

THE HONOURABLE PATRICIA BOVEY, FRSA, FCMA
SENATOR – MANITOBA



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SÉNATRICE – MANITOBA

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CANADA

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As a Manitoba Senator it gives me great pride to applaud the outstanding work of Manitobans in these difficult pandemic times. I thank all our medical professionals for their dedication, professionalism, determination, and support to those diagnosed with COVID-19, their families, and people dealing with other ailments and diseases. All essential workers, including doctors, nurses, orderlies, psychologists, physiotherapists, truck and postal drivers, and those who kept the food chain safe and our communities secure, certainly ramped up their responses during the pandemic. That of course is mirrored across the country. My appreciation goes to them all.

I also thank everyone for their adherence to the advice of our public health officials. The constant handwashing, staying home, and maintaining social distancing has helped us 'flatten the curve', and our ability to keep in touch with friends and family through phone calls, zoom and other technological means, has kept us connected with friends and family here and abroad. I am truly grateful for the meaningful quality of life technology has given us and am keenly aware that such tools were not available during the Spanish Flu epidemic a century ago.

As we begin to 're-open' none of us know what a 'new normal' will be, or how long it will take to get there. There is no doubt that the arts will continue to be the core of humanity and what it is to be human, but parts of the creative sector will, I believe, emerge from COVID-19 in quite different forms. With the current gradual opening I am pleased to see galleries and museums leading the way in parts of the nation. The Winnipeg Art Gallery, for instance, a first to open, is giving people the opportunity to go out, and while numbers are not high, the opportunity is appreciated especially by families who regularly home school their children.

I have also been delighted to witness the online initiative, *CANADA COVID PORTRAIT*, being presented in support of the Portrait Gallery of Canada. The Portrait Gallery of Canada has completed its feasibility study, now has a defined road map, is incorporated, and is actively moving to its next phase of development. Likewise, orchestras, chamber groups, and solo musicians have been increasing their online presence. Authors and publishers, though not able to launch their new books, have been of vital support to us all in our isolation.

The fear of re-engaging with live arts performances, dance, theatre, concerts, festivals, and other public events, must be overcome, and the financial impacts of the pandemic must be dealt with. This could take time and will necessitate national strategies. I hope that we all will be ready to embrace the new realities, new partnerships and a new economy. I have every confidence that the arts, Canada's third largest employer, WILL continue to be a major contributor in every facet of the country.

The recently announced \$500 million for arts, culture and heritage, in the Ministry of Heritage, adds to the emergency funds of the Canada Council for the Arts; the acceleration of funding from the Canada Book Fund; and the exemption by the CRTC for broadcasters from Part I licensing fees. I suggest that those interested visit the Ministry Website to learn program details and the specific means for accessing the funds. There are, for instance, \$198 million for arts and culture through existing programs; \$53 million through emergency provisions of the Museums Assistance Program; \$55 million through the Canada Council; about \$115 million through the Canada Media Fund and Telefilm Canada; and \$72 million for sport. These and other funding initiatives will be rolled out in the coming weeks. The intent is that the monies enable the survival of as many cultural organizations as possible. As I have said before, the sector is complex, it is at the heart of our society, yet it is vulnerable.

As our attention turns to societal recovery, I am fully aware of all that has been put on hold in the last several months. While I have been focused on COVID-19 impacts on artists and the arts, as well as the multiple issues faced in the Arctic during the extended isolation, I have also had the privilege of talking to students in Zoom classes, and to reflect publicly on Manitoba's 150th anniversary. The pandemic unquestionably slowed plans senators had for this session, including the Bill I brought forward for the Visual Artist Laureate, the inquiry I started on the establishment of a new Arctic Committee, and my plans to introduce a Canadian Arts and Culture Bill of Rights. The hearings and public discussions I held on these before COVID-19 were encouraging and truly worthwhile. When we are able to ramp up Chamber and committee work, all these issues will come back into focus.

In the meantime, I, and others, are seeking ideas to assist in the recovery for the arts and audiences. For my part, I am looking at the role of the CBC, the relevant elements of past, successful, special support programs and networks, creative departures, and new technologies and digital opportunities. We should build on the remarkable achievements artists made during this crisis.

For the young people in your life, I would be interested to know what they have enjoyed doing during these weeks of shut down. What did they paint or draw? Did they write stories? I was disappointed the pandemic meant I could not host my third annual kids' painting night on Parliament Hill. The works done in previous sessions hang in my office, in *The Kids' Wing: Gallery 144*. The subjects the children have painted are varied, the colours vibrant, the techniques direct and strong. These art works can be seen on my website. I eagerly await our next painting event, but before then, I would be happy to receive the thoughts of youth as to the importance of art, images of their art work, or copies of their stories.

Please let me know your ideas and needs as we move forward,

Best,



Patricia Bovey, FRSA, FCMA
Independent Senator from Manitoba