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REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

Speech by:

The Honourable Patricia Bovey

Tuesday, May 2, 2017

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INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

Hon. Patricia Bovey: Senators, it's late and the day has been full, but I still rise to speak to the inquiry on small- and medium-sized universities.

Canada is blessed with universities of all sizes, covering a full spectrum of specializations. Each is critically important, meeting specific student and research needs. They all contribute substantially to their communities with positive impacts on employment, innovation, specialized fields and the economy. They bring world experts into their community. They work with gender equity and have developed strong interdisciplinary partnerships with industry, social research, pre-secondary education, engineering and health.

My university involvement since the mid-1970s is with large, mid-sized, small and discipline-based universities as chair of two university boards, professor at two others and advisory on special programs at another.

Today, I draw attention to the work of Canada's four major fine-art and design universities that award BFAs, MFAs and related degrees in design, film and media. Together with fine-art university degree and college diploma programs, 82,672 students in Canada were enrolled in visual and performing arts and communication technologies in 2013-14. Their graduates are employed in all sectors of our economy.

I have spoken with and thank the leadership of all four major arts and design universities: NSCAD, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax; OCAD U, the Ontario College of Art and Design University in Toronto; Alberta College of Art and Design in Calgary; and Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver. We discussed their initiatives, statistics and current barriers.

[*Translation*]

Graduates of arts and design universities are innovators and have a vision to shape the future.

[*English*]

The mantra “head to heart to hand,” to think, to feel and to make summarizes what they do. Creativity enables innovation. Art and design unquestionably adds the plurality needed to be an innovative society.

Would you be surprised to learn that a 15-year survey of graduates confirmed that the employment rate from these universities is 92 per cent? That is true for Emily Carr, Nova Scotia and Ontario's art and design universities, closely followed by Alberta, and equalling rates of larger universities. Thirty per cent of graduates from the two western art and design universities and 57 per cent from Ontario's have started their own companies. Ontario College of Art and Design University's research shows

that 87 per cent of their graduates will operate businesses at some point in their careers. The tech sector's demand for Emily Carr students far exceeds the number of graduates, in a province where the creative economy equals 7 per cent of their total economy.

The creative economy is an increasingly critical part of the nation's economy.

Ontario College of Art and Design University is Canada's largest, most comprehensive art, design and media university in Canada. Founded 141 years ago, it now has 3,200 full-time and 1,050 part-time undergraduates, and 170 full-time and 80 part-time graduate students. Through its history, it has successfully adapted to societal and industry needs, pioneering new technologies and approaches.

Emily Carr University of Art and Design, founded as the Vancouver School of Art in 1926, has 2,000 full-time FTEs, graduating 400 to 450 students annually with more than 50 per cent studying design. Fifteen hundred community attendees are also in their outreach program, the biggest in that field, which, driven by market forces, is proving its high value. Emily Carr is about to open a Prince George campus in the Wood Design Centre and will offer fine art and design credit and non-credit undergraduate and graduate programs. This fall they are moving to a new Vancouver campus, a truly successful 3P project.

Nova Scotia University of Art and Design in Halifax is currently celebrating its one hundred and thirtieth anniversary. With its troubled period over and its independence confirmed, they have 600 full-time and 150 part-time undergraduates and 30 full-time graduate students and a 30 per cent increase in applications for the coming academic year. Like their colleague institutions, they are experiencing a significant 35 per cent uptake in design while retaining all their traditional disciplines and focus on art, design and craft. A craft institute being established is one research cluster resulting from their new strategic plan. They also run four community artists in residence programs in Lunenburg, Dartmouth, New Glasgow and Sydney, offering workshops, exhibitions and talks. Our former colleague Senator Moore has been a supporter of these and is currently involved.

Alberta College of Art and Design, now 90 years old, has 1,238 students plus continuing education students. Currently, 18 per cent of their students have at least one declared disability; 11 per cent are Aboriginal; and their students are slightly older than those at larger universities. Many are second career students, shifting fields into what they always wanted to do. I gather classes there are rich with intergenerational interactions, all learning from each other. Small, this university serves a vulnerable population well.

[*Translation*]

These small arts and design universities have a far-reaching influence. Because they touch upon the three key components of society—cultural, social and economic—creative industries are inextricably linked to one another and are also related to arts and

design, including art therapy and the creation and incubation sectors. The thought process associated with design gives students problem solving abilities that are transferable and highly sought after by employers.

[English]

In our society dominated by images, every student, faculty and staff member in these communities of creators is passionate about the art of creating and communicating, and all are engaged in content creation. Traditional norms shift quickly from one platform to another, from TV and movies to iPads and phones and now autonomous vehicles. We need a new workforce able to move between platforms. Art schools, small and nimble, train for that fast-paced rate of technological and societal change, inspiring today's students with skills different from earlier generations. Multi-tasking and navigating easily, they learn by sound bites. Art and design schools also teach interaction between disciplines and how to look at and interpret the world, readying it for the future.

So what do these places research and teach? Each has internationally recognized programs, Emily Carr being a global leader in dedicated research for studio-based art, design and media, with many industry partners encouraging academic research by nurturing industry engagement. It holds a top Canadian art and design spot in international rankings. Their significant research with industry includes building materials, fashion design and cutting-edge research in textiles and wearables, visual and digital media, and they were pioneers in developing 3-D printers. They are also partnering in challenging design issues in the medical area, working with 30 to 35 partners annually, developing successful signage approaches for hospitals, such as those for hand washing, and they are actively involved in the design for the new St. Paul's Hospital, researching needs of future hospital rooms.

Now with 120 Aboriginal students from across northern B.C. and Alberta, they have inaugurated a new door manufacturing industry in the North. With UBC, indigenous students' designs for doors are being scanned and printed in 3-D and sold country-wide. The early iterations have been hugely successful.

Fine art graduates also develop specialized problem-solving skills required by business, graduating with a tool box of abilities that let them work anywhere and in many areas of the economy. It is a new age for this type of graduate who has the ability to seek out problems and solve them, a skill enhanced by the universities' visualization labs. Students can contextualize and, resourceful, they have the intellectual capability and skills to deliver.

The survey found that 58 per cent of Nova Scotia's fine art alumni with undergraduate fine art degrees and 77 per cent with graduate degrees were working as artists. Other arts sector jobs included designer, web designer, creative designer, director, filmmaker, photographer, curator, gallery owner, craft artist, arts administrator, arts educator and architect.

But what about the opportunities for these small discipline-based universities to obtain research grants and Canada research chairs? That playing field is not even. Some universities of all sizes are disadvantaged because of the varying provincial policies for

research, as most federal research funds are matching funds. Smaller universities are disadvantaged because they are primarily undergraduate with small graduate programs. Historically, though, research funds for visual arts and design have been virtually non-existent.

Though each of these four received some grants from the major research funding, equitable funding overall remains an issue. Our research councils are not set up for the kind of research these universities do. Unlike Finland, there is no framework in Canada for design research, a field so critical to our moving forward. Nonetheless, these small but mighty universities continue to make huge impacts.

Nova Scotia, Emily Carr and Ontario universities of art and design have recently received Canada research chairs. Emily Carr has three with a fourth coming. Nova Scotia has one with the effective appointment date of January 2018. Ontario has three, one now filled for their pioneering Indigenous Visual Cultural Centre, with others in the hiring phase. Alberta College of Art and Design, acknowledging they were late into the research game, are launching their first research institute this fall, focusing on design-thinking for social issues. I believe the research funding they have all received should increase as the need and capacity is evident.

Small universities do great research and have developed truly inspirational partnerships with industry and social society. Nova Scotia's partnerships, for instance, include research in health care, particularly the aging and Alzheimer's. They are developing product designs and functional, accessible clothing for an aging population, respecting an individual's dignity.

Looking to provincial sustainability, they are also tied to the Nova Scotia agricultural community with their Sow to Sew program, reigniting growing linen as a harvest crop, following it from cultivation through each organic process, dying to sewing.

Ontario has their Digital Futures Initiative with new research in inclusive design, health and sustainable technology. The director of their Inclusive Design Research Centre, the world's most significant research centre on inclusive design, was a panelist at Toronto's recent autonomous vehicles conference. Their strong partnerships with science, business and communities, at home and abroad, make them a leader in these transitioning times. Their strategic foresight and innovation design lab, for example, is important in every stage from visualization through digital transformation, computation and artificial intelligence, in robotics, smart textiles, and the Internet of things. Their health and environmental design research contributes to industry, assisting in making useful and usable products with these new technologies. They serve the wider community with teams which include computer scientists, artists and designers and art thinkers. Think of the learning opportunities for students, tomorrow's workers.

Community organizations also partner with art and design schools. Alberta College of Art and Design, for instance, has a program where students work with not-for-profits on various projects. They recently designed a travelling booth for the RCMP.

These four universities also provide access to students from remote parts of the country, enabling them to complete degrees after doing their first or second years elsewhere. One feeder program eligible for credit transfer is Yukon's School of Visual

Arts. A similar approach was developed for the potential Aboriginal Arts Centre in northern Manitoba. Students would complete their first two post-secondary years in Thompson, under the auspices of University College of the North, and then transfer to departments of fine arts or fine art universities across the country. Equal access opportunities to education for all Canadians must be enshrined, regardless of geography. This is the primary way as a nation that we will be able to redress some of the most critical issues in contemporary society.

All our universities are led by community members on their boards of governors. This involvement is critical, bringing experience from the outside, weaving the community into the fabric of the university. I know several of us in this chamber have been on or chaired these boards, serving our institutions of higher learning and our communities.

I applaud the work the boards do in furthering the university mandates and sharing best practices. CUBA, the Canadian University Boards Association representing the boards and university secretaries of 80 of Canada's universities —

Three of the four art and design universities are part of CUBA. Their annual conference is later this week in Guelph — the theme being timely “Because it’s 2017: Cultivating Diversity and Inclusion in University Governance.”

[*Translation*]

In closing, I think that the accomplishments and contributions of Canada's universities are exemplary; that those of small and medium-sized universities are essential; and that those of arts and design universities are stimulating because of the concrete role they play in facing the exciting challenges our society faces and in shaping our collective future.

[*English*]

Let's acknowledge and celebrate the role of our smaller and discipline-based universities and enable them and their students to fulfill their dreams and potential for the benefit of all Canadians.

Colleagues, we must keep in mind that these small- and medium-sized universities are not just places of learning. They are economic drivers infusing workers, ideas and money into our economy. These institutions are key and can play a unique role in achieving one of the current government's highest priorities, building a stronger middle class. As such, they deserve the proper level of funding in order to continue making these significant contributions to our society. Thank you.
