

The BC Chamber is a volunteer, not-for-profit association, which serves its members as the provincial federation of autonomous community chambers of commerce/boards of trade and corporate members.

The BC Chamber is the widest and broadest based business organization in the province. Representing the views of 126 chambers of commerce and boards of trade The BC Chamber is the voice of over 32,000 businesses from every size, sector and region of the province. The BC Chamber is “The Voice of Business in BC.”

The challenge for the BC Chamber is that the current economic crisis presents unique challenges that are unprecedented in recent times. Given the scale of these challenges the BC Chamber has undertaken a number of consultations with members as well as key stakeholders to determine the key considerations and concerns of BC business.

Our members believe that to ensure the wise and prudent use of public money the government must adhere to a set of principles as it determines what measures will be considered as part of a stimulus budget. These principles are;

- **Timely** – must have an impact in no more than 4-6 months
- **Finite** – cannot involve ongoing program spending
- **Improve long-term productivity & competitiveness** –measures must improve our productivity & competitiveness
- **Partnerships** – the federal government must ensure that money spent is done in consultation and partnership with the provincial and territorial governments and where appropriate the regional and local governments
- **Rational** – base spending on realistic economic projections and does not lead to long-term structural deficits

Expediting infrastructure spending

The benefits of investing in infrastructure has always been of critical importance to our ongoing competitiveness, as such the BC Chamber agrees that infrastructure spending must be an integral part of governments efforts to stimulate the economy.

The BC Chamber recommends that the Federal Government;

- 1. Create a new “Community Partnership Fund” to fund local strategic infrastructure projects;*
- 2. Immediately expedite projects approved for funding that have cleared their regulatory hurdles to ensure construction begins in no more than 4-6 months;*
- 3. Expedite the approval processes for all projects to ensure that as the economy recovers new infrastructure projects are able to begin construction thereby accelerating our recovery;*
- 4. provide sustainable, long time funding for communities to invest in infrastructure within their jurisdiction by expanding the Gas Transfer Program to ensure that 100% of all gas tax collected within province/territory be returned to that jurisdiction.*

Improving access to credit

Access to credit is a significant concern to businesses of every size and in virtually every sector. While there is no empirical data on the level of lending there is growing anecdotal evidence that there has been a significant tightening of the credit market.

The BC Chamber recommends that the federal government;

- 1. Expand the ability of the Business Development Bank of Canada Export Development Canada and Community Futures to provide firms with alternative access to credit by significantly increasing the level of capital available while also increasing the range of lending these institutions can undertake; and*
- 2. Work with the Bank of Canada and the commercial banking sector to ensure liquidity and the affordability of credit for Canadian businesses and consumers*

Building strong and sustainable labour markets and training incentives

The BC Chamber believes that efforts in this area, as part of a stimulus budget, should focus on re-training workers who need to shift industries or sectors.

The BC Chamber recommends that the Federal Government;

- 1. Create a training fund for workers impacted by the current crisis;*
- 2. Introduce a national human resource investment tax credit program that provides a tax credit for firms that provided training as part of the federally accredited training program;*
- 3. Work closely with the provinces and territories to remove restrictions on the LMA and LMDA programs to allow for the design of programs that will meet the needs of employers;*
- 4. Extend length of time for which companies can use the EI worksharing program, beyond the current limit of 38 weeks, in order to preserve jobs during the current economic downturn;*
- 5. Consider introducing temporary income support measures for hard-hit industries and communities; and*
- 6. Expand the Working Income Tax Benefit to provide support to the newly unemployed on a strictly temporary basis.*

Supporting traditional and emerging industrial sectors

Beyond the auto sector, our members have consistently stated that support for traditional and emerging industrial sectors should always be a cornerstone of budgets at any level of government.

The BC Chamber recommends that the federal government;

- 1. Implement the election commitment to;*
 - Extend funding for the forestry industry to market its products abroad and continue support for lumber mills to convert from fossil fuels to biomass.*
 - Modernize the administration of our fisheries to ensure greater focus on conservation and using administrative sanctions, rather than court proceedings, to deal with violations.*
 - Extend the “super” flow-through share incentive for mining.*

2. *Implement the election commitment to support capital investment by abolishing tariffs on a wide range of imported machinery and equipment.*
3. *Work with all levels of government to identify leading edge research, development, technology and innovation initiatives and link information from those initiatives to current and new industries in the value-added products sector*
4. *Undertake a fundamental review of the regulatory burden placed on our resource sectors and immediately reduce and streamline the regulatory burden;*
5. *Implement the election commitment to;*
 - *Create a new venture capital fund to be administered by the Business Development Bank of Canada, which will allow late-stage technology companies to move from research and development to commercialization stages of business.*
 - *Increase support for science and technology by \$850 million by 2009-10 and make additional investments in internationally recognized science and technology projects in Canada*

Investing in housing

Homelessness is presenting an increasing challenge for many communities across BC.

The BC Chamber recommends that the Federal Government create a fund that can be used to partner with other levels of government in the construction of social housing.

Developing a more competitive Canada

The BC Chamber recommends that the Federal Government;

1. *Immediately produce a plan for the implementation of all the Competition Panel's recommendations; and*
2. *Immediately establish an independent Canadian Competitiveness Council under the Minister of Industry.*

Reducing the regulatory burden

The BC Chamber recommends that the Federal Government work with the Provinces and Territories to streamline the approval process in the areas of environmental permitting, major project development and fisheries management through strategic regulation and legislative reform that establishes 'one-stop' approval processes.

Breaking Down Trade Barriers within Canada

The BC Chamber recommends that the Federal Government fulfill its election campaign commitment to use the federal trade and commerce power to reduce barriers to trade, investment and mobility if immediate progress is not made by the provinces.

Increasing Trade with Emerging Markets

The BC Chamber recommends that the Federal Government;

1. *Fulfill its election campaign commitment to will move aggressively to improve Canada's network of bilateral and regional free trade and economic agreements to reduce our reliance on the US market by diversifying our export markets.*
2. *Make the conclusion of Approved Destination Status with China an immediate priority*