

THE HONOURABLE PATRICIA BOVEY, FRSA, FCMA
SENATOR – MANITOBA



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

SENATE | SÉNAT
CANADA

March 24, 2020

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

These are worrying unprecedented times, and as we all self-isolate, hand-wash, clean surfaces and respect social distancing, I sincerely hope you and yours are safe and well. With my children and grandchildren living in the UK, I am truly grateful for Face Time, Zoom, email and phones!

Through this crisis I am concerned about artists and arts organizations. The decisions to cancel performances and gallery and museum openings were absolutely correct. However, those closures have their own implications and concerns for all. With the Senate sitting tomorrow, (I will not be there given the distance of Winnipeg from Ottawa), I am submitting a question regarding artists' access to funding, especially for those whose contracts were sporadic and event based. I am well aware that artists comprise the largest segment of working Canadians who live below the poverty line.

My concern is also for arts organizations, and I am seeking confirmation that they will be eligible for funding as well, even though the government revenues for many are 'grant' based rather than 'investment' based. I will keep you posted with what I learn. If our organizations are not strong, the recovery for artists and audiences post the COVID-19 crisis will be longer. The arts are essential to mental and physical health and indeed to every aspect of society.

Meanwhile, I am gathering data and information regarding concerns, issues, and creative initiatives from artists and arts organizations across the country. I have heard from many in multiple ways. I will take whatever I receive and look for confluences and experiences, and will be bringing ideas and needs forward to my Senate colleagues.

The creative spirit of so many has been truly inspiring - the online music festivals, the collaborative community balcony singing, the galleries and museums who have opened their collections online, and those who are offering specific virtual tours. I am also following international examples and the art-making sessions led online. I applaud all!

I am continuing to work on my draft Arts and Culture Bill of Rights and thank the many Manitoba artists and organizations who participated in my Community Focus discussion. Excellent ideas came forward and the draft is stronger as a result. The current COVID-19 crisis is also adding to it. I now obviously do not have a time-line for its presentation in the Chamber, but I will be ready when life returns to normal.

In the meantime, keep creative, keep safe and keep well.

With best regards in these unique and troubling times,

Pat Bovey



Patricia Bovey, FRSA, FCMA
Independent Senator from Manitoba