

**CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF THE ARTS
PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS
Ottawa - June 18, 2010**

Dear Members and friends of the Canadian Conference of the Arts,

Dear colleagues of the Board of Governors,

This is my second annual report as the Chair of the Board of Governors of the CCA, and I am glad to report that 2009-2010 was an overall positive year of transition during which the oldest arts organization in the Canadian arts, culture and heritage sector made some important steps on the road to its rebuilding and repositioning.

The CCA has been able to maintain its status as a key, authoritative observer and analyst of all the goings-on at the federal level that affect our vast sector in one way or another. Our status has definitely grown with Parliamentarians and regulators, the result of several presentations over the past four years. For example, I am proud to report that the CCA was the first group invited by the newly formed all-party Arts Caucus to give an overview of the cultural sector and the main issues it faces. Our National Director was also invited to make a presentation to the caucuses of the Liberal Party and the Bloc Québécois on current policy issues.

We have been very active on the policy front, appearing as a witness in front of several parliamentary committees and the CRTC. This year, the CCA also made presentations in various parts of the country. Our National Director participated in panels in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Québec and Newfoundland. Thanks in part to the support of the Trillium Foundation, he also presented the new Cultural Policy 101 Workshop in several communities in Ontario.

Throughout the year, the CCA has pursued work on long-term issues that are very important for the future vitality of arts and culture in our society. It is well known that important issues are rarely urgent. Given their limited resources and the immediate challenges they face on an on-going basis, arts service organizations and their members rarely have the time or energy to engage in long-term and fundamental issues, often only tangential to their immediate preoccupations. Because of the breadth of its membership and of the perspectives it takes on issues, the CCA considers as part of its unique mandate a commitment to dealing with such long-term policy issues.

Last year, the board decided that one of the organization's priorities would be what we like to call the *Quest for cultural statistics*. We are happy to work in close cooperation with the Department of Canadian Heritage, Statistics Canada and the Cultural Human Resources Council on this important and multi-year project. This work will result in providing the cultural sector with the kind of relevant and timely data it needs to plan its future and make its case with decision-makers in both the public and private sectors.

In 2008, in the wake of a federal election where culture played an unusual and critical role, our National Director asked our members and stakeholders in 14 communities what could be done collectively to better position arts and culture in Canadian society. Amongst the several suggestions received, one was mentioned most frequently: ensure that arts education is present in all sorts of ways in our school systems. Accordingly, the CCA has welcomed the invitation of the Canadian Arts and Learning Network to work in close cooperation to ensure that the benefits of the arts and arts education in particular, are known and appreciated by the population at large and by decision-makers at all levels of government.

And it is because we see the long-term social and cultural advantages of creating truly community based multi-media centres across the country that the CCA supports and promotes the project recently presented by the Canadian Association of Community Television Users and Services (CACTUS) to the CRTC.

All of this work has been done in what I can only describe as a challenging year for the CCA. As we will see in a few minutes in the Treasurer's report, the CCA started the year with a deficit incurred the previous year, not because of bad management, but because it had been deemed essential to take on a number of initiatives in keeping with our strategic plan. Unfortunately, and against reasonable expectations, supporting revenue for those initiatives did not materialize in 2008-2009.

Thanks to the considerable efforts of the staff, we are happy to report that we have all but erased this deficit and are able to start the current fiscal year from a much better position. We are proud of this achievement and the fact that we have accomplished this in what remain difficult times for membership retention and recruitment. At this point, I would like to express our warmest thanks to our main funders, the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Trillium Foundation and the Ontario Arts Council, who have maintained their confidence and support throughout this period. We also thank the Royal Bank which helped us get through a short-term cash-flow crisis at the end of the fiscal year.

However, as our National Director will report later on, our financial success has come with a price. Given less money and the additional workload on everyone in the secretariat, some activities have suffered, like our communications with stakeholders and our research projects. Some important initiatives, like the convening of the strategic coordination committee subsequent to the March 2009 Chalmers Conference in Ottawa, required a lot of time and energy between March and October. Then it lost momentum, due also in part to the loss of urgency of an impending federal election. But I can assure you that this initiative has not been abandoned. It will be part of major developments in the coming months, including the way the CCA involves its membership in the running of its activities.

The challenges confronting the sector remain real. We must prepare for the potential impacts on our members as the government plans to reduce its deficit. We will have to work closely together to ensure that balancing the government's books is not done at the expense of much needed investments to arts and culture. Artists and cultural creators must be part of a comprehensive national strategy for the digital society, which is, by the way, the theme of our November National Policy Conference.

Looking forward, we are embarking on a thorough review of the CCA's strategic plan. The core of our preoccupations will be ensuring an increased participation of our membership in the orientation of the CCA, a topic which our National Director will touch upon in his own report. This process will take place as we prepare for the election of the next CCA board. The vote will take place in February 2011 and we are currently refreshing our list of potential candidates. I would invite all members to please contact our National Director regarding any candidate you think would be a good fit for CCA board and would assist in its development.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge three past board members who, for a combination of personal and professional reasons, decided to step down from the board of the CCA during the year. René Cormier, Susan Kennard and Philip Szporer all made an important contribution to the CCA during their term in office and they continue to be supporters of its actions and objectives. I would also like to welcome four new members to the board – Erika Beatty, CEO of Symphony Nova Scotia; Amir Ali Alibhai, Executive Director of the Vancouver Arts and Culture Alliance; Luc Fortin, President of la Guilde des musiciens et musiciennes du Québec; and Tom McFall, Executive Director of the Alberta Crafts Council, who unfortunately could not be with us today. I also want to thank the other board members: Rose Bellosillo,

Jason van Eyk, Arden Ryshpan, André Leclerc and Michel Beauchemin. I will take this opportunity to thank Michel for accepting the position of Vice President following René Cormier's resignation.

2010 marks the 65th anniversary of the CCA. This is a remarkable achievement in longevity, and this organization has a glorious past linked to the development of cultural policies at the national level. We will duly celebrate this anniversary next November, as a prelude to our National Policy Conference. However, having been around for a long time is not enough! This organization still has a unique role to play in the current environment and you can count on all of us at the board and the secretariat to ensure that it does.