

# **Federal Pre-budget Consultation 2018**

Submission of La Cité to the House of  
Commons Standing Committee on Finance

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La Cité would first like to express its full support for the direction taken by the 2017 Federal Budget. La Cité has benefitted by the direction taken through a contribution received from the Strategic Infrastructure Fund (SIF) for post-secondary institutions. That allocation will allow us to build an exciting space “Place La Cité” fully dedicated to the creative and innovation process for all – students, faculty, businesses and community families. Construction, now underway, will be completed for September 2018.

In this submission we are pleased to respond to the two questions referenced by the Standing Committee in seeking pre-budget comments and would be glad to expand in a personal presentation to the Committee by the President of La Cité.

### **1. What federal measures would help Canadians to be more productive? For example, what education and training, health, housing, and labour market participation and mobility measures would help Canadians to be as productive as possible in their workplaces and their communities?**

The nature of work and entrepreneurship is changing at a pace that often outpaces the adaptation by educational institutions. Students expect colleges and universities to be much more “nimble” in responding to changes in society and the work environment. Employers similarly expect greater flexibility in how education responds to what they require of new employees and the ability of existing employees to upgrade their skills and competencies.

While La Cité is a college in the Province of Ontario it is increasingly being pulled to a national and international presence in the global francophone community, particularly as electronic means of communication play an ever-widening role in the education process. International students are a fast-increasing segment of the college – students from 40 countries pushed enrollment up by 23% in 2016-17 over the previous year. The opening of “La Place” in 2018 is expected to further strengthen this trend. The contribution of the federal government can be instrumental in enabling colleges and universities to adapt to the new realities by supporting greater innovation and experimentation in the educational process. While the provinces fully support innovation and flexibility their resources are limited to foster non-traditional approaches that emphasize increased educational adaptability for both students, employers and entrepreneurs.

For instance, La Cité continues to seek support for its ground-breaking approach “Mobili-Cité” that provides a more tailored approach for small groups of students in geographic areas beyond the central campus to follow their educational programs

through matching with employers and receive direct experiential learning. This approach is also seen as a way of providing a more flexible experience for new immigrants that initially also require a more personal approach as they seek to adapt to Canadian society and the work place. While the model is developed, La Cité requires funding to fully test its implementation across a number of programs prior to introducing the concept to a wider group of programs.

The last federal budget correctly placed a major emphasis on agri-food emphasizing the growth in international markets and the role that Canada can play. While “industrial scale” farming is a reality of western Canada, it is much less the case in eastern Canada where family and smaller-scale farms dominate. Here again, flexibility and adaptability are the key concepts that education needs to meet in servicing the agriculture and agri-food community. In addition, education in these areas needs to be fully supported by applied research that is capable of resolving a myriad of challenges in the agri-food sector. In the 2016-17 year, more than 200 students were involved with 50 La Cité projects in applied research, many of which were in bio-innovation and agri-food.

Eastern Ontario needs a francophone-based Agri-food Innovation Centre that can act as a catalyst to bring the talents and creative approaches into focus. La Cité intends to be a full partner in transforming the facilities at Alfred, Ontario (former agricultural college of Guelph University) into a Community Hub and Innovation Centre for Agri-food. We urge the federal government to invest in the renewal and re-purposing of the Alfred facility which will combine education, experiential learning, innovation and applied research.

## **2. What federal measures would help Canadian businesses to be more productive and competitive? For example, what measures would help businesses to undertake research, innovation and commercialization, purchase advanced technology and equipment, invest in the training and development of their employees, participate in global value chains and increase their international market share?**

In its 2017 pre-budget submission, La Cité noted that Canadian businesses need to be competitive, regardless of the market they are in – local, domestic or international. Canada and many other countries are huge importers of products produced around the world and we seem to have accepted the maxim that “given the competitive situation” we cannot produce those goods in our own country. This is where the spotlight of creativity and innovation needs to shine – finding ways to do things better at home and then carrying that forward to the international stage. For this we need to put a greater emphasis on applied research that gives our students and our SME’s the opportunity to come up with new products and processes. The agri-food sector is ripe for such local innovation.

La Cité supported the call by CIGan to “ramp up federal investments in college and institute applied research over five years from \$75 million to \$300 million per year as part of the Innovation Agenda and action plan” as well as the recommendation of Colleges Ontario that “FedDev and FedNor should significantly raise their current low level of funding for college-business applied research to at least the norm for other regional development agencies.” Both of these recommendations are still important for the 2018 budget.

For its part, in conjunction with the building of “La Place”, the college has recently created the Office of Ideas and Creativity to produce a constant stream of innovation ideas for students, businesses and the community to test and implement across a wide range of economic sectors and then to showcase the results in constantly changing demonstrations at “La Place.”

The college understands the need for large innovation projects centred on Canada’s major urban areas but urges the government to turn its attention in the 2018 budget to fostering innovation outside of these centres and tailored to assisting SME’s. The federal government’s SuperCluster program was indeed an exceptional measure in the 2017 budget and the inclusion of colleges and universities as an integral component of submissions was commendable. However, the program is expected to have only limited application for SME’s, particularly those in smaller urban and rural areas.

What is needed is a “Mini-cluster program” for smaller urban and rural areas focussed on the priority economic sectors identified by the federal government.

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