

Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)

Pre-budget consultations 2012

OCAD University

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?

Our country's future prosperity will depend on how well Canada is able to create a flexible, competitive and creative workforce that can adapt to socio-economic conditions and develop new future-oriented products, services and ideas. With over 135 years of creative work force development, OCAD University is Canada's largest art, design, and media university. Alumni and faculty are leading artists and designers who contribute to economic development through new product development, product design, healthcare innovations, to the success of galleries, digital and mobile media. Many OCAD U graduates go on to lead all manner of businesses and public enterprises bringing with them the tools for innovative thinking. The federal government can strengthen OCAD University's role in the creative economy by investing in research, Aboriginal higher education, and in physical and virtual infrastructure. Continued investments in research, through the federal granting agencies, support postsecondary institutions in attracting and retaining the best students, faculty and researchers from around the world and in developing global research partnerships. Continued investments in research will allow OCAD University to develop innovative products, services and ideas and allow student and faculty research to reach new markets. As well, the successful research and commercialization programs at the Federal Economic Development Agency (FedDev) should be maintained and strengthened. Continued investments in Aboriginal higher education through increased financial support to Aboriginal students and investments in innovative university programs, such as OCAD University's Aboriginal Visual Culture Program, will expand university education opportunities for Aboriginal Canadians. Continued investments in physical and virtual infrastructure will support job creation and provide universities with the capacity to expand quality education and research and compete globally.

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?

Continued investments in physical and virtual infrastructure Universities increasingly play the role of stimulating economies, whether in urban districts, cities or non-urban environments. Capital investment in university infrastructure creates direct jobs as well as many spin-offs. Despite past stimulus investments, Canadian universities continue to need physical infrastructure. OCAD U's utilization of classroom and laboratory space is well above the system average in Ontario. Despite this, OCAD U has still managed to accommodate growth, program innovations and graduate studies. Providing OCAD U with the resources to expand its physical space will allow for the institution to increase enrolments and to create innovative graduates ready for the future needs of Canada's innovation economy. As research has become increasingly multi-institutional and international and as all disciplines require large-scale data, a robust super-computing infrastructure remains critical to university research. OCAD U supports the development of a Data Infrastructure Program (DIP) that would provide students and researchers

with access to essential tools, such as high performance computing, to support growing Canadian expertise in areas such as data analytics.

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?

Continued investments in Aboriginal higher education Aboriginal Canadians are the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population. Expanding opportunities for post-secondary education for these citizens will have a beneficial impact on Aboriginal Canadians and on Canada. Aboriginal Canadians are limited in their ability to participate in the increasingly educated Canadian workforce due to low educational attainment rates. There is a need to expand university education opportunities for Aboriginal Canadians by increasing financial support to Aboriginal students and by investing in innovative university programs, like OCAD University's Aboriginal Visual Culture Program. At OCAD U, the Aboriginal Visual Culture Program draws on rich histories, traditions and linguistic expression that underlie First Nations, Metis, and Inuit art, media and design, and concentrates on contemporary practice, theory and expression in Canadian and international contexts. The program includes Aboriginal critical and historical knowledge across a range of media and brings a unique Aboriginal focus to design history and criticism. The OCAD U Aboriginal Visual Culture Program welcomes all Canadian Aboriginal people from First Nations, Metis, Inuit and urban centres. It is also building an international presence and links with Aboriginal peoples in Mexico, Australia, New Zealand and other sites. With curricula spanning art, media and design as well as curatorial and critical studies, the program is unique in Canada and significant in the world. Additional funding to Aboriginal higher education would fast track the development of strategic programs like the Aboriginal Visual Culture Program and drive immediate measurable outcomes. Canada should invest now and partner with the indigenous communities to ensure cultural, social and economic prosperity for all its citizens.

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?

Continued investments in research Innovation is the key to improving Canada's productivity. Continued investments in research support postsecondary institutions in developing innovative products, services and ideas, attracting and retaining the best students, faculty and researchers from around the world and in developing global research partnerships. Art, design and media play an "enabling technology" role in modern economies and are largely responsible for the phenomenal success of companies like Apple and Ikea. To compete on a world stage, Canada needs to invest in research capacity to connect art and design with health care, gaming, scientific visualization, information and communication technology and other rapidly growing fields. OCAD University is growing its research and educational capacity in partnership with other institutions and with industry, so that students and industry are both exposed to the best ideas. OCAD U's new Imagination Catalyst will help students and faculty with the resources and advice required to launch and grow businesses through a start-up incubator that fosters experiential learning opportunities and accelerates the commercialization of ideas for products and services. The Imagination Catalyst will strengthen and integrate OCAD University's current and future industry collaborations with faculty and students in applied research and commercialization. The Imagination Catalyst will ensure that student and faculty research reaches new markets. With the aging of the western world, the global increase in the incidence of disability and the adoption of accessibility legislation by all of Canada's trading partners, Canada has an opportunity to supply a growing global

demand for inclusively designed services and products. The Inclusive Design Research Centre (IDRC), at OCAD University, is the nexus of a number of internationally recognized, global research networks that lead innovation in inclusive design. Continued investments in both operational and infrastructure costs of applied research through the federal granting agencies will allow OCAD U, and other Canadian universities, to continue to develop innovative products, services and ideas. As well, the successful research and commercialization programs at the Federal Economic Development Agency (FedDev) should be maintained and strengthened.

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?