



## Message from the Chair

I am very honoured to have been invited to perform the duties of Chair of CBC/Radio-Canada's Board of Directors. Honoured because I believe profoundly in the public broadcaster's essential role in helping Canada's regions understand each other, while preserving our national cultural sovereignty in the face of overpowering competition from foreign programming.

For over 65 years, CBC/Radio-Canada has been a part of the flow of our daily lives: informing, entertaining and keeping us company through long winters. But it has been there also, or perhaps especially, in moments of celebration and of stillness – in times of triumph and tragedy – those unforgettable moments that bind us as a nation.

This past year we have lived such moments. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Canadians stopped in their tracks, silent and unbelieving, by the radio or television, at home, on the street and at work. It was a time of mass bewilderment and unthinkable suffering.

During the dark hours that followed, I, along with millions of Canadians, wanted to know what this international tragedy meant to us. How did it affect our immigration policy or border security? What did our Prime Minister have to say, or our experts, our journalists? Most importantly perhaps, how did this “war on terrorism” mesh with our values as Canadians?

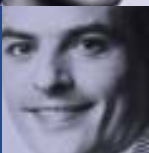
For these answers, Canadians turned to CBC/Radio-Canada in record numbers: French and English, Radio, Television and New Media. Canadians across our nation understood the importance of independent Canadian public broadcasting at a time of crisis.

I am very proud of the service provided by CBC/Radio-Canada's journalists and technicians in those chaotic days and nights. They informed us quickly while vetting information for accuracy at a very turbulent time. Yet, that is what a public broadcaster does: it makes room in its schedule for extraordinary events, provides context that is tailor-made for its national audience, and delivers a valuable public service.

And sometimes those extraordinary events are joyous celebrations such as the final hockey game in the Olympics. Our women had already taken gold and on the Sunday, Canada watched as our men did the same. CBC/Radio-Canada's ratings for that game were the highest in Canadian broadcasting history since the introduction of people meters.

So, at its very best, public broadcasting connects us with our neighbours, cousins and friends across the nation.

Strengthening that kind of understanding and link between Canadians through increased regional reflection on CBC/Radio-Canada is one of my key priorities as Chair. In my own case, I am a Western Canadian, originally from Ontario, who yearns to hear the complexity and diversity of ideas and voices from across this country. I believe that the development and sharing of stories is what will strengthen CBC/Radio-Canada in the short- and long-term.



In keeping with this desire to improve the regional reflection in our programming is my effort, already begun, to meet informally with as many citizens as possible from different community sectors to hear their comments on our programming and service, and to solicit their support for CBC/Radio-Canada. I am aware that we need to strengthen our relationships with our audiences and to build bridges to new ones.

I am also meeting with members of our dedicated staff across the country who carry on with their hard work every day, because they too believe passionately in the importance of public broadcasting.

As Chair, I need to ensure that the Board of Directors fulfils its responsibility to oversee the management directions of the Corporation. I am very impressed with the commitment and dedication of our Board members. In March 2002, the Board approved new governance guidelines, bringing its responsibilities and liabilities up to current international standards.

Another of my priorities is to encourage the creation of more cross-cultural programming at CBC/Radio-Canada, for which the Board has now approved a \$10 million budget. In recent years, the Corporation has been producing and airing innovative programming that combines the interests, sensibilities and expertise of our French and English media services. Joint programming initiatives such as *Canada: A People's History / Le Canada : Une histoire populaire*, and this year's *The Last Chapter / Le Dernier chapitre* and the *Trudeau* mini-series reflect Canadians' shared experiences and promote a common understanding amongst Canadians. I believe that devoting a generous budget to programs of this kind is a natural fit for this special organisation and a natural progression in our history.

I want to emphasise the fact that CBC/Radio-Canada is *unique*. There is no other institution that produces excellent programming in English and French and in eight Aboriginal languages, delivered by Canada's most rigorous journalists, creative writers and technicians on an expanding list of media platforms. It broadcasts across the second largest country on the planet using the world's longest and most sophisticated transmission system in the interest of educating, informing and entertaining Canadians.

Given the borderless traffic on the airwaves, it is vital for Canada to strengthen CBC/Radio-Canada as an independent voice for all Canadians – celebrating Canadian values, ideas and talent. Many countries around the world recognise the need to maintain their own public broadcasting system. They feel the effects of world dominance by the American media, and consequently support public broadcasting as a key to preserving their national culture and values. I am proud that Canada does, as well.

In closing, I am very happy to be a part of this energetic, innovative and creative organisation, and I look forward to serving the Board of Directors, the employees, and the public at large over the next five years.

Carole Taylor, O.C.  
Chair, Board of Directors

