

ART EDUCATION INVESTMENTS

The cultural economy of British Columbia is in trouble. The trouble stems from a dwindling supply of artists, and lack-luster investment in arts education from K-12 and post secondary. Without adequate investment in pre-K-12 and post-secondary art education, businesses and cities are at risk of losing an essential skill: creativity.

Background

Using the product perspective, Statistics Canada estimates that the direct economic impact of culture products was \$53.1 billion in Canada in 2017, which equates to \$1,454 per capita and 2.7% of overall GDP. The employment estimate was 666,500 in 2017, or 3.5% of the 18.8 million jobs in the country. In 2019, nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of culture and sport in Canada increased 2.6% to \$63.2 billion, representing 2.9% of the total economy. The culture sector generated \$57.1 billion (or 90.4%) of this amount, while the remainder was attributable to sport.¹ In 2019, employment rose 2.2% (or +16,597) in Canada's culture and sport sectors to just over 772,000 jobs. Culture jobs accounted for more than 80% of the increase (+13,395), led primarily by the visual and applied arts and audio-visual and interactive media domains, further highlighting the growing importance of digitization in the culture sector.²

Most creative sector jobs require a bachelor's degree in an arts field but without adequate funding for arts education in K-12, the cultural economy will diminish. Currently, not all students receive the necessary courses to fulfill high school requirements to apply to degree programs.

Arts Education – why is it important to business and to the economy:

Let's start with arts education. Exposure to high quality arts education isn't just a feel-good issue for those of us that appreciate the arts and culture. It's been demonstrated time and time again that incorporating arts education into student learning helps students become more creative thinkers and improves their performance in other subject areas. As a result, arts education is important for its own sake, but also to our ability to equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly complex world.³ Jobs in the creative and design industries are opening doors to economic growth.

Not only the creative industries, but all industries continue to increase the value they place on creativity in an increasingly competitive and ever-evolving business climate. A creative mind helps individuals develop problem-solving skills, fuels innovation and product development, encourages outside-the-box thinking, and allows for quick adaptation. According to a report conducted by the Conference Board and Americans for the Arts, creativity has risen among the top applied skills sought by today's business leaders. In short, creativity has become a business necessity in the 21st century.

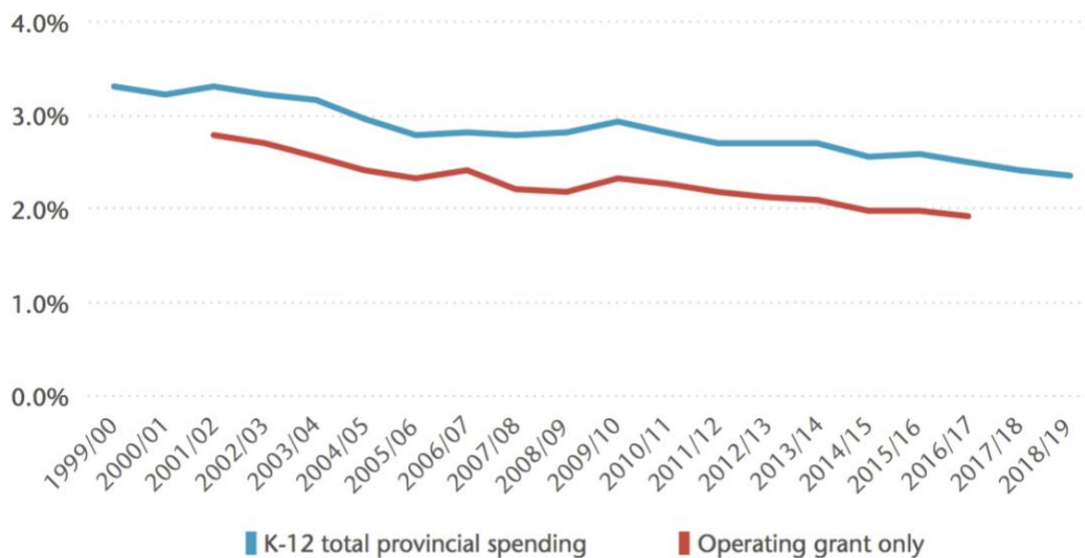
¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210527/dq210527b-eng.htm>

² <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210527/dq210527b-eng.htm>

³ <https://blog.americansforthearts.org/2015/09/18/arts-education-is-essential-to-cultivating-the-creative-economy>

Figure 1 shows that education investment has been decreasing in general between 1999 and 2018/19. Although the BC government will be investing \$2.7 billion over three years to maintain, replace, renovate or expand facilities and there will also be \$550 million invested to hire new teachers and special education assistants, and improve classrooms, it does not equate to the value lost that occurred with substantial music program cuts.⁴ K-12 student enrollment has been steadily increasing with an estimated 563,514 funded full-time equivalent (FTE) students in public schools for the 2021-22 school year, an increase of 2,269 FTE from the 2020-21 school year.⁵ The Province is investing \$7.1 billion for K-12 education this year, which is \$1.5 billion more than in 2016-17. This is an increase of 27%, while enrolment has grown by an estimated 2.9%.

FIGURE 1



Source: 2015 BC Financial and Economic Review; 2016 BC Budget; BC K-12 Operating Grant summaries.

Note: 2017/18 and 2018/19 are forecasts from the 2016 BC Budget.

In the Lower Mainland, Kwantlen Polytechnic University has cut all in take for the music program for the 2019/2020 school year due to a \$12 million shortfall.⁶ Many high school graduates from south of the Fraser rely on Kwantlen’s music programs to flourish.

Given the importance of creativity in today’s economy, we must ask ourselves if we are doing all we can to promote the development of creative minds among the next generation of Canadian students—the employees and entrepreneurs of tomorrow. Unfortunately, the evidence suggests that we are not.

⁴ <https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/b-c-budget-2019-what-it-means-to-you-six-things-to-know>

⁵ <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021EDUC0059-001682>

⁶ <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/students-sing-blues-as-kwantlen-cancels-intake-for-2019-2020-music-program-1.4322154>

Additionally, development of creative minds benefits society as a whole, not just the economy. To this point, a 1997 study looking at social capital and community arts programs found that programs built social capital by boosting individuals' ability and motivation to be civically engaged, as well as building organizational capacity for effective action.⁷ The study observed that community arts programs often involve people who are disadvantaged in some way (at-risk youth, ethnic minorities, people in a poor neighborhood) and are designed in the context of some larger goal, such as neighborhood improvement (typically aesthetic) or learning and teaching about diverse cultures (multiculturalism). These goals are usually the basis for claims about the politically transformative potential of community arts projects.

There is a significant gap between what children are told is important for their future career success and what business leaders actually want from the emerging workforce. Creative individuals are actually in demand. Not just for arts careers, but for careers in business as well. For example, Disney and Apple are two of the most successful companies of our time, largely because of the creativity, innovation, and the leadership they have demonstrated in their respective industries. In an era when businesses are constantly struggling to find creative ways to stay at the top of their market, arts education can be a powerful tool to nurture the creative abilities of our young people, ensuring they are ready for the skills that are in demand.⁸

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

Invest in funding for arts education for early childhood to K-12 and post-secondary curriculums.

Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade

⁷ <https://benefitshub.ca/entry/how-the-arts-impact-communities-an-introduction-to-the-literature-on-arts-i>

⁸ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/01/29/why-we-love-artists-but-not-arts-education/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.92f4d47af508