

## 1st review of Manitoba's arts, culture industry in nearly 30 years offers 'action plan' but few specifics



Government will review how it distributes grants and invests in public libraries

Ian Froese · CBC News · Posted: Mar 12, 2019 12:30 PM CT | Last Updated: March 12



Theatregoers line up for a show at the Winnipeg Fringe Festival. The first review of Manitoba's arts sector in nearly three decades was short on specifics but spoke highly on the contributions that arts and culture brings to Manitoba. (Leif Norman/Winnipeg Fringe Theatre Festival)

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A long-awaited government review of Manitoba's arts and culture industry revealed the government plans more reviews, but didn't detail any new investments.

A 19-page report released Tuesday is effusive in its praise of the industry, but doesn't go into specifics on how the province will offer support.

- [\*\*Everyone's a critic: Manitoba's culture scene gets reviewed\*\*](#)

Sport, Culture and Heritage Minister Cathy Cox argued the first review of Manitoba's arts sector in nearly 30 years didn't need to get those details.

"You have to understand that when we talk about this plan, this is ... an action plan that's going to guide us in decision-making over the next five or 10 years," Cox told reporters Tuesday at the Manitoba Museum, in front of a refurbished replica of the Nonsuch, a 17th-century British ship.



Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage Cathy Cox said the action plan is a blueprint for how the government will approach its support for the arts in the coming years. (Radio-Canada)

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In [Our Way Forward: Manitoba's Culture Policy and Action Plan](#) — a document nearly two years in the making — the government promised to examine the way it distributes funding grants to simplify the application process, and to develop a website so funding opportunities are widely shared.

The province will also create a heritage trust program to entice the private sector to donate to museums and archives.

The government said it will work with funding agencies and grant donors to ensure diversity in cultural programming and collaborate with Indigenous, francophone and minority communities to ensure their cultures are reflected.

## 'Value for money is important'

The report did not explain how the province would achieve these goals, however.

When pressed on specific investments the Progressive Conservative government is making in the arts, Cox referred to last week's announcement the government [will double the province's film and video production tax credit](#), and to previously announced funding like [\\$15 million for the Winnipeg Art Gallery's Inuit Art Centre](#) and [\\$10 million for the Royal Aviation Museum of Western Canada](#).

"We have done a lot of legwork already while working on this document," she said.

Cox did not rule out the possibility of funding cuts.

"This is a plan and I can't determine, you know, what the future holds," she said. "Our government values arts, we value culture and that is very representative of what we've done since we've become government."

Trudy Schroeder, executive director of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, would have been more surprised if the report came with big spending promises.

- [Winnipeg symphony looks to province for \\$2.6M in repairs for 'disastrous' acoustical shell](#)

"In the context of the current provincial government's priorities, we would have been somewhat unrealistic to expect large financial announcements at this time — that would have been shocking."

Schroeder said she was encouraged by the commitment the province appears to be showing the arts sector, even if she wanted more details.







The cast of the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre's March 2018 production of *The Humans*. RMTC artistic director Steven Schipper says he's encouraged that the province is recognizing the economic value of the arts. (Dylan Hewlett/Royal MTC)

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Steven Schipper, the [departing artistic director](#) of Winnipeg's Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, said the report didn't need to spell out new initiatives.

"I think it's premature to put dollar amounts [out there], but one senses that value for money is important and so is the return on investment," he said.

- **PREVIEW** [The Bard, the Beatles and Austen-inspired Christmas story coming to RMTC next season](#)
- [In with the new: Prairie Theatre Exchange's new season features 6 world premieres](#)

He said the broader community sometimes overlooks the economic value of the arts, and he appreciates the government acknowledging the value of an industry that brought in \$1.6 billion in 2016.

Roberta Christianson took part in the province's last arts review in 1990.

The chair of the Manitoba Arts Council commended the government for involving the arts sector itself in the promotion and development of its livelihood.

"I think it would be inappropriate to be talking money at this point. I think that it's more appropriate to talk about the actions that the government has committed," she said.

## Public libraries under microscope

The government also promised Tuesday to review the funding model for public libraries to "realign provincial funding."

A look at the long-term sustainability of public libraries is overdue, Cox said.

"I don't want to talk out of turn and say anything that might sort of pre-empt what we're planning to do, but we're really not there yet," Cox said, when asked whether libraries should expect consolidation or more funding.

- [Doubling film tax credit 'sign of confidence' in growth, industry association says](#)
- [Province orders review of Manitoba Film and Music](#)

"We continue to have those discussions and we want to make sure we get it right."

The government previously said it would also [review the effectiveness of Manitoba Film and Music](#), the Crown agency supporting the province's film, television and music industries.

### Read the report:

To print the document, click the "Original Document" link to open the original PDF. At this time it is not possible to print the document with annotations.