make companies more responsible and avoid environmental damage Corporations should invest back into communities where they operate from
32. Increase tax fairness and combat tax evasion and close tax loopholes	Corporations benefit much more than low-income earners or people on social assistance Wealthiest need to pay more in taxes than the rest of the population No more tax cuts to international corporations Counter growing income inequality with greater redistribution and progressive taxation Tax system should be able to redistribute wealth
33. Simplify the Income Tax Act	Better access to income assistance from the government

	<p>Do not introduce income splitting giving back to the households with incomes over \$100 000 and give more to those who need supports to get out of poverty</p> <p>Fitness credit is not needed in its present form since it gives back to those who actually can afford to pay for activities</p>
34. Reduce the burden of `red tape` on businesses and utilise the digital solutions more	
35. Eliminate internal barriers to trade and facilitate labour mobility within Canada	
36. Establish a single common securities regulator to promote the integrity of Canada`s fiscal system	
37. Review all relevant legislation to ensure safety and security of the country`s financial sector	Government needs a greater role in regulating the free market; it does not promote equality, it does not provide for job creation or affordable housing
38. Support credit unions in transition to being federally regulated and level the playing field with large financial institutions	
39. Extend the Accelerated Capital Cost Allowance in manufacturing, energy and clean technology	
40. Consider making the 15% Mineral Exploration Tax Credit for flow-through share investors permanent	
41. Work with provinces and territories toward an arrivals duty-free pilot project	
42. Reduce and eliminate tariffs that apply to retail goods sold in Canada	

MAXIMIZING THE NUMBER AND TYPES OF JOBS FOR CANADIANS	
Standing Committee on Finance Recommendations	Kitchener Centre Consultation Input
43. Promote skilled trades	Expand eligibility for the Second Career Program
44. Increase labour market and economic participation of vulnerable Canadians	People finish training but there are no jobs in the community Enhance Canada Jobs Grant to focus on people who have not worked for more than 5 years through incentives to employers Create employment at a living wage level with transparent monitoring
45. Assist youth with job and skill training, creating internship and work experience opportunities	
46. Support youth business mentorship and consider new incentives for young entrepreneurs	
47. Maintain its support for veterans through investment in services, connections to jobs	Assistance for veterans needed: supportive housing, social assistance, long-term home care

Additional Input from the Pre-Budget Consultation Session

Kitchener, December 13, 2014

COMMUNICATION

- Better communication with the public: more resources in more public places so people can find supports they need
- Better communication with provinces and territories (such as the support to the Light Rail Transit in Waterloo Region)
- Better communication between different orders of government and government agencies

HOUSING

- Investment in affordable housing so no one pays more than 30% of their income for rent (in comparison to prisons), in supportive housing (supports for people transitioning from homelessness long-term) and permanent housing (in comparison to shelters)
- Incentives for developers to build affordable housing
- Programs for affordable home ownership

LONG FORM CENSUS

- Reinstate the long form census

SAFETY and SECURITY

- Punishment needs to be consistent and justified by crimes
- Proper rehabilitation facilities and programs during imprisonment
- Commitment to a national security system for all Canadians based on social, economic and political equality
- Act on income inequality that erodes trust in communities and between segments of the population

IMMIGRATION

- Programs for faster recognition of diplomas and degrees for immigrants
- Recent immigrants should not be at a greater risk to live in poverty than other residents

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

- Increase eligibility and insurance paid
- Elderly workers contribute to EI but some never collect – reinvest back in EI system
- Include part-time workers in the EI program

**Federal Pre-Budget Consultation
Co-hosted by Social Planning Council K-W and
Stephen Woodworth, MP Kitchener Centre
Discussion Group Notes**

Group 1

Issues of Concern

- Housing (most of the group believe this is a major issue)
- National Debt and Banking System
- Employment
- Emergency Services and Safety
- Income and Taxes (half of the group thought that this is a major issue)
- Environment
- Transportation

Issues that the group focused on in greater detail

General Issues

- One theme mentioned throughout the discussion was communication.
 - This included better communication on resources available to the public, as in these resources should be found in more public places.
 - This also includes more communication between the federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal governments. Planning and funding for the LRT was mentioned as an example of good communication between all governments.
- More money going toward the municipalities to fund social programs
- Investing in the future
- Lots of overlap between issues-namely housing and income and taxes

Housing

- Criminal law and the justice system are connected to this issue. The group mentioned deinstitutionalization and wondered about housing services in place for those leaving prison (transitional housing). There seems to be a reliance on shelters in these cases
- Need for more supportive housing, more permanent housing
- Understand that housing is a complex issue, need motivation from multiple sectors to address this issue
- Discussed the suggestion of only spending 30% of income on housing
- Need for more affordable housing, especially for those receiving some kind of income assistance, who can only spend so much of their benefits on housing

- Discussed the desire to create a sense of home where you reside, have the freedom to do so
- Information on housing repair benefits have to be more accessible
- The government should have more incentives for land developers to build more housing
- Affordable home ownership

Employment

- Need to see job creation in our community
- There are employment training programs, but jobs are needed for those who complete these programs
- Expand eligibility for the Second Career program

Income and Taxes

- Need better access to income assistance from the government
- Number of people receiving social assistance seems to be increasing
- Need more money from the federal government going to the Social Transfer to each province
 - Increasing payments to the social transfer, to build up services, can help to reduce burdens on the health care system, and reduce crime rates. This can benefit communities, and save money in other areas, for years to come
- Social assistance rates should increase with the cost of living rates
- Corporation tax breaks higher than social assistance rates
- Suggested transferring money from the justice/law sector to social services and programs
 - More money currently used in supporting people in prison each day than those on social assistance
 - Money should go towards prevention, to support people, which could decrease crime rates
- Discussed the guaranteed minimum income-base it on the cost of living across the country. Having this income could lessen individual burdens, like having the money to pay for transportation. Need motivation from the government for this to happen.
- More taxes paid by the wealthiest in the population

Environment

- Need protection acts for natural resources, national parks
- Stop dismantling environmental protections
- Pipelines and the need to protect the environment

- Discussed a carbon tax-Stephen mentioned that British Columbia already has one, mentioned that this issue should be discussed with the U.S. , to tax “producers”-more responsibility on companies that cause environmental damage
- Climate change issues have to be addressed

National Debt/Banking System

- Shouldn't have bailed out the banks during the recession, instead should have helped citizens
- There needs to be more money spent on the general population
- (Non-governmental) There is a lawsuit against the Bank of Canada, for not fulfilling its constitutional obligation, as it is responsible for money creation; the government currently borrows money from private banks at high interest rates-the Bank of Canada used to provide the government with low interest rates.

Emergency Services and Safety

- Canadian tax-payers' money should go towards protecting the Canadian tax-payers, not international corporations. The example used here was the protest in British Columbia against the creation of pipeline, where the police are enforcing rules against the protesters, and tax-payers, not the corporation behind the pipeline, are paying for this
- Do we need more police on-call, or a more efficient police force?

Large-Group Discussion

General Discussion

- Employment is a complex issue, need to determine if current statistics on employment rates are accurate (do they showcase long-term employment and short-term employment?)
- Need national wage guidelines (with wages dependent on the cost of living across the country), would help with social inclusion by helping people out of poverty
- Many different forms of income security, with different funding
- Accessing income security benefits can be a challenge, especially for those with addictions and mental health issues
- These issues are not only a responsibility of our governments, but communities and individuals as well
- Should use tax dollars to build infrastructure of communities

Surprises in the discussion

- Mention of a need for the long-term census
- National defence and Veteran Affairs were mentioned by one group, but were overall not heavily discussed

Stephen Woodworth's Comments

- Some issues are easy to articulate
- Discussed issues important to constituents, and general policy directions

Group 2 Discussions

- We would like to see a standardized healthcare system
 - A physical activities plan for seniors like the one for children
 - Senior fitness grant
- Assistance for veterans
 - Supportive housing
 - Social assistance
 - Long term home care
- Health benefits should be available for everybody in our community including people of homelessness
- Ensuring that our census is not overlooked
 - Communication and data from the federal government is skewed and our current census does not provide is a good representation of the population since it is voluntary
 - Employment rate is not as high as it is advertised to be
 - Forms of communication should be looked at so that people that need help will be able to get help
- Wage should be raised and more jobs should be created
 - National wage guideline
 - Everybody should get the benefits that are available to the refugees
 - Lower wage earners are not receiving these benefits
- Criminal law
 - Life imprisonment should be life
 - Punishment is not consistent, they are not justified based on the crime
 - Genuine government will to look out for society as a whole instead of allowing certain individuals to get away
 - There is no offering of rehabilitation or proper facilities available during imprisonment
- Immigration documents should be able to transfer job qualifications and education from native country
 - People with certain degrees/ diplomas are not always recognized in Canada

- Immigrants end up being forced to take “survival” jobs which makes them unable to pay for housing
 - Funding for trade school
- Apprenticeship targeting low income earners
- Remove the income splitting ‘benefit’ that gives back the most to households with incomes with over \$100,000. Not those who need income most

Group 3 Discussions

- Income Tax (basic exemptions)
- Fitness credits go to families that compared to others have enough income
- Children's fitness credit does not benefit low income children: tax credits only help those who have enough income to apply them
- Inflation: CPI 2.3 but items like food exemptions and pensions are tied to CPI, not essential.
 - Basic exemptions should be tied to essentials and be higher than inflation
- **Need to balance income inequality**
- Need greater redistribution and progressive taxation
 - Lower incomes need higher exemptions
- Commitment to a national security system for all Canadians: social, economic and political equality
- Commitment to measuring the well-being of Canadians using the Canadian Index of well being ; recognise the disconnect between GDP /economic growth and the well being of Canadians and their communities

- Budget based on addressing income inequality. Building stronger communities is linked to trust. Trust is built through coming together as equals. Social inclusion happens when everyone is able to participate both physically and in arts programs. E.g. Centre in the Square only available to those who can pay the ticket prices and can get there to participate (both financial and time)
- People running things do not always understand the needs of the people they are serving
- Instead of taking actions, different levels of government and government agencies are arguing about who is responsible for different needs; this is harming the people who need service most.

- People who are marginalised are becoming more marginalised; classism is becoming more prevalent; if there is high income inequality, there is higher mistrust between segments of the population
- Restrictions on CPP, UI do not help. Part time workers need to be included in benefits.
 - Seniors who work pay EI but cannot collect
- Homelessness initiatives: Funding responsibility
- Canada Jobs grant: to focus on people who have not worked for more than 5 years; an incentive to employers to give a chance to a worker who has to build new skills.

- Adequacy of transfers: fairness between provinces and finances adequate to meet the needs of all constituents. Sustained transfers so that successful programs can continue

- Break Canadian Social Transfer into separate parts for education and social assistance
- Housing first is NOT housing only! We need funded supports for people transitioning to housing from homelessness and risk
- Government needs a greater role in regulating the free market
 - Does not promote equality, cooperation, and trust.
 - Free market can no longer provide low cost housing
- Corporations with reasonable profits contributed to the community. Now they are disconnected. Maybe legislate that profit over X% needs to come back to the community.

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Large Group Conversation Notes:

Reiterated points of discussion:

- The government needs to embrace and not work against the idea of distribution of wealth through the tax system
- **Communication** between levels of government, and within and between agencies of the government needs to be improved
- Job creation in the form of **sustained employment above the minimum wage**
 - Need transparent and honest monitoring and statistics to accomplish this
- Return of the **long form census** in order to properly inform and monitor policy. The current National Household survey breaks up decades worth of data sets and does not reach often overlooked segments of the population leading to unreliable data.
- Parks: focus on preserving heritage, not turning parks into business ventures
- Creation of National Wage **guidelines**
- Focus on **Social Inclusion**; poverty reduces this ability
- Income redistribution and transfers:
 - Restrictions over EI need to change:
 - Seniors pay into EI but cannot collect EI
 - Part-time workers face EI restrictions as well
- **Measurement** of low income based on those who receive benefits is under representative because there are many who do not receive /try to apply for benefits but live in poverty (i.e. many with mental health issues) : low income measure would be more appropriate than basing data off of benefit numbers.
- How can we build communities where people feel they are valuable and can contribute meaningfully to the community?
- 4 common values driving social change groups:
 1. Fairness and equality
 2. Legacy for the future
 3. Compassion
 4. Community of voices
- Can the budget reflect some of these values?