

Message from the
President and CEO



I am happy to report on another year of change and progress for CBC/Radio-Canada. For the past four years, we have sought to reshape the Corporation into a world-class public broadcaster that sets the standard for broadcasting excellence at home and abroad.

We can demonstrate confidently that CBC/Radio-Canada is very different now. We have a clear direction and we are better managed. We have made significant changes that better equip us to face the challenges we see ahead in the broadcasting environment. Our initiatives have strengthened us and allowed us to offer more excellent programming to Canadians – and our audiences are applauding!

This year, we launched a major repositioning of Télévision de Radio-Canada in order to bring it back to its public broadcasting roots and make it more distinct and valuable in its market. We also continued fine-tuning CBC Television's transformation while further improving our unique, market-leading English and French Radio services. We dedicated ourselves to making *CBC.ca* and *Radio-Canada.ca* second to none on the Internet. We were equally steadfast about making the Corporation an undisputed model of broadcast efficiency. We improved our production methods, and our management of real estate, transmission, merchandising, corporate services, and television affiliate agreements. In short, we boosted the Corporation's capacity to deliver top-quality, relevant programming where, when and how Canadians want it.



At our core – and the heart of any broadcaster – is our content. Everyday, CBC/Radio-Canada delves into the Canadian experience. We connect Canadians to each other, their nation and the world. We reflect Canada’s vibrant regional, cultural and linguistic diversity. We bring Canadian perspectives, values and talents to the world stage. We encourage Canadians to ask important questions about who we are, what we believe, and what we know to be true. No other broadcaster offers Canadians such unique programming.

In 2003-2004, our revitalised networks and commitment to public service broadcasting allowed us to produce excellent programming, examples of which demonstrate the value we bring Canadians everyday:

- › CBC Television launched *The Canadian Experience*, a documentary series looking at pivotal, defining stories such as those of the Bluenose, Nanook of the North and Expo '67.
- › Télévision de Radio-Canada introduced new programs, including *Les Bougon – c’est aussi ça la vie!* which attained an immense following, and *Samuel et la mer*, filmed mostly in New Brunswick.
- › Télévision de Radio-Canada and CBC Television delivered a wide range of high-impact programming such as *Human Cargo*, *Shattered City: The Halifax Explosion*, *Le Bleu du ciel*, and *Grande Ourse*.
- › Our Radio services were no less impressive. The Première Chaîne grabbed its highest ratings ever with programming such as the biography of Robert Bourassa. CBC Radio One celebrated 35 years of excellence at *As It Happens*, while improving the network’s flexibility to immediately respond to national and international happenings.
- › CBC Radio One and the Première Chaîne collaborated to produce outstanding programs, including an in-depth series on Afghanistan.
- › *CBC.ca* and *Radio-Canada.ca* continued to extend our strong brand to the Internet, building upon our broadcast content, enriching that content with interactive features and extending our reach to new audiences in the process. *CBC.ca* and *Radio-Canada.ca* each now occupies the number one position as media websites in their respective markets.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Even as we celebrate our progress and success, our work continues.

At a time when the need for a strong and vibrant public broadcaster is as great as ever, so are the challenges. Today’s fragmented media universe is dominated by intense competition for audience share



and loyalty. Competition for compelling programming is driving costs ever higher. As media companies strive to establish a strong presence on the Internet, the rollout of digital television and radio dictates even higher levels of investment, just to keep pace. Public and private broadcaster finances and business models are under enormous pressure.

Against this backdrop, the Government of Canada has conducted a number of timely reviews of broadcasting. One of the most important was a review by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. In June 2003, the Committee reaffirmed “the importance of public broadcasting as an essential instrument for promoting, preserving and sustaining Canadian culture,” and recognised CBC/Radio-Canada as the primary guarantor of high-quality, distinctive Canadian content. The Committee also expressed grave concerns about the future of public broadcasting. It cited the need for increased funding and recommended a three-to-five-year funding cycle for the Corporation. Among its recommendations, the Committee called upon the Corporation to ensure that appropriate levels of local programming are delivered to Canadians. At the same time, it recognised that this could not be done without additional funding. It also called on the Government to provide one-time funding to support the Corporation’s transition to digital television. CBC/Radio-Canada supports the recommendations and will work with the Government to ensure that public broadcasting remains a strong and vital force in Canadian culture and identity. We have already begun developing a fully costed strategic plan to enhance our local and regional programming. Clearly, a renewed commitment to CBC/Radio-Canada would represent an essential investment in our nation’s future.

It is with enormous pride and satisfaction that I present this CBC/Radio-Canada Annual Report for 2003–2004. I would like to thank the Chair, Carole Taylor, and the entire Board of Directors for their continuing dedication to our strategic directions and vision. I would also like to thank each and every CBC/Radio-Canada employee for their contributions everyday. The results outlined in this Annual Report speak loudly to the dedication, energy and creativity through which they have again raised the bar for all broadcasters. And of course, we owe thanks to our audiences for their continuing support of national public broadcasting. They inspire us every day to take risks, look deeper, and stretch accepted ideas of what media can accomplish. Our goal will remain constant – to serve the citizens of this country by offering the best Canadian programming found anywhere.



Robert Rabinovitch
President and CEO

