

**CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF THE ARTS
PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS
Ottawa - June 18, 2009**

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

It is an honour for me to present this Annual Report for 2008-09 for the first time, as the recently elected Chair of the Board of Governors. I think it is fitting at this point that I first thank my predecessor, Robert Spickler, whose leadership and experience has helped the CCA go through a very difficult period of its history. Over the past four years, Robert has made an enormous contribution to put the CCA back on the road to recovery, and for that, we all owe him our warmest thanks.

CCA's mission is to contribute to the development of policies which support and enhance the vitality of the arts and culture sector in Canada. It has been doing so for sixty-four years and it is more needed than ever, but in an environment much different from that of 1945! The organization has to adapt to new dynamics and adopt new approaches to leverage what are its two main assets, namely the breadth of its membership and its considerable potential as a network of networks.

2008-2009 has been a remarkable year for the CCA, one during which the oldest and largest arts and culture umbrella organization has made important progress in the refocusing and rebuilding process launched by the Board of Governors in 2005. For the first time, the organization has started planning on a three year cycle, based on the strategic alignment of its activities and resources.

This process has been generously supported by our main funder, the Department of Canadian Heritage: for the first time in thirty years of financial support from the federal government, the CCA has been able to count on a two-year agreement which ensured a much needed modicum of financial stability to the Secretariat as it develops new ways of serving stakeholders and seeks to increase and diversify the organization's sources of revenue. We thank the Minister and the Department's officials for their continued support to the unique contribution the CCA makes to the arts and culture sector in Canada.

CCA's renewed credibility was confirmed in several ways over the past twelve months. I have mentioned restored credibility with our public funders and can point to the fact that beyond the confidence shown by Heritage, we have received increased grants from Ontario and British Columbia Arts Council, the Canada Council as well as the Trillium Foundation.

The value of the CCA in providing authoritative and non partisan information was clearly demonstrated through the public reaction following the cancellation last summer of important arts and culture programs and the impact this issue had over the federal election. CCA's analyses and election material were vastly referred to and used extensively by our membership and beyond. Our National Director has been solicited dozens of times for interviews in all media.

The profile of the organization has been greatly enhanced by this series of unforeseen events, and the more so since by serendipity, those events dovetailed perfectly with the action plan set

out in our Strategic Plan. In the spring of 2008, the CCA had chosen as theme for the year: How can the arts and culture sector better work together to put its policy priorities on the public agenda? The events which preceded and characterized the last federal electoral campaign and the Regional Forums which followed the election all contributed to heighten the relevance of the issue raised by the CCA.

Two research documents were commissioned in partnership with universities and published as background material for a series of 14 Regional Forums which took place all over the country right after the election, from the middle of October to the beginning of December.

This very large consultation, coming as it did after a groundswell of collective interest in arts and culture as matter of public debate, confirmed the widespread desire of the sector to try to seek greater unity of purpose. The Regional Forums led to the March 12, 2009 Chalmers Conference in Ottawa where over 100 delegates from all over the country debated the issue of consensus building with the help of Anne L'Ecuyer, formerly vice-president of American for the Arts. This workshop was followed the next day by a working breakfast where some 40 key organizational and individual members met with the CCA Board to pursue the discussion. These meetings have led to the creation of an ad hoc Coordination Committee tasked with short and long-term objectives to better position arts, culture and heritage issues in public debate. The Committee has met by teleconference four times so far and work is underway... but that will be for next year's annual report!

Beyond the Regional Forums and the March Chalmers Workshop, the CCA also organized in Toronto in June 2008 a public debate on culture in foreign policy held in Toronto with Professor Cynthia Schneider, from Georgetown University, and Canadian PhD Student Melissa Aronczyk, from New York University. Another way of providing forums for exchanges on policy issues has been the creation of an Advisory Committee on Research, which helps the CCA identify research projects and develop partnerships. Other instruments like teleconferencing, blogging and web based work groups figure increasingly in the arsenal used by the CCA Secretariat to deliver on its triple role of leader, catalyst and advocate.

There are several challenges ahead, but I am confident that we are on the right road and that, as we update our Strategic Plan for 2012 and beyond, the CCA will clearly establish with all stakeholders its unique role in Canadian society.

In closing, I would like to pay tribute to two great Canadians who have recently passed away. The first one is one of CCA's lifetime honorary members, Paul Siren. As a member of the Board of Governors, and in his service as Vice-President and finally President of the CCA, Paul Siren helped the organization deal with complex and controversial issues in a logical and timely manner.

The CCA will always be enormously grateful for the many contributions that Paul made to the welfare of the arts and artists in Canada and around the world. His unflinching common sense and wisdom were rare assets which he used unsparingly for the benefit of others in the arts and beyond. His collaboration with Gratien Gélinas led Canada to be the first signatory of the Belgrade Recommendations on the Status of the Artist and to implement legislation at the federal level to promote and protect the socio-economic status of our artists and creators.

This week, we learned of the death of the internationally renowned filmmaker Allan King, the recipient of 2008 Diplôme d'honneur of the CCA. We feel greatly privileged to have been able to honour this luminary of Canadian cinema at the Award Ceremony on March 12, 2009, presided

by Senator Tommy Banks and at which we also honoured the president of Culture Montréal, Simon Brault, who received the Keith Kelly Award.