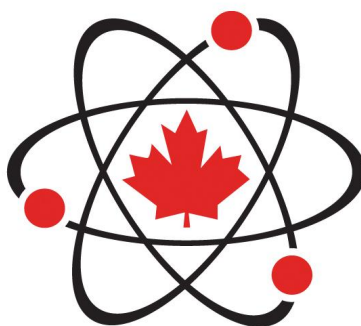


Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget



**CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SCIENCE CENTRES
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES CENTRES DE SCIENCES**

August 2020

Recommendation 1: That the government implement a \$30 million Recovery and Stimulus Plan to support the national science centre sector, to provide funding for:

- **Online Science & Innovation Engagement** for families and youth through technology, platforms, capacity building development, and implementation of relevant and reliable online content.
- **COVID-19 Safety Upgrades & Public Awareness** for immediate deployment towards health and safety related supplies and infrastructure renovations critical to facility operations; and to build public COVID-19 awareness campaigns leveraging high levels of public trust in science centres.

SITUATION

In the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis, understanding science is vital. We applaud the Government of Canada in your quick and decisive actions to protect Canadians through public health leadership and COVID-19 emergency funding programs defined by evidence-based decisions.

Canada needs consistent, reliable science communication for the coming months and years, especially with the ongoing problem of misinformation. Canadian science centres are poised to take a leadership role as the most trusted source for science information. **When Canadians look for accurate science, they look to science centres. 1 in 3 Canadians visit a science centre every year, serving over 10 million people, including more than 1 million students.**

The Government of Canada's support of science and research with the single largest investment in fundamental research in Canadian history is admirable. However, there is an alarming gap in the *engagement* of Canadians with science. Science centres are stepping into that gap to provide clear messaging to equip families with the knowledge, habits, and public norms that will empower them to understand science, tackle misinformation, and keep them safe. This role is essential and increasingly urgent for building resilient communities. The Government of Canada has a pivotal opportunity to partner with science centres to help Canadians navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

We recommend **establishing a \$30 million Recovery and Stimulus Funding Plan** to help maintain and create jobs while delivering on the increasing need for science engagement in Canada.

PROBLEM

Canadians are at risk of losing their most effective science communicators as a result of the impacts COVID-19 has had on science centres. Layoffs of up to 90% of staff are inevitable once the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) ends and unless there is a significant investment of recovery and stimulus funding. The impact on public confidence in science at a time when science is in the headlines could be complicated and negative. Science centres are high touch, highly interactive facilities, thus fully re-opening will be a challenge and will occur slowly to ensure the health and safety of visitors and employees. As one of the hardest hit sectors due to COVID-19, significant impacts will be felt at our institutions for months or years, even after society has settled into a new "normal." The experience with past epidemics—such as the SARS outbreak in 2003—suggests that restoring normal patterns of visitation to science centres and museums may take two years or longer.

During the COVID-19 pandemic many CASC member organizations are falling through the cracks for relief funding. Stimulus support is needed for the recovery of Canada's most impactful science communicators, at a time when tackling misinformation is vital.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend the following key action to ensure the continuity of science centres in Canada:

Provide \$30 million Recovery and Stimulus Funding to support national:

- **Online Science & Innovation Engagement** for families and youth through technology, platforms, capacity building development, and implementation of relevant and reliable online content.
- **COVID-19 Safety Upgrades & Public Awareness** for immediate deployment towards health and safety related supplies and infrastructure renovations critical to facility operations; and to build public COVID-19 awareness campaigns leveraging high levels of public trust in science centres.

The Canadian Association of Science Centres' network has the largest science public engagement reach across Canada, engaging over 10 million Canadians, and has the capacity to facilitate the creation and distribution of the Recovery and Stimulus funding.

RATIONALE

The Government of Canada has previously recognized the need to support and invest in Science, Innovation, and Economic Development. Science centres are community anchors actively doing this work by:

Contributing to Canadian Economy

- **Tourism and the Visitor Economy** – Science centres collectively add well more than \$300 million a year (total operating budgets) to the Canadian visitor economy.
- **Workforce Development** – Employing more than 3500 Canadians and contributing to future skills development by engaging over 1 million students each year, fostering the next generation of scientists and innovators.
- **Rural Economic Development** – Science centres help build vibrant rural economies and communities to strengthen the middle class and enhance economic growth for Canada. Over 75% of Canadian science centres offer outreach activities beyond their walls, reaching local, rural, and regional communities.

Helping Canadians Face Global Challenges

- **Providing key support for educators and parents** in science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) learning and advancing awareness of global challenges, collectively reaching over 10 million Canadians through in-person visits, outreach programs, and online experiences;
- **Contributing to innovation ecosystems** through youth engagement and industry partnerships, fostering the next generation of scientists. Science centres in Canada have developed innovative

responses to global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, through enduring relationships with a range of partners, including school districts, youth-serving not for profits, community-based organizations, public libraries, local businesses, and more.

Championing Safe and Resilient Communities

- **Helping keep our communities safe** through effective communications on relevant issues affecting people's daily lives, provide social infrastructure that improves people's quality of life.
- **Renewing relationships with Indigenous peoples in Canada** through partnerships and collaborations to deliver content that bridges traditional knowledge and perspectives with Western science.

While supports, such the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), have been helpful, these are temporary programs that are not designed to meet the science centre sector's long-term needs. In addition, numerous science centres do not qualify for CEWS due to their relationships with provincial governments. The recently announced \$53M *COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund for Heritage Organizations - Museums Assistance Program* leaves out science centres, as most are not considered to have "heritage collections" and thus do not qualify.

We are encouraged by the recent extension of CEWS until the end of December, 2020, but as we continue to navigate the pandemic, targeted program support is needed to address unique challenges that science centres are facing. Thus, we recommend the establishment of a **\$30 million Recovery and Stimulus Funding Plan** in order to maintain and create jobs, while delivering on the increasing need for science engagement in Canada.

During COVID-19 closures science centres quickly pivoted to providing digital learning opportunities for families, youth, and educators online, even as science centres faced tremendous economic challenges. **With their high public profiles, science centres are barometers for recovery in the eyes of many Canadians.** It is critical that we support and leverage the impact of these institutions to help keep Canadians safe by making COVID-19 information accessible, inclusive, and relevant to local communities.

About the Canadian Association of Science Centres:

Established in 1985, CASC is a registered charity that supports a national network of trusted member organizations whose missions include linking science to society. Our overarching vision is for Canada to have a thriving science and innovation culture of engaged citizens. We work towards this outcome by empowering a national network of organizations who champion Science and Innovation by making science approachable, relevant, and accessible. Our Members, including science centres, museums, aquariums, planetariums and innovation labs, among others, that work at the interface of science, innovation, and the public. Collectively, our Members reach over 10 million visitors each year, including over 1 million students engaged through school visit programs.

Canadian Association of Science Centres

100 Ramsey Lake Road

Sudbury ON P3E 5S9

T: 705.522.6825 F: 705.522.1677

E: info@casc-accs.com