
Sector News Digest: May 5, 2020

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In this week's Special News Digest: Celebrating Giving Tuesday Now; more organizations make generous donations; federal relief for non-profits; online learning opportunities; and the impact of COVID-19 on arts organizations.

Giving Tuesday and other COVID-19-related fundraising activity

Today is Global Giving Tuesday, and the semi-annual appeal drive has particular resonance given the COVID-19 disruption. The Giving Tuesday website has compiled ideas on how charities can encourage direct donations or through platforms like CanadaHelps.org.

But in recent weeks, a growing number of organizations have already stepped up with targeted donations. TD Bank last week [unveiled a \\$25 million Community Resilience Initiative](#), which includes a \$2 million donation-matching component. [Green Shield Canada](#) committed \$500,000 to support community foundations across the country. [The Medavie Health Foundation](#), the charitable arm of health services provider Medavie, increased its fund by \$5 million to support groups working in mental health and food insecurity. And [CUPE](#), Canada's largest public sector union, approved a \$250,000 donation to Food Banks Canada.

More federal funding for charities and non-profits

On April 24, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a program to slash rents for businesses that can't afford lease payments due to COVID-19 closures. The [Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance \(CECRA\)](#), which is available to charities and non-profits, offers forgivable loans to qualifying commercial landlords to cover 50% of rent payments for April, May, and June. The loans will be forgiven if the mortgaged property owner reduces eligible tenants' rent by at least 75% under a rent forgiveness agreement, which includes a pledge not

to evict the tenant while the agreement is in place. The tenant covers the balance.

While the rent relief comes on top of other pandemic-related funds earmarked for the charitable sector, these emergency measures have to go a long way. [Imagine Canada](#) will release complete survey data on the impact of COVID-19 on charities and non-profits in early May. Preliminary results show that more than 70% of organizations have reported revenue declines in excess of the losses incurred during the 2008 credit crisis.

As well, [Philanthropic Foundations Canada](#) (PFC) is launching a survey mapping funder response to COVID-19, *The Philanthropist* has learned. The survey will capture the response of philanthropic and other grant-making organizations to the COVID-19 pandemic. PFC plans to make the data publicly available to produce an interactive mapping tool that will enable greater collaboration and transparency among grant makers while also providing insights into where funding gaps remain.

Pledged emergency funding hasn't yet found its way to every group in need, moreover. [APTN News](#) reports that the Odawa Native Friendship Centre in Ottawa was forced to move into a pair of rented storage containers because it has yet to receive any federal funding from the \$305 million Indigenous Community Support Fund.

Online learning opportunities flourish during the pandemic

As more activities move online, so do learning opportunities for individuals and organizations, including many offered by charities and non-profits.

The Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN), a non-profit network of local labour and neighbourhood groups, is partnering with construction giant Aecon to triple the spaces in TCBN's [NexGen Builders](#) program, which offers training and mentorship to workers laid off because of COVID-19 who come from communities that are historically underrepresented in the industry, including women, newcomers, and racialized workers.

Ontario's Pillar Nonprofit Network is organizing [daily online events](#) to host informal discussions on challenges faced by non-profits. And for people working in the sector, Charity Village has hosted [free webinars](#) on topics including fundraising, volunteering, and social finance.

Other non-profits are moving to deliver their training remotely. JA British Columbia, a BC education non-profit, is offering a suite of educational programs for students in grades 4 to 12, focusing on financial literacy – a hot topic, the *Trail Times* [reports](#). The digital lessons are based on the programs JABC would traditionally offer in schools. Parents and educators can access the program for free at jabc.ca/online-learning.

Challenges spur innovation

In response to pandemic-related economic pressures, Aspen Family and Community Network Society and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary have merged to [create a new agency](#) supporting young people, families, and communities. A new name and brand will be released in the fall.

In Southwestern Ontario, Libro Credit Union, Pillar Nonprofit Network, and TechAlliance have partnered to host [Recovery & Rebuilding the Region Design Challenges](#). Applicants can win a

\$20,000 investment and personalized support services. Volunteer Nova Scotia late last month soft-launched [a new portal](#) to connect non-profits and volunteers looking to provide essential services. Changes will be made in response to feedback, and a hard launch is expected soon.

International news

The pandemic is exacerbating isolation and poverty for newly arrived refugees, according to the Huffington Post. With cancelled Immigration and Refugee Board hearings and skyrocketing unemployment, refugee-focused charities are struggling to keep up with the demand.

Action Against Hunger Canada/Action Contre la Faim, an international humanitarian organization that fights hunger, is asking Canadians to send messages of support to its frontline health workers. Find the form [here](#).

The show will not go on

Arts non-profits across the country continue to cancel events as Canadians maintain social distance. In the past two weeks, the [Stratford Festival](#), North America's largest classical repertory theatre company, cancelled its entire 2020 season, while the financially troubled [Luminato Festival Toronto](#) cancelled its June international arts festival. Several fringe festivals have also pulled the plug on their summer seasons.

Some groups, however, succeeded in moving events online. [The Festival of Literary Diversity \(The FOLD\)](#) held its events online this year, between April 30 and May 3. One pleasant side effect of moving the festival online: it allowed book lovers from across the country to attend the events, which are normally held in Brampton, Ontario.

Indeed, other arts organizations have seen growing demand during the pandemic. According to a survey from [BookNet Canada](#), 50% of Canadians are reading more as they practise social distancing. Nearly 30% said they're borrowing from their local library's digital collection, while two in 10 are supporting brick-and-mortar bookstores.

Elsewhere in the cultural sector, some funders are providing assistance to creators. The [Canadian Writers' Emergency Relief Fund](#) has released three tranches of funding. The \$250,000 fund is a collaboration between the Writers' Trust of Canada, the Writers' Union of Canada, the Royal Bank of Canada, and Access Copyright Foundation. It issues \$1,500 grants to writers and visual artists who lost income between March and June 2020.