



August 7th, 2020

Honorable Wayne Easter, PC, MP
Chair, House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Via: [FINA RBC website](#)

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2021 Federal Budget

Dear Mr. Easter:

Science World BC is a registered charity and an iconic landmark in British Columbia. For over thirty years, our exhibits and programming have served and benefited the entire province, in particular our youth and future generations of science professionals.

Science World is truly a provincial organization. In 2019 we welcomed over 864,000 visitors to our iconic facility and served over 145,000 students with direct programming in their own communities across the province. In the last five years, we have seen the fastest growth of the large BC attractions, and are one of the biggest attractions in all of BC (#4 according to 2020 Business in Vancouver listing). We are the not-for-profit with the most visitors in 2019 according to the same publication.

We provide valuable augmentation to the province's education system, visiting some of the most remote schools in the province each year. Science World BC believes in the importance of delivering quality science, technology, engineering, art & design, and mathematics (STEAM) learning opportunities accessible to all young Canadians including rural, remote and First Nations. Our vision is to provide leadership and science-based educational opportunities to British Columbians of all ages. We believe the need for STEAM education and digital skills are more important than ever to ensure Canada's competitiveness as high-tech innovations are rapidly transforming job requirements across British Columbia, Canada and internationally. Support from the Government of Canada is critical for both essential programming and maintaining our physical space to facilitate this growth.

Due to COVID-19, Science World closed our doors on March 13 and lost 85% of our revenue immediately. As a charity, with less than 2% government funding, shutting our doors eliminated our largest revenue stream. While we have re-opened to the public August 1st, we remain very concerned as attendance is expected to be very low until a vaccine or effective treatment is found and Science World is known for its high-touch, interactive experiences. This differentiation from other tourist attractions means substantial re-engineering is required in order to ensure visitor satisfaction and safety.

We are taking all the necessary steps to ensure that we have a Science World to come back to and have made a number of difficult decisions including lay-offs and reduction in pay for all staff, including a 40% pay cut for myself as the President & CEO. We are seeking one-time assistance to help Science World cover a portion of our operating expenses during this unprecedented time.

In order to continue to serve our community, Science World's capital infrastructure needs to be maintained. In that regard, we continue to pursue a formal funding request for the critical rehabilitation of our dome, upgrades to near-obsolete technology and to ensure universal accessibility and improved energy efficiency.

Below are our specific recommendations pertaining to our key strategic initiatives including our focused initiatives to serve Indigenous communities and girls and young women pursuing STEAM literacy and careers. These are key components of our strategy that align with federal priorities.

Science World BC is one of the largest science centres in Canada. With currently less than 2% government funding (far less than our counterparts), we are seeking support to continue to grow our programs in the name of current and future generations of Canadians.

Thank you in advance for your Committee's considerations of our recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Wood". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first letter of "Janet" being a large, stylized 'J' that loops around the word.

Janet Wood
President & CEO

cc: Nancy Roper, VP Development Science World

Key Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the Government implement program to support Science World BC's operations due to the impact of COVID-19

Recommendation 2: That the Government of Canada invest \$15.6 million in critical capital infrastructure funding for the iconic Science World BC dome

- **Recommendation 3:** That the Government of Canada invest \$3 million over three years in *"Symbiosis"* to dramatically scale STEAM literacy

- **Recommendation 1: That the government implement program to support Science World BC's operations due to the impact of COVID-19**

Financial

Science World closed its doors in March, resulting in an immediate loss of 85% of revenue. Immediate steps taken include:

- Temporarily laid-off of 133 part-time staff
- Full-time staff took a minimum of a 20% pay cut
- President & CEO has taken a 40% pay cut
- Reduced all non-essential expenses
- Cancelled all merit increases
- Deferred capital investments, other than those essential to health & safety required for the facility
- Reduced discretionary spending to a minimum

Unique challenges

We have just re-opened but concerns about operational feasibility include:

- Attendance is expected to be low until a vaccine or effective treatment is found. Our August admissions numbers to-date are very low
- Science World is known for its high-touch, interactive experiences. This differentiation from other attractions means substantial re-engineering is required in order to ensure visitor satisfaction and safety

Impact

- To be fully operational our monthly operating costs are approximately \$950K per month.
- Currently, with CEWS (approx. \$300K/month received) and reduced operational costs, Science World BC is losing \$300K/month.

Saving an Icon for the next generation

If financial support is not secured until a vaccine is available and admissions do not recover quickly enough, Science World will have to permanently lay-off staff, and will face massive deficits that would be difficult to recover from. In addition to re-engineering costs to reopen in this new world, the facility - particularly the iconic dome - needs significant repair. If Science World continues to spend its limited reserves to cover basic maintenance and operational costs during the closure, and there is a structural issue with the dome, Science World is unlikely to survive.

• **Recommendation 2: That the Government of Canada invest \$15.6 million in critical capital infrastructure funding for the iconic Science World BC dome**

The current plan is shovel-ready and shovel-worthy, and can be implemented in phases

Phase 1: Dome repairs & technology upgrades

Phase 2: New Innovation Space

We believe that this infrastructure project can provide an avenue for economic recovery while meeting a critical provincial, and national, demand.

Recently voted the most iconic building in Vancouver, Science World's iconic domed facility was built as a temporary structure for Expo 86, intended to last six months. Science World took over the building in 1988 and opened to the public in 1989. In the intervening three decades, Science World has refurbished the bulk of the facility, with the single major exception being the dome, which is still encased in the original (now leaky) shell stainless steel triangles and features the original 1980's theatre technology.

The infrastructure project includes two key elements:

Dome repairs & technology upgrades:

- Upgrades to critical infrastructure including roof repairs so that the dome no longer leaks and replacement of technology that will become unusable in a few years
- Improve energy efficiency and access for visitors with disabilities
- Upgrade to flex-use, 350 seat venue in the largest domed theatre in the world, capable of hosting an array of performances—from drama and music to town hall gatherings and lectures
- Installation of cutting-edge visualization technologies that will create immersive experiences capable of transporting visitors anywhere
- Ability to livestream STEAM education to schools throughout the province

New Innovation Space:

- Just outside the domed theatre, overlooking False Creek will be a new 934 sq. m. glassed-in convening space featuring digital technologies that can host a multitude of programs, conferences and community events. The space will be highly flexible, configurable into one large space (capable of seating 650 people at table) or four breakout rooms, all with access to an outdoor area overlooking the harbour.
- A new exterior entrance will allow evening access to the Innovation Space and Dome Theatre when the remainder of the building is closed.
- By day, this space will frequently be configured as a digital learning lab for children and youth; by night it will host a variety of community programs and events
- This new space will allow community groups increased, free access to our facility

With a total project budget of \$39M, we have worked with structural engineers, designers and architects to design this project so that it can be phased based on funding available.



Infrastructure upgrades include improvements that drastically improve energy efficiency and support STEAM-related programs for future STEAM jobs. This project ensures Science World can continue to meet the growing need for STEAM education particularly in traditionally underserved and under-represented groups including First Nations, Indigenous, women and girls.

We did make an application in January 2019 under the “Phase II Canada-BC Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program - Community, Culture, and Recreation” program. As this program was substantially oversubscribed, we were not successful for the first round of funding available. A copy of this application, including drawings and detailed budgets can be provided for further details.

• Recommendation 3: That the Government of Canada invest \$3 million over three years in “Symbiosis” to dramatically scale STEAM literacy

Our world is changing at a pace we’ve never known before. 2/3 of kids in elementary school today will work in jobs that do not yet exist, and almost all of those jobs will require high levels of understanding in STEAM. Many young people are being left behind, especially those in rural and underserved communities. Failing to prepare the next generation to be STEAM literate threatens the health of our youth, the economy, and the places we live. Now, more than ever, Canada needs bright, curious minds to secure a thriving future.

What is Symbiosis?

Symbiosis is an urgent response to the critical need to accelerate STEAM literacy. Led by Science World, Symbiosis has brought together over 100 organizations across multiple sectors (industry, education, government, business, non-profit organizations) into a provincial network of STEAM resources. Members provide a wide range of informal, BC curriculum-aligned, STEAM experiences through programs, events and initiatives. Symbiosis will drive increased reach and accelerated delivery of experiences through the activation and coordination of the Symbiosis network of STEAM resources across BC.

What are the benefits?

A stronger, more diverse BC: 60% of students entering high school with an interest in science change their minds by graduation. Only 22% of Canadian science jobs are currently held by women. Informal learning experiences improve attitudes toward STEAM fields and careers; increase STEAM knowledge and skills; and result in a higher likelihood of graduation and pursuit of a STEAM career.

More resources to underserved areas: A third of all K-12 BC students attend schools outside major city centres. Regional hubs of Symbiosis identify, support and amplify existing, relevant and sustainable STEAM activities and programs, meeting young people where they live.

A coordinated effort: The current Symbiosis hubs in Vancouver, Prince George and South Vancouver Island serve a vast geographic area. By sharing resources and programs, and coordinating services and outreach, Symbiosis will significantly accelerate the delivery of STEAM learning experiences across all of BC, preparing the next generation for the jobs of tomorrow.

Two sub-initiatives within Symbiosis will address at-risk groups: indigenous youth and girls. Indigenous communities in BC are currently at great risk, in part due to a dearth of quality education opportunities. We will establish an indigenous network aimed at dramatically increasing the numbers of indigenous youth pursuing STEAM careers. Similarly, girls and young women are far less likely to develop an interest in STEAM than their male counterparts. Through special events, programs, mentors, and a growing

network, Symbiosis will tackle this challenge directly, beginning with girls in elementary school and continuing through post-secondary years.

In 2019, Science World commissioned an environmental scan of STEAM learning resources and providers. This rich data set will allow Symbiosis to target audiences at greatest need, have baseline metrics to support regional growth, and will allow us to secure longer-term funding partners. Our \$3M funding request is intended to cover the start-up and short-term funding needs of the project while building a product that will be supported by industry in the years to come.