

**NATIONAL
CULTURAL
STRATEGY
WORKSHOP** **20
09** **UN ATELIER DE
STRATÉGIE NATIONALE
POUR LE SECTEUR
CULTUREL**
A Chalmers Event Un événement Chalmers

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**A Report on Consensus Building in
Canada's Arts & Culture Sector**

Canadian Conference of the Arts

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Table of Contents

Background

1. Report on the National Cultural Strategy Workshop, March 12, 2009
 - a. Analysis of consensus building as presented by Americans for the Arts
 - b. Structure to achieve consensus goals: 5 Action Areas
 - c. The Canadian Context
 - d. Breakout Group Policy Scenarios:
 - Federal Funding in Canada
 - Creative Economy
 - Arts Education
 - Other Issues
 - e. Scenario planning vs. strategic planning
2. Report on the Canadian Conference of the Arts Board breakfast, March 13 2009
 - a. Models of American Consensus Building
 - b. Policy Scenarios for the working group
3. Next steps: CCA building consensus in the arts and culture sector

Background

The National Cultural Strategy Workshop was hosted by the Canadian Conference of the Arts on March 12, 2009 in Ottawa. The Workshop, along with a Board Breakfast on March 13, 2009 were productive days for the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) and the Canadian arts and cultural sector in general. The CCA brought stakeholders together from around Canada to continue the process of consensus building initiated through the 2008 Regional Forums. With an aim to foster unified policy platforms and increased sector-wide networking, the two days featured frank discussions and open dialogues.

Over 110 people from all disciplines, organizations and regions participated in the [National Cultural Strategy Workshop](#) led on March 12 by Anne L'Ecuyer, from American for the Arts. A number of policy priorities and preoccupations were highlighted at the end of the meeting, which fed into the discussions of the next morning at the CCA Board special breakfast meeting.

On March 13, 2009 the Board of Governors met with over 40 representatives of key arts service organizations and some of their board members to further develop the concept of consensus building within the Canadian arts sector. The organizations represented the full spectrum of disciplines and regions of Canada. There was a broad agreement that the arts and culture sector needed to develop a more coherent public and political message and the CCA has agreed to assemble a pan-sectoral working group to undertake this task with some urgency.

The following report details the events of March 12th and 13th, as well as an analysis of the steps to take moving forward as a coordinated sector.

1. Report on the National Cultural Strategy Workshop, March 12, 2009

a. Consensus building as presented by AFTA

Anne L'Ecuyer, our guest speaker from Americans for the Arts (AFTA) gave an enlightening Keynote Speech on the ways in which AFTA achieves creating an annual federal policy agenda, while also playing a strong role with local organizations, and with state level decision-makers. AFTA identifies its constituencies throughout the sector and works with them to achieve their policy goals. Constituencies may include: local and state arts service agencies, creative industries, non-profit organizations, artists, diverse cultures, community development, business partnerships, arts education, public arts and civic design, and the list goes on.

The networking within the American arts and culture sector allows these constituencies to agree on goals which apply at all levels of civic engagement. These goals include:

- Foster environments in which the arts thrive and contribute to more livable communities.
- Generate more public and private resources for the arts and arts education.
- Build individual appreciation of the value of the arts for all Americans.

b. Structure to achieve consensus goals: five action areas

To work within a structured framework, Ms. L'Ecuyer emphasized the importance of five action areas used by Americans for the Arts to work with its constituencies in pursuing AFTA's mandate. The first step when working within a policy area is identifying the constituencies or partners within the sector affected by the policy. These constituencies become assets to utilize when pursuing the goal. All policy positions are framed by the five action areas – so that specific assets and constituencies are identified.

Following the identification of assets, the five action areas form the structure within which a policy agenda is laid out. The first action is using research and policy to inform the scenario. The second is advocacy – the direction taken by the sector. Next, professional development is used to train partners and increase the levels of involvement. A visibility campaign is one which attracts notice – through the strategic use of celebrities, business partners, media, and the internet. Finally, strategic alliances are depended upon to broaden the scope of the policy issue. AFTA is very aware that the arts and culture sector impacts the economy, social welfare, education, and other facets of society; therefore, they utilize these innate connections to foster strong networking partnerships.

This approach allows every policy area to have a context created around it. Intelligence surrounds each issue, which provides recommendations for what to do now, and what to do next, followed by an evaluation of work, so that the sector may continue its forward projection.

In the search for consensus, Ms. L'Ecuyer insisted on the importance for participants to focus exclusively on identifying what they have in common, and not on their differences on any issue. This is a real challenge as organizations are often entirely focused on the specific needs and restricted perspective of their membership and often find themselves in opposition to each other on some specific issues

Another major point to consider: within the five action areas, arts and culture is always presented as a solution to decision makers. On each policy issue, AFTA presents the sector in opposition to being a weak link, charity, or handout. Instead, the sector is made visible as a solution to the dilemmas of the day. This is a powerful approach because the arts and culture sector is able to provide solutions which generally have multiple public outputs. An example provided by Ms. L'Ecuyer is a historic building which needs to have a use while retaining its historic integrity. The arts and culture sector would promote the concept of a multi-use facility – with an arts space, restaurant, theatre, shops, galleries, and condos. Thus, the arts and culture sector is presented as one with constructive, powerful solutions, often with ramifications of cultural, educational, social, and economic benefits.

c. The Canadian context

While the presentation from Americans for the Arts was heavily centred on the United States, many of the structural elements discussed can be translated and adapted to a Canadian context.

When the Canadian Conference of the Arts initiated the process of consensus building with the sector, by hosting Regional Forums in 2008, the CCA asked several questions:

- What is the current climate in which the sector functions?
- What are the top policy priorities of the sector?
- How will the sector work together to achieve its goals?
- What tools do we need in order to achieve these goals?

The answers to these questions were reported on in the [Regional Forum Report](#). However, within the framework of the AFTA structure, these results can be examined in a new light.

The current climate of today is obviously one of economic uncertainty. Whether it improves or not, in any kind of economic change there are winners and losers. The argument presented by Anne L'Ecuyer is that arts must be aligned as winners. As a sector with a multiplicity of partnerships, and a renewable resource of creativity, the current climate positions the arts and culture sector as one which can provide solutions.

Top priorities for the Canadian sector include an image problem, highlighted by the unwitting visibility in this past election. There remains concern about how arts are being viewed on the national stage. Cuts to national funding also continue to be a prominent issue of the sector, as does concern for the state of arts education and training.

The CCA's overwhelming attendance at its Regional Forums and at the National Cultural Strategy Workshop demonstrates a budding sense of opportunity – that now is a time to work together and make gains with our priorities.

In working together, the CCA continues to promote sectoral inclusion and consensus building on areas ALL CAN AGREE upon. This will eventually involve concerted partnerships outside the sector. Moreover, communication within the sector is integral as many cultural professionals work within a climate of isolation – whether geographically or professionally

Finally, it is clear that long term strategies are necessary in order for the policy agenda to be robust, consistent, and productive. Simply put, the long term goals of the sector cannot be focused on just this election cycle or just a certain funding opportunity. This is not to say that short term goals are to be ignored. In the end, the sector must be able to keep its doors open in order to achieve the long term strategies. However, in the end the goal of a national effort is long term consensus and coordination.

The Workshop continued with breakout sessions, where attendees were asked to sit with a group, to discuss the strategic approach to identifying assets, and working within the five action areas on a given policy priority. For a short report on group discussions, see Appendix.

d. Scenario planning vs. strategic planning

In order for the sector to continue the process of evolving its coordination, there was a distinction made between strategic and scenario planning. Strategic planning is an approach to outlining methods taken in a linear direction which does not account for external changing factors. In contrast, as the sector progresses through scenarios, it plans for changed climates and can adapt. Given varying factors, scenario planning allows for more flexibility.

The completion of the Workshop entailed a timeline on progression. There was a call for a preliminary report before summer 2009.

2. Report on the Board Breakfast Meeting, March 13, 2009

The Canadian Conference of the Arts Board of Directors was joined by leaders from the arts and culture sector for a breakfast meeting on March 13, 2009. These 40 leaders were representative of organizations, institutions and unions from around Canada. They were brought together to continue the discussion on how long term consensus can be reached throughout the sector, and with what priorities should be set for the short term.

a. Models of American consensus building

Anne L'Ecuyer once again moderated this discussion and began the morning by demonstrating how a regular and systematized action schedule allows the American sector to have increased clout with decision-makers. Ongoing activities at local, state, and federal levels, as well as a policy convention, 'Day on the Hill', and the use of media

and celebrities, all afford the American sector the ability to voice a unified vision for arts and culture policy.

She discussed with the group that several lessons from the American model can be adapted to Canada – and should be used in setting a consensus-building program.

The first lesson to be learned was that the sector must focus on policies on which it agrees. The arts and culture sector must rely on its assets – which included the prevalence of the sector in every community around Canada, as well as creative people throughout the country. To build consensus these strengths must be capitalized upon.

The second lesson was to **not get caught up in the debate over grand themes.** Rather than discussing what ‘art’ or ‘culture’ is, let the public messaging stay outside the philosophical debate.

Ms. L’Ecuyer advised the Canadian sector **to work in small groups, while remaining accountable to the greater network.** Workgroups with smaller numbers, transparency, should move forward while being accountable to the larger sector.

Finally, **the model used in the United States to structure goals is based upon a scenario schema.** Rather than setting forth a set of specific items that the sector will do, instead, look at the contextual environment we are in, develop scenarios on factors that will change – the Government, the economic environment, members of the community. Outline what the factors are and build these factors into likely scenarios that the sector will need to address.

b. Policy Scenarios for the working group

It was established in the meeting that the network of leaders must move forward with a working group addressing various scenarios. **In the short term, it was deemed necessary to advance preparations for a coming election.** A short term scenario would be a changing of government. This is a useful first scenario for a coordinated sector because everyone in the room is able to agree upon this issue. Moreover, the issue exists within a particular time frame. The current state of affairs is that the parties have no specific arts and culture platform, and no understanding of their future direction in this sector. Thus, a concerted effort with research and policy, visibility, advocacy, professional development, and strategic alliances would build the methodology to promote party platforms.

During the open-floor discussion, many other policy areas were raised as themes which should be addressed by the working group. While there was consensus about the short term objective related to the next federal election, the long term was a heavy concern for many as the sector moves forward in an increasingly coordinated fashion.

One of the first policy scenarios raised was by ACTRA and the Independent Media Arts Alliance. They promoted focusing on the issues of broadcasting, regulation, as well as funding for independent media practitioners. The need to coordinate policy agendas within the new media environment, broadcasting, copyright, and federal regulations was on the minds of many.

A representative of the **Canadian Arts Coalition** expressed her understanding of the arts sector as it stands now, and how coordination must be addressed in the short and long terms. She stressed that given the current economic climate, the sector must clarify relationships, commit to consistent programming in terms of research and lobbying. She expressed the need for an organization independent from government funding which could pursue lobbying activities, while remaining transparent to the sector, evolving overtime with a broadened base of participation. She foresaw an organization which would have formal communication with supporters, regular information exchange, foster the development of a federal arts caucus, handle media relations, and host an annual day at Parliament Hill. The Coalition stated that in the short term there must be a clarification of the relationship of the Canadian Conference of the arts, identification of supporting organizations, as well as the individuals who would support such an initiative.

Anne brought the group back together by summarizing. Within the scenario-led system, factors which are prevalent in Canada include the fragmentation of the sector and a legal environment in which different entities can undertake different activities. As such, the point along the path of consensus building at the moment is one where the sector must build out a couple of different scenarios, and then to come up with a process in which those scenarios can be developed, leading to the ability to make unified decisions.

Anne explained that this issue fell within the economic and political environments. However, in order to outline scenarios, these factors must be expanded upon. For example, the changing technological environment affects the delivery of the arts, the expansion of new art forms in new media, and the communications environment. She asked the group to develop other contextual factors which would affect the scenarios around policy actions.

Several additional issues put on the table were: the problem of antiquated policy limitations which hinder the evolution and flexibility of new media, broadcasting, and the role of the individual artist. Another issue is the overall silence in certain policy areas – such as the absence of a renewed National Museum Policy.

Thinking outside the box, the global environment is a contextual factor when considering intellectual property and new media. Where are other countries on these issues, and can comparable cases be used to form consensus within Canada?

Continuing on factors internal to Canada, achieving a regular annual funding cycle for arts and culture was a scenario where policy, consensus, and activities would be enabled to exist in a long-term format.

3. Next Steps

After much discussion, several questions were posed to the group:

- In terms of a timeline, when do you need the first update from the working group?
- What will you expect to hear?
- When do you need a more formal report?

Throughout the room there was **a sense of urgency to begin the consensus building framework**. Within the short term scenario of an impending election cycle, many felt that a working group must be established quickly. Many also felt that there must not be a re-invention of the wheel, that work which had already been completed must not be redone.

However, some felt that this group was not to sit on a pyramid above others, but to simply enable the networks already existing, to better communicate with one another. In the process of identifying assets, it was clear that some existing organizations and associations are better suited for certain responsibilities. It was agreed that the role of the working group would be to identify those assets within a given scenario, coordinate the sector effort, and delegate responsibilities accordingly.

Again, it was emphasized that this group aimed to be as inclusive as possible: of arts, cultural industries, with linguistic parity, and with the understanding that other coalitions and summits already exist.

Conclusion

In closing, Kathleen Sharpe, President of the CCA, confirmed the commitment that the CCA will work immediately on the creation of an ad-hoc committee charged with developing greater strategic coordination of the sector. She repeated to the group that the CCA is their organization to use as they best see fit. The process must continue to improve how we work together to achieve a greater unity of purpose and efficiency in repositioning the arts and culture sector in Canadian society and in public debate.

Appendix: Reports of breakout group policy scenarios

The priorities tackled by the breakout groups included: federal funding to arts and culture, the creative economy, and arts education. There was also a group which focused on other policy agendas.

Tools were identified to achieve the policy areas:

- know our resources and assets (mapping)
- valid research and supporting data
- coordination
- regular information
- advocacy training: learning how to speak, deal with media succinctly

Each policy group began by asking a specific set of questions, used to initiate the conversations. From there, the groups moved through each action area to structure the framework for each policy set.

FEDERAL FUNDING:

➤ Advocacy:

- Need messages to the public that they can carry forward to politicians. Negative messages have negative outcomes. Need to move to focused positive message that speaks to public.
- What are the resources? If planning an election campaign each coalition and silo is separate right now – resulting in a fractured sector. Need coordinating structure to work together to bridge these factions.
- Main policy issues not been the best addressed within the industry. What would we do instead?
- What does the Canadian public want from its arts? Statistics necessary to make every argument stronger. Example: How many parents in Canada want funding for arts education in schools?
- Need coherent definition for culture and what it means to Canadians to lobby to federal decision makers.

➤ Research and Policy

- Talk more about sharing of information and distribution and interpretation of information. The information is not readily accessible to the general public, so there needs to be more visibility for organizations who do publish. The Conference Board of Canada does this well – sharing of information, distribution, and interpretation.
- Need for facts and statistics – starting a conversation with the public, and share the economics of the sector. This way the public can see

what role public subsidy plays. Example: a fraction of the operating cost for a touring theatre.

- Need for accurate, timely information.
- Lack of research in arts policy development.
- The federal funds may or may not be enough money in the system, but it lacks efficiency, transparency, and consultation.
- Organizations do not have resources to get information on the various impacts of arts/culture on society.

➤ **Strategic Alliances and Visibility**

- Image of the sector still exists with concept of begging bowls. Need to counter that: messages like: “ordinary Canadians value art,” “arts are cornerstone of knowledge economy.” The message is: arts is not what *we* need, it’s what the *community* needs.
- Relationship between arts and citizenship. Example: Art Gallery of Ontario memberships given out when people become citizens.
- Lack new compelling messages – excited, focused, create a burning platform for someone to jump off of – that people can bring to decision makers.
- Getting other assets involved, public, practitioners, and associations.
- What are the networks? How to draw the links?
- The biggest alliance/asset is the public.
- Focusing messages on something compelling. Example: Direct message to parents.

➤ **Professional Development**

- Must develop advocacy skills for artists, cultural professionals, and general public.
- Who can do this? The CCA can play this role. Federal group needs to coordinate.
- Mapping the sector (identifying the assets): first thing the CCA could do. Who are we?
- If we identify the crisis, can we feed up through a mapped system, to a large coordinated body (CCA?) who then is able to define the roles – identify the issues, connect the people, convene the network, and filter the info and research upwards and downwards.

CREATIVE ECONOMY:

- **Professional Development: *Who is succeeding in this area? What are they doing so well?***
 - Cultural Human Resources Council (CHRC)
 - Problem in retention of artists within creative economies which have reached certain apex: need to build equity for artists in communities they build.
- **Strategic Alliances**
 - Looking at larger networks – beyond provincial planning levels, also at municipal levels, and community organizations. How do people connect?
 - How artists connect to these different levels as they drive the creative economy.
- **Advocacy**
 - Goal to try to express creativity beyond speaking about economic impact.

ARTS EDUCATION:

- **Research and Policy:**
 - Make an inventory of current research
 - Get overarching sense of all research on arts education
 - Who has the resources and capacity to produce research: FCCF, Institutes focused on linguistic minorities, SSHRC (competency studies), CIRCEM, Ministries of Education in the provinces, AAAPNB, universities, Heritage Canada, Hill Strategies, Ontario Arts Council, Magazine Canada, Emerging Arts Professionals Training Program, Canadian Society of Education through Art, Canadian Music Educators Association, Learning through the Arts, Arts Smart, Arts network for Children and Youth, Cultural Human Resources Council, Council of Drama in Education, Training of Arts Managers
- **Advocacy**
 - Create a message: arts curriculum in schools so children become adults who are natural patrons of art/culture
 - Increases community and citizen participation, and sense of self
 - Advocacy tools and training needed for parents

- Arts in the Educational system with measurable skills development in both the affective and cognitive domains will help elevate the status of arts as disciplines
- Teacher Unions Media campaign
- Non arts sources of messages. Example: use organizations that are perceived as leaders – Rotary Club

➤ **Professional Development**

- Adapt to the educational milieu
- Easy access to resources to incorporate into educational environment
- Evaluate finances, viability, resources
- Lacking generalist teachers
- Train specific discipline teachers the preferred teaching model
- 'artist in school' programs are important links to the community and can also inform generalist teachers. Problem is that artists may lack methodologies of teaching.

➤ **Strategic alliances**

- UNESCO Canada Commission, research universities, Artsmart, education ministries, ACELF/FCCF, RCMP, Canadian Arts and Learning Network, CSEA, CMEA, CODE, Provincial Arts Councils, Provincial ministries of education, School Board associations, Canadian Educators Association, CHRC

➤ **Visibility**

- Need to have coordinated system with: Department of Education, School Boards, teachers, and parents.

OTHER ISSUES:

Policy Issues

- Tax reform, income averaging, succession and transition of professionals, intellectual property, cultural equity. Difficulty because some policies are not aligned among provinces.
- Status and support of artists and cultural workers.
- Income, tax exemption, EI (benefits), policies that exclude cultural workers.

- Strategic Alliances: *Who are common partners in success? Who are natural allies in this area?*
 - sports community, trade union, self-employed in other sectors, groups like software developers, or tech industries, teachers unions, or university programs that train cultural workers
 - Who is succeeding in these areas: CHRC (toolkits), Cultural Careers Council of Ontario, Province of Quebec, other professionals (art therapists)

- Research
 - Academic and independent researchers, Statistics Canada, Hill Strategies, CHRC, Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN)