



President's Report to the Annual General Meeting of Members

Toronto, June 12, 2008

Dear Members and friends of the Canadian Conference of the Arts,
Dear colleagues of the Board of Governors,

It is appropriate today, as the 2005-2008 Board of Governors 3 year mandate ends, to report not only on CCA'S achievements of the past year, but also to give an overview of what has been accomplished during the tenure of the outgoing Board.

Three years ago, the CCA was celebrating its 60th anniversary, reminiscing on its many accomplishments as the broadest based Arts Service Organization in Canada, and paying homage to many artists and cultural workers who have devoted time, expertise and energy in serving the Cultural community through the CCA.

But having been around a long time is not sufficient to maintain the relevance of an institution. And while the CCA was proudly blowing the candles of its anniversary cake, it was, at the same time, highly conscious that the environment in which it was operating had changed considerably over the years. Arts services organizations had appeared and were now providing specialized services for specialized needs in every discipline and in most areas of the country, in French and in English.

The unavoidable question, which the newly elected Board needed to ask to itself and to the CCA as a whole, was:

*Is there a need in the 21st century for an umbrella organization like the CCA?
Can it still be relevant? And if so, what is the added value that the CCA brings to
the cultural community, on the one hand, and to our federal institutions on the
other?*

Coincidentally, the same questions were being asked of the CCA by its main funder, the Department of Canadian Heritage, as well as by some of its largest institutional members. It became obvious to the Board that the CCA which had, in the past, to adjust to changing times, needed to do it again.

It needed to test the relevancy of its mission, to clearly establish a vision for the future shared by its members, to develop a coherent plan of action and to articulate a public discourse that would resonate with all the constituencies it serves.

Three years later, I am proud to report that, thanks to a highly dedicated Board of governors, an energetic National Director and a dedicated staff, considerable progress has been achieved.

First, we have refocused the CCA on its core mission, which is to provide a forum where policy issues affecting the arts and culture sector at large at the national level are debated in an informed manner.

This has meant that the CCA has disengaged from non-core activities, concentrating exclusively on the monitoring, research, analysis and dissemination of information on federal policy issues affecting the Canadian arts and culture sector.

The outcome of the National Policy Conference held in March 2006, allowed the Board to establish clear policy priorities and to develop a strategic plan for 2008-2011, which is currently being implemented.

The CCA now fulfills efficiently the basic “reactive” part of its mission of monitoring, reporting and analyzing policy developments as well as intervening in public debate. It has reaffirmed its role and re-established its credibility with the milieu, tightened its links with the membership through the quality of its bulletins, through the in-depth presentations it makes to parliamentary standing committees and regulating agencies and through the publication of research papers such as the one on cultural diplomacy which culminated in a Symposium held in Montreal last November.

The 2008-2011 Strategic Plan, which will become the new Board primary working document, is a strong roadmap against which the CCA will measure its progress on an ongoing basis. It will be regularly revised to reflect any unforeseen circumstances, in order to adjust our course of action and sketch the road ahead.

While concentrating on its core business, the CCA also needed to look at its operating budget, mainly at its sources of revenue. We have asked our members to show their support through a major increase in the membership fees. The response has been positive to the extent that the relative share of membership fee to the operating revenues has grown from 6% to 15%, a level we deem more appropriate for a service organization like ours.

Moreover, a strategy for a comprehensive diversification of revenue is under development. While fundraising for a national service organization remains a difficult task, we believe that through a “project management” approach, now being implemented, the CCA will be in a better position to attract donors through more tangible proposals.

There are, however, important but unknown and intangible contributions being made to the CCA right now. That is why the CCA has decided to quantify rigorously the value of *pro bono* services, volunteer work and personal investment in time and financial resources provided by its Board members who are all professionals and expert in their field, let alone a great number of outside experts associated to the CCA. Over the past 12 months, we estimate at \$225K such contribution, which eloquently demonstrates the trust many people invest in the mission and purpose of the CCA.

The renewed relevance of the CCA’s work and the evident dedication of so many people are clearly demonstrated by the fact that, for the first time in its existence, we have secured a two year contribution agreement with Canadian Heritage to facilitate the implementation of our three year plan.

Our audited statements for the year show that the CCA has been able to erase its accumulated deficit and maintain a break-even financial situation during these challenging times.

On the issue of Governance, CCA members will recall that in 2002, the Board had implemented a new governance structure. It had also suggested that this new structure be re-examined after a trial period of 3 to 5 years. The outgoing Board has proceeded to such examination and is recommending to you, today, the ratification of some amendments to the current By-Law.

Finally, in the late winter, the CCA members were invited to elect its new Board whose members will be presented to you in a moment by the Chair of the Nominating Committee.

I am confident that the clarity of CCA's mission and values and the strategic alignment of its activities, the consolidation of its financial resources, as well as the leadership of the new Board of Governors, the energy of the National Director and the dedication of the Secretariat will insure CCA strength for the future.

At this moment, I would like to thank all members of the Board for their generous support throughout those three years. Special thanks go to the outgoing members of the Board: Lori Baxter (BC), Michel Blondeau (Ont), Peter Gardner (Nfld) Bastien Gilbert (Qué), Peter Hyde (Ont) Sheila Roberts (Sask) and Karl Siegler (BC). Their dedication to the CCA throughout this crucial phase of its existence has been invaluable. I know that their commitment to what the CCA stands for will carry forward even as they leave its Board.

The CCA is a unique Canadian institution which provokes interest and sometimes envy from foreigners. It occupies a unique niche in the cultural ecology of our country. As a major component of Canadian civil society, it plays an important role in defining the kind of public policies required in the rapidly changing environment faced by our various forms of cultural expressions. As the former Board hands over to the new, I can express optimism concerning the future of this remarkable organization.

Thank you.

Robert Spickler
President of the Board of Governors