



March 27, 2020

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

“**La culture ne doit pas tomber victim de la COVID-19**”. (Culture must not fall victim to COVID-19.) That was the message of Michel Legacé in *La Liberté* on March 25th. I couldn't agree more. Despite the financial peril artists and arts organizations face, the creative spirit of the arts sector is certainly providing solace, inspiration, levity and important connections for us all. I applaud all those who are making a difference!

I want to thank all who responded to my March 22nd letter and have sent me concerns, initiatives, and surveys respecting various arts disciplines. I look forward to continuing to receive information and please rest assured that I am compiling them and will attempt to come up with issues and approaches to bring to my Senate colleagues. Keep your ideas and realities coming! I am also monitoring local and national news, organizational websites and international arts' situations. I have been advised of Google's spreadsheet listing performing arts closures and postponements. You might want to add your realities to that master list! The Link is: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Zd_wFg9pTwQYINktNpkL1LcOgqgWjLFHAdVWHGFDRnM/edit#gid=158732924

As you know, the Senate passed Bill C-13 on Wednesday and it was given Royal Assent that afternoon. My New Brunswick colleague Senator René Cormier, whose background is in the performing arts, and I crafted two questions for Ministers regarding artists and organizations. Hansard's reporting of these and the Ministerial responses is attached.

In essence, the Ministers confirmed that anyone is eligible who earned \$5000 in the previous year, freelance or otherwise, and who can establish that they now are without income because of COVID-19. With regard to support from the CDC for arts organizations, we were assured that we would get a response, and that should come soon. Things are moving so fast I ask that you monitor the Heritage Canada website and all news media!

I remain impressed with the creative initiatives of artists and organizations in these dire times. With venues, galleries and museums closed, virtual concerts like that of Prairie Voices this week are inspiring. So too are the online play readings, the virtual tours offered by museums and historic sites and attractions nationally and internationally, and the many online explorations of works in the public trust, including the daily collection presentation by Winnipeg Art Gallery director, Stephen Borys.

I was likewise encouraged to see that as early as March 21, 2020, Manitoba Music announced a new COVID-19 emergency relief fund for artists and music industry workers in Manitoba.

Another sector hit hard across the country is education. I want to pay tribute to Canada's universities. With the quick shut down of in-person classes, they deftly shifted to online teaching so students could complete this academic year. Having been an adjunct professor at two universities, and Chair of the Board of two others, I can only imagine the complexity of that immediate shift in serving students in their many disciplines. Our universities are indeed a microcosm of the Country as whole.

We are in stressful and rapidly changing times, and I know you share my concern for the safety and good health of all. We all look forward to life returning to 'normal'. As the Winnipeg Free Press daily ad says; "When the World returns to the Stage, we will be back in our seats". I know that sentiment is felt by audiences everywhere. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy and share the creative online opportunities offered by so many in such diverse artistic fields.

With best regards,

Pat Bovey



Patricia Bovey, FRSA, FCMA
Independent Senator from Manitoba