

REPORT ON THE 2004 CHALMERS CONFERENCE

Founded in the year 2000, the Chalmers Conferences are held annually to provide a forum for representatives of arts service organizations to meet and discuss issues of common importance and interest.

The focus for this year's conference was identified last fall, when CCA convened a meeting of leading arts activists to discuss the renewal of the **Tomorrow Starts Today** funding to the sector. This group wisely counselled that while renewal of the funding package was crucial, it was also necessary to position the arts within the whole economic environment of the country, and specifically to look at the arts within the complete electoral process.

As a result, the 2004 Chalmers Conference was held several months' earlier, to provide tools and an opportunity for discussion and debate within the community prior to a federal election anticipated for the spring of the year.



CCA Photo

Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Hon. H el ne Chalifour Scherrer (right), addresses members of Canada's arts service organizations at the 2004 Chalmers Conference. CCA National Director Megan Davis Williams looks on.

The 5th annual Chalmers Conference was held on Friday 27 February 2004 at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. It opened with an advocacy breakfast co-hosted by the NAC, with **the Honourable H el ne Chalifour Scherrer**, the new Minister of Canadian Heritage, as the guest speaker. This marked the first time a federal culture minister has made an appearance at the Chalmers Conference, and her attendance was warmly received.

In addition to the leaders of the cultural sector gathered for the conference, the breakfast guest list also included members of the local Ottawa cultural scene, NAC Board members and senior staff, CCA individual members, and government officials.

Address by the Minister

It was standing room only in the Panorama Room at the NAC as Mme Scherrer delivered her speech, focussing on three key areas:

⇒ excellence in cultural expression;

⇒ cultural diversity and national identity; and
⇒ Canada's place in the world.

She reiterated her own interest in the arts, and regretted that the Conference was being held a month early - had it been after the Budget, she might have had some concrete news for the sector. [This was perceived as an auspicious comment by participants!]

A new era has begun

In discussing the continuation of the Tomorrow Starts Today funding, the \$500 million envelope over three years which was committed to the sector in May 2001 and was recently extended for a further year, Mme Scherrer stated "Rest assured I have heard you and I will examine the situation carefully so that you will have the means to carry on your efforts".

She expressed her intent to work closely with provincial, territorial and municipal counterparts "to ensure the cultural vitality of every Canadian community",



and announced "a new era of cooperation has begun". Mme Scherrer closed her remarks by pointing out that it is our passion for the arts that links us all. [The Minister's complete speech can be found at www.pch.gc.ca]

Mme Scherrer graciously agreed to a short question and answer session following her speech, although she described it as more terrifying than Question Period in the House of Commons. In response to questions from the floor, she reiterated her government's support for continuing the work of her predecessor in taking a leadership role in the international cultural arena, and expressed her hope that there would be funds for this in the Budget.

Regarding the divergent reports from the Standing Committees on Canadian Heritage and Industry on the issue of foreign ownership of broadcasting, Mme Scherrer said she would discuss it with Lucienne Robillard, Minister of Industry, in an attempt to come to a resolution; she clearly stated her intent to be firm on the issue of maintenance of Canadian content. Faced with questions on which she did not have all the facts and figures (such as book publishing, and Bill C-12), she expressed her willingness to meet to further the discussion.

In thanking the Minister, CCA President **Denise Roy** stated it is the arts which subsidize the country rather than the other way around, especially in the areas of healthy communities and cities, social cohesion, citizenship and democracy. The cultural sector looks forward to a mutually beneficial partnership with the Department of Canadian Heritage and with the federal government in the years ahead.

Setting the stage

Megan Davis Williams, National Director of the Canadian Conference of the Arts, put this year's Chalmers Conference in context by describing the opposing forces currently at work between

new leadership in government, a looming election, and the period between the Throne Speech and delivery of the Budget.

She indicated that the Main Estimates, which came out a few days' earlier, contained an indication of ongoing funding for Tomorrow Starts Today in the 2004-05 fiscal year, but the Budget will provide the details for the next few years.

Ms Williams reminded participants that the House was also between second and third reading of a very contentious Bill (C-12, previously C-20) which will remove the defence of artistic merit in cases where child pornography is in question. CCA has been promoting public discourse on the significance of this loss of freedom of expression for artists, and rallying support among arts organizations for maintaining the artistic merit defence.

There is a great deal of tension in the air and it is time to position the arts high on the agenda, not only for the government and other political parties, but also in our own communities.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Hype, gossip, and spin: which messages get attention at election time?

Nancy Juneau, Executive Director of the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française and moderator of the panel, explained its objectives: to provide participants with the necessary elements to develop an election strategy/advocacy campaign through the discussion of several different approaches to advocacy .

She prefaced her remarks by stating that her organization was proposing a change from using the Gross Domestic Product to measure the nation's fiscal health and quality of life, to using "le bonheur national brut" (a "Gross National Contentment" scale) because the arts, heritage



CCA Photo

Participants in the 2004 Chalmers Conference panel discussion (from left): Elizabeth May, Executive Director of The Sierra Club of Canada; Richard Messier, co-founder of *La Boîte de Comm: stratégie et production*; Nancy Juneau, Executive Director of the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française; Max Wyman, President of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO; and Caroline DiCocco, Ontario Liberal MPP.

and culture would feature prominently.

Max Wyman

"Get out there and mobilize this lifestyle change I'm talking about. Mobilize the grassroots - Caroline's example is phenomenal, a grassroots consultation that led to policy. Get out there, mobilize, move the issues forward!"

Max Wyman, one of Canada's leading cultural commentators and President of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, used the arguments in his newly published book, *The Defiant Imagination: Why Culture Matters - an impassioned plea to keep culture at the heart of the Canadian experiment*, to illustrate his points.

"Culture is at the heart of our society"

Mr Wyman described the current requirement for advocacy as a "war", a battle which needs to be fought on many fronts in hand to hand combat, and he expressed the view that what is needed is a wholesale paradigm shift - a lifestyle change - in the way Canadians think about the arts and culture and the way we live. He outlined the central challenges as being

- ⇒ long-term stability for arts organizations;
- ⇒ significantly improved professional management;
- ⇒ the arts and education dilemma; and
- ⇒ the threats and opportunities of new technologies.

He stated the need to create the public will - and thus the political will - to address these challenges, and expressed his disagreement with the notion that culture doesn't have the urgency of health or education.

On the contrary, he believes that culture goes to the heart of the health of a distinctive Canadian society. To build a society of imagination, creativity, and innovation, a society of good neighbours and healthy communities, a society of economic prosperity - arts and culture must be situated squarely at the centre of the public agenda, as integral elements of decision making across governments and across society. It should not be an either/or choice: health or culture, education or culture - all are equally vital. Arts and culture are what make life worth living. He expressed his belief that the money is there - it is how it is allocated that counts.



The main arguments

Mr Wyman identified the main arguments as being culture and its contribution to the wealth and harmony of cities; the importance of creativity in education; and the many facets of cultural diversity.

The key is to find the right "switch" to illuminate the issues:

- ⇒ **economic** - the arts return more than three times any investment, even by conservative estimates. (This fact always amazes politicians and media.)
- ⇒ **quality of life in our communities** - from the writings of Richard Florida to a new deal for Canada's cities, this issue is very topical. Cultural activity eases the pressures ingrained in an immigrant-rich country like Canada.
- ⇒ **the arts as a healing tool** - mentally, physically and spiritually. Examples of this include aboriginal communities returning to traditional cultures to help youth overcome addictions; suicide rates dropping in cultures with high self-esteem; the positive effects on offenders of involvement with art; etc. On the physical side, participation in the arts reduces stress levels, fear and the sense of isolation; has a beneficial effect on the immune system; shortens hospital stays; etc. (One British doctor went so far as to suggest that a large portion of Britain's £50 billion health care budget be transferred to the arts!)
- ⇒ **the ingenuity gap** - society is looking for innovative responses to some of the most profound dilemmas human-kind has faced: global health threats, human rights, poverty, the environment, stem cell research, robotics, and much more. These force us to re-evaluate our moral knowledge as human beings. The knowledge society is already with us, with its demands for vision; Canada is already heavily invested in innovation. What is needed is a sense of moral purpose. Engagement with art synthesizes the rational, the emotional, the imaginative, and the intuitive.
- ⇒ **benefits in schools**: witness Howard Gardner's studies at Harvard about how the arts enhance the basic curriculum.

"There is more to life than is dreamed of in a materialist's philosophy"

Art will never - and should never - pay its own way. Many payoffs cannot be quantified by economics, and funding culture should be neither an imposition of taste nor an act of charity - it is an investment in the health of the community.

Mr Wyman remarked that the time was ripe for a "Participation" type scheme across the country, to encourage people's involvement with art, to enable people to discover that sense of fulfillment and personal growth which involvement with creativity engenders. Modern western society places the arts at the fringes of our existence, but cultural activity belongs to everyone.

He advised cultural advocates to pick their targets very carefully, to pitch an issue that all can agree on, and one which can engage a broad sector of the country.

Richard Messier

Co-founder of the Montreal-based marketing

"Don't be shy. Artists can move mountains when they put their minds to it. Why not artists advocating for artists?"

firm La Boîte de Comm: stratégie et production, Richard Messier has worked on advocacy strategies with cultural organizations for a number of years. He was the mastermind behind the highly successful advocacy strategies of MAL (*Mouvement pour les arts et les lettres*), a Quebec coalition of cultural organizations.

It costs money to advocate, and small organizations usually have neither the experience, the capacity, nor the financial resources to do this on their own. The reason MAL worked so well in Quebec was that it regrouped a number of



different arts organizations, with each having to ante up a small amount of money. It was crucial to have a single, intelligible message that each organization could support - one which cut across all disciplines and resonated with all arts organizations, large and small.



CCA Photo

La Boîte de Comm : stratégie et production founder Richard Messier

"Shout it out!"

Mr Messier felt the best way to get one's message heard, and heard clearly, was to shout very loudly - he felt this was the key to his own success. He mobilized Quebec artists and arts organizations behind a single common message: artists live in poverty and something has to be done about it. While the strategy was to speak with one voice, the message could be tailored to the different parties. He stressed timing was important, especially at election time when the message has to be heard by **all** parties. The media must be used constructively: politicians are sensitive to public opinion as expressed in the media, but many in the cultural community do not use cultural media enough.

The Quebec artists' situation was helped by a study released shortly before the election which indicated that most artists worked multiple jobs just to survive. There-fore, if artists are spending half their time flipping hamburgers, they don't have the time or energy to produce their art, and the void will be filled with US culture. If creativity declines, there will be no requirement for legal protections because there will be nothing to protect. Artists need time, space, and financial support to create their art.

Culture in a knowledge-based economy

The knowledge-based economy has been touted as the way forward for the 21st century. Industries used to grow up around natural resources; now they develop where educated human resources are most plentiful - and studies have shown that knowledge workers seek creative environments. Culture is becoming one of the main economic development tools at the global level. If culture continues to be underfunded, there won't be a knowledge-based economy.

"Demand a larger pie"

It is important to keep the messages focussed, otherwise it gives an opportunity to candidates tend to slide off topic. Mr Messier stressed there is a collective responsibility to fight for the big picture. The reason MAL succeeded is because, rather than each discipline asking for a larger slice of the pie, the collectivity campaigned that the pie itself be enlarged. Focussing on a limited number of large objectives takes nothing away from the specific demands of each sector. For example, Union des Artistes has put a tremendous amount of lobbying effort into the need for a social safety net for artists - that is its particular issue. But they also supported the efforts of MAL. There is considerable strength in unity.



He added that, in Quebec, culture is a matter of national identity, but cautioned there is still much work to be done to increase the funding pot, and to improve the conditions of life for artists. A unifying vision of what is important for culture is needed, together with an indication of its importance to us.

Caroline Di Cocco

"You need to mobilize at a grassroots level that everyone understands, and consider taking part in elections as candidates. By being at the table, one can try to effect change."

As a Liberal MPP, and the culture critic during the Harris government years, Ms Di Cocco was instrumental in the development of the Ontario Liberal party's cultural platform. When she began at the Legislature in 1999, she wanted to find out as much as she could, but sensed there was "an indifference from the government and almost a victims' silence from the cultural sector".

"With strong grassroots involvement and a political will, we can move mountains"

Ms Di Cocco brought together the eclectic, diverse arts and culture disciplines in order to showcase the strength and value of the collective both for her party's caucus and for the public, and get real input into policy development.

This type of consensus building had not been attempted before. She began the process in 2001 in her home riding of Sarnia-Lambton, under the title "Developing a Network for Cultural Renaissance", and brought together groups from all parts of the community: education, arts and heritage, local elected representatives, and representatives from economic development councils, tourism, and the chambers of commerce. The non-partisan forum comprised four areas for dis-

cussion:

- ⇒ education and the arts
- ⇒ community and provincial networking
- ⇒ roles and responsibilities of the province
- ⇒ roles and responsibilities of the community

This model was duplicated in a number of communities across the province, with the outcomes from each compiled into a document which was then reviewed by those who participated; the documents were also shared among the different communities.

In 2003, the Liberal caucus met with representatives of the major arts groups to discuss the outcomes of the various forums, following which the final policy was developed and circulated to all involved for further input. This intensive networking approach was crucial to the development of the party's cultural policy.

Ms Di Cocco emphasized the fact that this advocacy work was done continuously, consistently, and persistently, over the four year period before a cultural policy emerged.

She pointed out in her remarks that political decisions makers do not always understand the inherent strength and value of the arts and culture. "The success of advocacy and influencing government when it comes to sectors such as arts and culture requires the collective in each and every community to be seen, to discuss issues constructively, to showcase the successes and to make a visible case for their value and importance to their communities."

"Achieve buy-in at the macro level"

Policy making is tremendously layered and complex. In her own efforts, Ms Di Cocco found it was important to peel back the individual issues and to look at the big picture, because that is what will interest the decision makers. It is essential to achieve buy-in at the macro level first, otherwise it cannot be achieved at the micro level. A number of macro messages emerged from the forum discussions, such as a



new heritage act because the existing one had no teeth, the establishment of an advisory council to the minister, and the importance of arts in education. The subsequent micro messages will differ depending on the organizations involved, as will the actual advocacy requirements themselves as there is competition with other elements of the same sector. She emphasized that if the focus is only on the micro level, the advocacy will be wasted because it becomes a "divide and conquer" scenario. A message that encompasses a wider group carries much more clout.

Elizabeth May

"Use the power of your voices to move the hearts of Canadians - and organize! I think this constituency needs to find ways to say "solidarity"; to say we'll take these five points for the election and we'll stick to them and we'll work together. We stand together."



CCA Photo

Elizabeth May, Executive Director of The Sierra Club of Canada

Ms May, Executive Director of The Sierra Club of Canada, provided a spirited insight into advocacy from the viewpoint of an environmental NGO. She pointed out that there are similarities between artists (working in a community - alone, poor, discouraged) and environmentalists (working in that same community - alone, poor, discouraged), and she encouraged common cause with like-minded individuals and organizations.

She highlighted another common theme: the meaning of life and why we are here. She felt there was a "dumbing down" - an over-simplification - of society, resulting in a loss of connection to what makes us interesting as citizens and as human beings. In the fight against virtual nature and virtual culture, the message has to be that we all need the "real thing" to survive.

Ms May described CCA's advocacy primer (included in the conference kits and available on CCA's website) as excellent, containing all the basics to get started. The difficulty in getting messages across during election time, is due to the media's obsession with hype, gossip, scandal and spin! Despite the presence of journalists who specialize in arts and culture, the topic is nowhere to be seen during an election campaign.

Self-fulfilling prophecies

She envisioned the difference it could make if one reputable journalist announced "the sleeper issue in this campaign is the fate of Canadian culture in the face of the wave meaningless drivel from the United States". Supposing that same journalist went on to exhort Canadians to embrace that issue as they've embraced nothing since the war effort - it would become a self-fulfilling prophecy! What appears in the media is what becomes most important (rather than the other way around).



So how to get the really important messages into the media? It is difficult but not totally impossible. The more candidates hear the same messages coming from a variety of sources, the more they will listen. The Sierra Club works at two levels: the main message in the national media is broad and it's important to stay on message; at the riding level, the issues are tough, very specific, and targeted, with questionnaires for candidates, riding by riding, and published results. It is also important to work at the national party platform level. The environmental movement has been successful at collaborating across different groups which may have their own issues but collaborate on the top issues and work on those for the election campaign. Use a broad banner message, stay on message, and then hammer away on specifics.

"Use your celebrities"

The cultural sector has something the media loves: celebrities! Use them more - during an election campaign, the media's attention must be grabbed quickly.

She described how Mary Jane Lamond, a Gaelic singer, gave a series of free concerts to raise money to fight the oil and gas industry off Sable Island, Nova Scotia - a natural gas find there has received considerable press but created only 60 jobs (as opposed to the music industry in that province which is the fastest growing economic sector but receives almost no credit). Artists come out to protect the natural world because they draw their inspiration from it - but the politicians seem unable to make this connection.

Ms May described how Ursula Frankel believed that if one briefed politicians sufficiently, it would be enough because she believed them to be well-intentioned but ill-informed. Instead, Frankel found they were well-informed but ill-intentioned. She also quoted the late Warner Troyer, one of the earliest environmental inves-

tigative journalists, who used to say the problem with politicians is that we "anthropomorphify" them and forget that they are single-celled organisms susceptible only to heat, pressure and pain. Therefore, in an election campaign, it is heat, pressure and pain that will gain their attention!

Q&A session

There was considerable comment from the floor about the need to hear the voice of youth in these discussions. Many young people do not vote at all because they feel disconnected from the issues so it is important to engage them. One campaign, Apathy is Boring, supported by all the major political parties, is using art to engage youth and encourage them to vote (www.apathyisboring.com).

There was a call for cultural activists to get into partisan politics. "We have to be at the table as artists, as cultural workers, making the decisions that will implement our future. We need a lot more Wendy Lills in Parliament!"

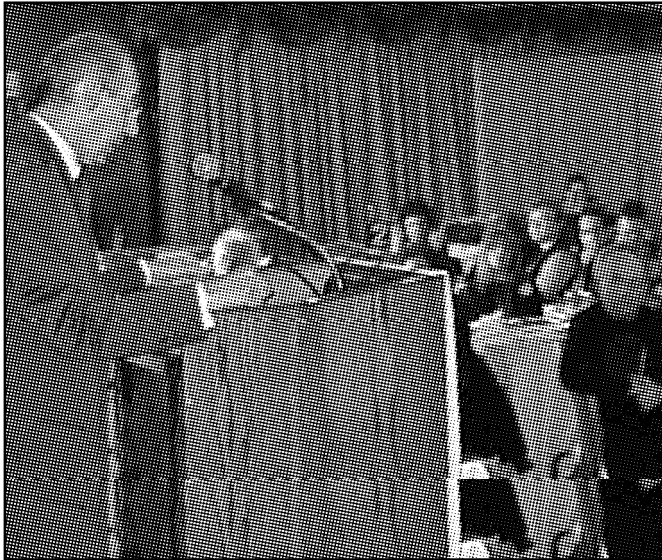
Mme Juneau concluded the panel by challenging participants to be original and creative in the discussions to be held later in the day. "We are representatives of the artistic and creative sector, we have tools that others do not have. Dare to be original!"

LUNCH TIME SPEAKER

John Hobday, Director of the Canada Council for the Arts

"Show me the money!"

Mr Hobday referred to Minister Scherrer's earlier comments, stating he was encouraged regarding the future of her government's ongoing support for the arts but he will be more encouraged when he actually reads it in the budget.



John Hobday, Director of the Canada Council for the Arts.

He expressed support for Ottawa's beleaguered cultural community, currently faced with a draft budget to cut funding by 80%, pointing out that Council invests more than \$3 million a year in this city. He felt Canada's fourth largest city, and its capital, should be a leader, especially given "the crucial link between creativity, urban development and the quality of life".

Changes ahead

The Canada Council's new corporate plan, provisionally entitled *The Road Ahead*, will govern the Council's direction for the period 2005-2008. With the current climate of programme review at the federal level, he indicated Council is assessing its programmes to align them more closely with the goals identified in the new plan.

While the Council's mission remains unchanged, changes in implementation will include:

- ⇒ an increased focus on the benefit to the Canadian public of the arts and of investment in the arts
- ⇒ a stronger emphasis on improving the organizational health of arts organizations
- ⇒ a reassertion of the Council's role as the

- primary federal funder of the professional arts
- ⇒ building a common and coherent federal policy framework
- ⇒ facilitating an improved relationship with other arts funders at the provincial, territorial, and municipal levels

In addressing the challenges he had identified at the last Chalmers Conference (see Mr Hobday's speech on 22 May 2003 at

www.canadacouncil.ca), he noted that changes are also required in Council's grants to artists and arts organizations, moving away from sustaining grants and towards supporting artists at key career transition points, who are:

- ⇒ making "sea-changes" in their artistic vision,
- ⇒ exploring promising new partnerships, or
- ⇒ taking advantage of opportunities for market and audience development, research and publication.

Council will also develop tools to assist arts organizations in the professional management of promotion, fundraising, volunteers and board members, as well as helping them through the minefields of complex administrative requirements. With applications for funding growing annually, Council will be establishing new criteria for entry of deserving organizations into its funding programmes and the exit of organizations that fail to maintain the highest standards of excellence. (In response to a later question, Mr Hobday stressed the importance, first and foremost, for Council to better understand the issues relating to organizational health. Many artistic organizations which received Council funding in their early days are now mature establishments and Council must struggle with the question of how to move them from the "bare survival" mode of support to the plateau of reasonable sustainability.)

Mr Hobday also indicated that discussions were ongoing with the Department of Canadian Heritage to bring some of the Department's existing programmes under the Council's



umbrella. To accomplish all these, Council will require a vast commitment of new funding from the federal government.

Advocacy tools

Canada Council is launching a new website at the end of March, to coincide with its 47th anniversary. In addition to being more user-friendly, it will have a special section providing talking points, tips, data and other useful materials and links to make the case for public funding of the arts. "It is not enough to preach to the converted The only way we will succeed in obtaining sustained investment in the arts - from all levels of government and the private sector - is by bringing the evidence and the arguments directly before the people who hold the purse-strings".

In the question and answer period following Mr Hobday's speech, one participant made an impassioned recommendation that the Council's budget needed to be at least doubled, in the first instance, in order to respond to the needs of professional artists in Canada, a recommendation which met with loud applause.

The complete text of Mr Hobday's speech is available at www.canadacouncil.ca.

WORKSHOP

How the System Works ... and How to Work the System

The afternoon workshop was delivered by **Sean Moore**, an Ottawa-based partner with Gowling Lafleur Henderson LLP, and an expert in public affairs and policy.

Mr Moore pointed out that in our system of government (a cabinet system), legislators have a certain role to play but working through the executive branch is much more important for

public policy advocacy. He suggested that 90% of the policy activity actually takes place there. Therefore, most organizations' preoccupation with "getting to see the Minister" is misplaced. As Ronald Atkey, a minister under the short-lived government of Joe Clark, once said: "Getting in to see the Minister is usually the last gasp of a losing lobby". This is especially true if the homework, the background liaising with the officials and others around the minister, have not been done first.

What are some of the "keys"

⇒ Examine the issues the way those in government have to look at them. The advocacy "industry" is a much busier environment these days, which makes it difficult to get any message across - a much higher order of performance and strategic creativity are required.

⇒ Understand the nuance to process in order be effective. This entails a commitment to a certain amount of do-it-yourself policy work, which previously might have been expected of those in government (outlining the arguments, suggesting a communications strategy, showing them how to "sell your product" to their colleagues).

The six Ps of public policy

⇒ **Principle/purpose:** In order to define one's own objectives and goals, it is important to understand the objectives, principles, and purpose of the government in that particular area. To paraphrase from lesson #1 in the film *The Fog of War*, empathise with the enemy, get into the mind of those in government to understand the purpose and principle of what they are trying to do. Align your purpose to that of the government. The bottom line for governments is not necessarily dollars.

⇒ **Process:** understand the process of government, who are the people and organizations which are central to decision making on the issues, what are the timetables/cycles for the issues (almost everything in government has a timetable - budgetary, policy, etc). This is essential to a focussed advocacy effort.



CCA Photo

Ottawa-based lobbying expert Sean Moore describes the "Six P's of public policy" to the participants at the 2004 Chalmers Conference.

Develop a blueprint of who is responsible for what, right down to the director level.

⇒ **Precedent:** this is what drives consideration of issues in government. Ignore it at your peril! It is central to how an open, democratic government works. The downside is that government often reacts by stating "we've never done that before" or "if we give it to you, we have to give it to everyone". It is necessary to develop other ways for government to understand your issue.

⇒ **Politics:** people should be "constructively cynical" about government, rather than just dismissing something because it is deemed "political". It's all a political process and the skill is in knowing what are the binding agents of politics (the relationships, alliances, friendships, loyalties, feuds). Politicians deal with an endless stream of petitioners so you need to be creative in how to make your pitch.

⇒ **Positioning:** sometimes known as "spin". It is important to have a definition for success in your advocacy efforts. Constantly check and evaluate your progress. Understand how government positions your issue, and what government's stated objectives are (and its unstated ones). The objective is to shift the positioning of the issue to a more favourable terrain. This may require rethinking the positioning of the arts vis à vis its role in society and government funding. Positioning is also part of expectations management. It is important to develop a sense of

potency within an organization with regards to advocacy. Sometimes this means pitching some easy successes in order to build a record with those in government. Success builds on success, and failure to meet unrealistic goals can be devastating to an organization.

⇒ **Perseverance:** the vast majority of advocacy efforts which appeared to have reasonable objectives, fail because they quit too soon. An enormous amount of time and energy is often exerted internally, defining the issues and objectives, so that when the actual lobbying event takes place there's a two day event and that's it! Government knows this and frequently plays on the fact that an organization's key issue today will be gone tomorrow. Stick with it, be strategic, but don't ignore the realities government is facing.

Working the system

To put together a strategic effort at influencing any government decision requires identifying the short term goals and successes, but also examining the long-term big picture - where do you want to be in 5-6 years.

Stage 1 Enquiry: understand the politics of the issue, who's involved, what issue cycle is involved.

Stage 2 Develop Theory and Themes of the arguments.



Stage 3 Test it: rather than rushing into an advocacy campaign as soon as you have an idea. Be prepared to modify your approach if appropriate.

Stage 4 Implementation: roll out your campaign, get out the messages, hold the meetings, do the follow up.

Stage 5 Evaluate: despite possible difficulties brokering different objectives, analyse how you are doing.

Stage 6 Persist: don't give up.

Elements of the strategy

The elements of persuasion for your issue are:

⇒ have a compelling narrative: most politicians find the story the most compelling aspect of any advocacy campaign. In addition to having one message for the sector and being consistent with it, ensure it is tailored to the particular circumstances (organization or individual you are dealing with).

⇒ theory and theme: every argument needs a central theory or idea to guide the discourse, rather than a shopping list of "wants". Out of this idea should come 3-4 themes to give life to the idea.

⇒ language: couch your messages in the strategic language used by government.

⇒ confront your negatives: admit your own shortcomings rather than have someone else point them out for you. A very good article on this by the late Martin Schulman, *The Audience for Arts Advocacy: Building a Political Constituency*, can be found at www.artsnet.org/ATHEEJ/audience.htm.

⇒ emphasize commonalities, the cohesive effects of the policy, rather than highlighting the differences. This is particularly important to government these days. Those in public office are frequently dealing with competing demands and anything that is seen as bringing people together is favoured.

⇒ invest in future relationships: spend the time and effort cultivating those who work behind the scenes.

The three phases of meeting with politicians and/or public servants

Before - Do your homework. Get some insight into their current preoccupations. Develop an appropriate narrative (rather than talking points or power point presentations) to deliver your message. This needs to be tailored for each individual and is very labour intensive, but politics is a retail rather than a wholesale exercise. Make sure you know the staff - ideally give them briefing notes ahead - or your visit will be a waste of time.

During - MPs are already busy people and will become busier once the Prime Minister's parliamentary reforms come into effect. Never spend more than 40% of the meeting discussing your issue; the real value of the meeting is listening to them, finding out what problems they have with your issue. So spend most of your time on "receive" rather than "send". In the send: stick to theory and themes rather than embarking on a debate of the issue. As part of that receive, ask for advice: "If you want advice, ask for money; if you want money, ask for advice". Arrive on time, be prepared, and leave when the time is up.

After - Hold an immediate debrief and provide feedback to your organization. Persistence is key so ensure you have a plan for follow up. One of the best ways to hammer the message home is to have someone from your organization meet the minister or MP in their local constituency to continue the dialogue, thereby ensuring it is not just a national issue but also a local one. Try to find out behind the scenes how others perceived the meeting: perhaps the messenger was wrong, or the themes irrelevant to that person. Ensure you send a written thank you (not just another letter outlining your key points) to both the principal and to staff members. This is very important and one of the rarest things in Ottawa!



"An outstanding presentation!"

Mr Moore's workshop was hailed by participants as extremely detailed and useful. The full power point presentation is available on the CCA's website at www.ccarts.ca.

Following the workshop, participants divided into discussion groups to consider election strategies and messages for the sector.

Discussions ranged around issues such as the micro and macro topics for discussion; the arts as a necessary component of our quality of life and the place of culture in building winning communities; how to engage youth; and the necessity of ensuring all parties hear our message(s). These groups provided considerable insight and input into the work required in advocating on behalf of the cultural sector.

Some of the results included:

- ⇒ CCA must be the leader, providing the necessary advocacy tools.
- ⇒ The cultural sector must not be shy about using its greatest resource: its celebrities.
- ⇒ A "Creative Canada" can lead this country into the 21st century.

CCA will use the material from the discussion groups in its election strategy material currently in development. [Some material for the upcoming election is already up at www.ccarts.ca; new material is being added as and when it is available.]

In her wrap-up remarks, CCA National Director, Megan Davis Williams, commented on the determination expressed by those present that the arts be raised in the context of the coming election, not just to advocate for funding but to articulate the centrality of the arts to the lives of Canada's citizens. She thanked the participants for their clear message that the CCA should move forward with a strong campaign, drawing on the strengths of its organizational members.