

Submission of The Royal Conservatory of Music: 2014 Pre-budget Consultation to be undertaken by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Royal Conservatory of Music is one of the largest and most respected music education institutions in the world, and was established in 1886, not long after Canada itself. The Conservatory provides the definitive standard of excellence in curriculum design, assessment, performance training, and teacher certification. The Conservatory's systems and publications support an industry of 20,000+ private music teachers across the country, operating in urban, suburban, rural and remote communities. In addition, the organization's arts-based programs address a range of social issues, such as youth at risk, the development of children in their early years, and wellness in seniors.

In this submission, The Royal Conservatory will emphasize that music and the arts are an essential part of Canada's internationally competitive, creative economy that positively impacts jobs, businesses, our international profile, and the intellectual, social and creative development of our citizens, along with their quality of life. Investment by the federal government in The Royal Conservatory of Music is an investment in social and economic prosperity, creating a desirable environment for business development and growth, and a quality of life that is the envy of the world. Such an investment helps to address the following three themes of the 2014 pre-budget hearings:

Maximizing the number and types of jobs for Canadians

Increasing the competitiveness of Canadian businesses through research, development, innovation and commercialization

Supporting families and helping vulnerable Canadians by focusing on health, education and training

The Royal Conservatory – with its national scope, inclusive programming, and extensive plans to modernize music education to ensure the ongoing engagement of young Canadians in music study and better support the professional development of music teachers, particularly those in smaller communities – has an important role in the cultural and economic future of Canada.

The Royal Conservatory of Music would welcome the opportunity to present its submission before the committee at its hearing in Toronto.

THE CASE FOR INVESTING IN THE ROYAL CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

In 2007 alone, participation in cultural activities generated \$25 billion in taxes for all levels of government. In fact, arts and culture have helped to sustain the country's economy in many ways throughout the economic downturn by providing high quality jobs to about 600,000 people – more than double the level of employment of the forestry or banking sectors.

In addition, individuals who actively participate in music have carried the many cognitive, intellectual, social and creative benefits of music study into subsequent careers in a wide range of fields, including medicine, business, politics, education, science, sports, as well as those who have gone on to international musical acclaim and helped to define Canada to the world.

One of the world's most creative societies as measured by rates of start-up formation is Finland, where music is a mandatory subject throughout K-12 education. Innovation leader South Korea boasts among the world's highest rates of participation in music study. These societies have recognized the tremendous advantage conferred through participation in music and arts education, and are already reaping the rewards in terms of competitiveness and resulting prosperity and economic leadership.

Today, a growing body of academic research evidence supports the contention that music education develops transferable skills and attitudes that are highly correlated to academic and career success. Simply put, students who pursue music studies gain a capacity for persistence and self-regulated learning that gives them an advantage in academic studies.

Furthermore, music education fuels a passion for learning among youth. By drawing out students' very best efforts, music education programs redefine their sense of possibility and purpose.

Declining Music and Cultural Literacy

Canadians believe in the value of music and arts literacy. A remarkable 94% of Canadian adults in a recent national survey agreed that children should have an opportunity to learn to play an instrument. Yet in many regions of the country, especially away from major urban centres, public schools no longer have music teachers on staff.

In the past, Canada's cultural organizations have largely been able to take for granted that Canadians would have the basic cultural literacy to participate meaningfully in cultural activities. This is no longer the case. Large numbers of younger Canadians are growing up with minimal opportunity to acquire music and arts literacy. This is particularly challenging for organizations involved in fields such as opera, theatre, ballet, and symphonic music that require educated audiences.

The Conservatory is working to address the decline in participation in music literacy programs in several ways:

- Creating online programs that offer access to musical training expertise that is not available in many smaller communities

- Advocating for the value of music study, and encouraging parents to emphasize music instruction for their children
- Creating programs and music apps that develop a foundation of music literacy in pre-school children
- Partnering with school districts to fill gaps in cultural literacy programming via partnerships with artists and elders from the local community, trained by The Conservatory.

In this increasingly digital age it is critical that The Royal Conservatory of Music is able to respond to the expectations of a generation whose social networks are part local and part global, and who expect to collaborate, comment on, share, create, as well as consume culture online, and thereby keep children and youth interested in participating in our vibrant cultural scene. The Royal Conservatory understands the great potential for expanding its digital footprint, but requires investment by the federal government to take advantage of opportunities to reach audiences in the farthest reaches of our vast country.

Modernizing Music Literacy

Over the past year, The Conservatory has articulated a new vision for the digital engagement of young Canadians, and has launched two initial product development streams in online learning and music literacy apps.

Among Canada's major cultural organizations, The Conservatory's core audience is the one most immediately affected by the digital shift, as the vast majority of its students are between the ages of five and eighteen.

The Conservatory has observed that, while there is a robust core group of students excelling through its traditional music systems, the digital culture is impacting the level of engagement of many children taking music lessons today.

Conservatory-affiliated teachers across the country speak of students who have shorter attention spans, and who expect greater choice in repertoire, and more opportunities for social interaction.

While demand for music lessons remains robust across the country thanks to Canadian parents' high level of support for them, many teachers report higher levels of turnover than in the past and say there are fewer "serious" students.

If Canada is to produce the next Sarah McLachlan, Diana Krall, Bruce Cockburn, or Prime Minister, The Conservatory must make the very best tools and resources in music training readily available in the kinds of digital formats that today's youth find most engaging.

The Conservatory is addressing the digital shift in these ways:

- Creating music apps that incorporate high quality graphics, customizable interfaces, and social sharing and collaboration options

- Designing early childhood apps that develop basic music literacy so children are well equipped when they begin to learn to play an instrument, enabling them to make faster progress
- Developing online courses that offer the advantages of group learning and anywhere anytime access
- Experimenting with a digital edition of Learning Through the Arts – the Conservatory’s community arts program – that are suited to the needs of flip classrooms, where students prep at home and problem solve in class, using hands-on learning resources developed by Canadian artists.

Recommended investment: \$10 million over five years

Modernizing Canada’s Cultural Infrastructure

The Conservatory’s systems and publications support an industry of 20,000+ private music teachers across the country. This is one of the nation’s key cultural assets, and its future deserves close attention from policy makers.

A generational change is beginning to occur within Canada’s music teacher community, with younger teachers beginning to take over practices from retiring teachers. This trend is more advanced than in many other industries, due to the older average age of Canadian music teachers.

The Conservatory recognizes the intergenerational transfer is a huge opportunity to ensure the viability of music literacy instruction in communities across Canada.

The Conservatory plans to invest in the professional development of younger music teachers, in tandem with its burgeoning investment in digital tools and systems.

It is important for The Conservatory – and Canada – to make this investment, because as much as digital can be an asset for cultural engagement, there is no substitute for the coaching and mentorship of an individual teacher.

Moreover, the music teacher plays a huge role in the community. In many of Canada’s smaller communities, the music teacher is the only individual with extensive musical training. As such, he or she is called on to lead local choirs, bands, and festivals, and to play at public events, in addition to fulfilling teaching duties.

Indeed, many parents say that the local music teacher is one of the key resources helping to make the quality of life in smaller communities attractive to families with young children.

The Conservatory’s plan to modernize music education and support music teachers in smaller communities aligns with the federal government’s wish to see smaller towns continue to thrive in future.

The Conservatory is working to modernize the Canadian music education industry by creating:

- A national needs assessment program to engage teachers in defining challenges and creating solutions
- Digital training and certification programs for teachers
- Digital tools for teachers and their students, such as ear training and theory apps and online courses, practice apps, and collaborative creation apps
- A broader curriculum that includes more opportunities for customization and social music making, both online and through music festivals and events.

Recommended investment: \$5 million over five years

Exports a Key to Sustainability

As The Conservatory invests in new systems and supports to ensure the viability of music literacy programs across the nation, it is critical that it also invests in rapidly developing markets for music literacy in Asian-American communities and countries such as Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan.

Indeed, an expansion of enrolment in The Royal Conservatory's examinations and expanded sales of publications in overseas markets are necessary to provide the organization with a new revenue base to support the reinvestment program outlined in this document.

The Conservatory needs the help of Canadian trade missions and export assistance programs to boost its business in key Asian markets, where demand for traditional forms of music instruction are at historically high levels.

At the same time, The Conservatory will offer products created for Canadians, such as ear training or early childhood music literacy apps in global markets such as the iTunes App Store, helping to generate additional revenues that will help sustain product development over time.

Recommended investment: \$5 million over five years

Conclusion

The Royal Conservatory of Music has an important role to play in the cultural and economic future of Canada. Investment by the federal government in this type of business development will enable The Conservatory to deliver music education programming to children increasingly being left out of musical education across Canada. It will also allow the organization to grow internal capacity and business relationships in order to gain greater independence from government in the future.