

THE HONOURABLE PATRICIA BOVEY, FRSA, FCMA
SENATOR – MANITOBA



L'HONORABLE PATRICIA BOVEY, MSRA, MAMC
SÉNATRICE – MANITOBA

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Canada's artists and arts organizations are, without doubt, key throughout the fabric of society, in both good times and hard times. The COVID-19 pandemic is no exception and their support for essential workers is strong and appreciated. Their many contributions to our individual and collective mental health is so essential, as they generously share their reflections, and give us hope and the ability to dream. Their collective innovative online programming is inspiring. In our isolation we are watching films, reading books, listening to music, seeing treasures in our public art and history collections, playing video games, and learning how to paint, draw, play the guitar, and do basic dance moves. Without our creative sector none of these activities, diversions or new explorations would be possible.

This past week artists have also taken a compassionate lead emanating from the horrors which took place in Nova Scotia last weekend. Their songs, paintings and poems are calming, and over the time to come, I know they will help us all heal. Music is a powerful conduit for all our emotions right now and I thank all who have shared, and are sharing, their talents. My heart and condolences go out to every Nova Scotian, and particularly to the family and friends of those who lost their lives in this tragedy.

As we slowly build to our new post-isolation normalcy, artists and our cultural sector will again unquestionably contribute significantly to our wellbeing.

Digital access has been a positive gamechanger for these times. Indeed, the digital age has revolutionized the whole international cultural value chain, a shift which has escalated in speed during the current COVID-19 pandemic. The International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies fast tracked the release of their report *Supporting Culture in the Digital Age*, which gives experiences and ideas for digital presentations. While it is clear that strategies and policies still need to be developed to ensure that digital creation is sustainable, diverse, equitable and accessible, I am proud to see the leadership which Canadian artists and organizations are showing.

This week, the Canada Council of the Arts, with the CBC, announced a new program *DIGITAL ORIGINALS*, its goal being to “support Canadian artists and arts organizations to reach Canadian audiences online during the COVID-19 crisis by enabling them to adapt their work for digital dissemination.” \$5,000 is available through “micro-innovation” grants.

Ce programme, *Connexion création* « permettra aux artistes et aux organismes artistiques canadiens de rejoindre le public canadien en ligne pendant la crise de la COVID-19, en adaptant leurs œuvres pour la diffusion numérique. » Les subventions contribueront de 5000 \$ pour l'innovation.

This new grant opportunity is open to those working in all fields, except those who currently receive core funding. No prior digital experience is required. Open for applications between mid-May and June 15th, it is for adapting existing work, or creating new work, to be shared online.

I also want to draw your attention to the funding available to students which was announced this week, the key elements being:

- Canada Emergency Student Benefit, available from May to August 2020, for students and new graduates, not eligible for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. It provides \$1,250 per month for eligible students, or \$1,750 per month for eligible students with dependents or disabilities.
- Canada Student Service Grant, for students who choose to do national service and serve their communities, will provide up to \$5,000 for their education in the fall.
- In addition, up to 116,000 jobs, placements, and other training opportunities to help students will be created, and Canada Student Grants for all eligible full-time students will be doubled up to \$6,000, and up to \$3,600 for part-time students in 2020-21.
- Support for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation students pursuing post-secondary education will be enhanced through an additional \$75.2 million in 2020-21.
- Further, expiring federal graduate research scholarships and postdoctoral fellowships, and supplements to existing federal research grants, will be extended by providing \$291.6 million to the federal granting councils to support students and post-doctoral fellows.

Again, I suggest that you check the details of all these programs, and others, on the Government of Canada website.

During these unparalleled times I find myself looking at how Canada recovered after WWII and how we survived the Depression. Special education and access to university programs for returning members of the forces was a critical post-war 'recovery' program, recognizing the importance of education in rebuilding communities and the economy after those dark times. In the Depression, people came together to assist each other in innovative and compassionate ways. Through all, the arts and education played critically important roles, documenting the realities, telling our stories, and shining the light on the future while imbuing society with hope, humanity and skills.

These creative and educational activities are vital today too to ensure that we are able to move forward with our mental health strong, and our citizens and landed immigrants poised with the skills and knowledge we all will need to get our lives going again.

I also want to remind those who could benefit from last week's announcement of \$500 million to Heritage Canada, that Minister Guilbeault has asked for suggestions of criteria and use of these funds. I hope organizations, associations and groups are responding to that invitation.

In closing, I applaud all those who are doing all they are to make this place a better place, and I herald all essential workers especially those who work in our health system, securing our food chain, and for our personal and community safety.

Remember, "We are all better off when we are all better off"!

May you and yours stay well and stay safe.

Best regards,



Patricia Bovey, FRSA, FCMA
Senator for Manitoba