



Canadian Conference of the Arts' Annual General Meeting

Ottawa June 18, 2012

President's Report

- Welcome – This is my fourth annual report as Chair of the Board and what a year it has been!
- A year ago, we had the first unofficial indication that the federal government had decided to put an end to 46 years of funding to the CCA. Since such funding has represented over the years anything between 50 and 70 % of our resources, the news was obviously of major importance to the organization.
- According to the Chinese, “Never let a good crisis go to waste!” So, as soon as we found out, the Board and the Secretariat agreed that this was an opportunity not to be missed: to reinvent the business model of the CCA and to make it an independent voice and instrument serving the vast Canadian arts, culture and heritage sector in Canada.
- But this could not be done unilaterally. The first thing to do was to confirm with members and stakeholders whether they shared our conviction that this unique organization still had a role to play in the new environment. Longevity is not a proof of relevance!
- Accordingly we launched a thorough in-depth consultation to see if the need was there for such an organization, what its priorities should be and how it could go about delivering a renewed mandate.
- We were privileged throughout the process to be accompanied by a real professional consultant who did an incredible job, mostly on a pro bono basis – and I will open a parenthesis here to publicly thank Michel Langelier formerly of the University of Ottawa, for his generosity, his dedication and the great quality of his work. He has given us a roadmap which we could never have afforded to buy.
- But let me get back to the consultation process. In just under three months, our National Director toured the country, meeting with over five hundred people in seventeen cities. He met with members and non members from the not for profit sector and from cultural industries; from the traditional art forms and the not so traditional art forms. He met with provincial and municipal government representatives and with arts funders from Victoria to St.-John's. These face to face meetings were coupled with an on-line consultation which over 200 people participated in.



- We were able to test our vision, our mission and to get a feel for what should be the priority issues and activities. What came out of this process was the solid confirmation that there is indeed a need for an overarching organization like the CCA bringing together the vast number of individuals and organizations in the Canadian art, culture and heritage sector. And the information gathered allowed the preparation of a comprehensive business plan.
- We now have plan, we have started implementing it as the National Director will say in his report. We have projects underway. What is in short supply is time, particularly with regards to putting in place the transition funding needed to shift gears to a new business model. As you know, we had indicated to officials at the Department of Canadian Heritage early in the process last year that we would require some support as we develop new sources of revenue to ensure the financial sustainability of the organization. With their support, we put in a request for such funding to be until 2012-13. It is not until April 11 that we learned of the government's decision to limit such funding to six months. Need I say that this focuses the mind?
- We have already taken a number of steps to gauge the possibilities of success. The first one was to check if our membership is still with us in this venture. Renewal date for the majority of our members is April 1, and I am glad to say that given what people know about our challenge, the response has been most encouraging. Not only have renewals come in at a regular pace, but some ten organizations said that upon checking, they were underpaying their membership. Some old members have come back, and I have every reason that more will as the movement picks up steam. Last of all, we are heartened by the fact that we now count seven provincial governments as Affiliate members, Nova Scotia having just joined for the first time.
- We have launched the Founders' Circle which is comprised of those individuals, unions, associations and corporations who, over the next three years, will support the activities of the CCA. We are looking for specialized assistance in preparing a membership and a donation campaign and in finding corporate support and sponsorship.
- As you can see, over the past year, the Board and the Secretariat have been steadily pro-active in facing the challenge thrown at us to re-shape this unique collective instrument to the new realities. I can tell you today that we are ready to continue our efforts. We currently build our financing quarterly but given our plan, we hope to move progressively to longer periods, starting late fall.
- But we cannot do this alone, we cannot do this for you. We can only do it with you all. If you believe in the need for a collective and independent voice for Canadian culture, if you believe that working together makes us more efficient



and strong, come participate in the rebuilding. Renew your membership if you have not already done so. Help us recruit new members. Respond to invitations that we will make to you to participate in committees and forums.

- This is the only way we will be able to do it: together!
- Before I conclude, I would like to thank and congratulate our Board colleague Erika Beatty for her contributions to the CCA since she joined the Board in 2010. Erika is stepping down because of her workload as CEO of Symphony Nova Scotia, but also because of her having received this year's John Hobday's Award for cultural management. So Erika, thank you and congratulations on your exciting project!
- And finally, I would like to express my warmest thanks to the full team of the Secretariat for their incredible dedication and loyalty in these challenging times.