



**Executive Director Report
National Annual Meeting for 2016-2017
February 27, 2017 - Toronto, Ontario**

GOOD EVENING AND WELCOME TO ALL.

I'M GLAD YOU ARE ABLE TO JOIN US THIS EVENING. LAST YEAR, I THOUGHT MOST PEOPLE HAD COME TO THE AGM ON THEIR WAY TO THE HONOURS EVENT. THIS YEAR, WE DON'T HAVE A PARTY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL BUT I ENCOURAGE YOU TO STAY FOR THE SECOND PART OF THIS MEETING WHERE WE LAUNCH OUR NEW RESPECTFUL WORKSPACES PROJECT.

WHEN WRITING THIS REVIEW, I ALWAYS LOOK BACK ON WHAT I SAID AT THE LAST YEAR'S AGM. IT'S A GOOD REMINDER OF WHAT WE WERE INTENDING TO DO AND GIVES ME A MEASURE TO SEE HOW CLOSE WE GOT TO ACHIEVING THOSE GOALS.

MORE THAN EVER, IT SEEMS LIKE OUR LIVES ARE TAKEN UP WITH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING. IT'S NOT THAT WE HAVE NEW A BUNCH OF NEW AGREEMENTS, BUT RATHER THAT WE ARE TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THE AGREEMENTS UP FOR RENEGOTIATION. IN ADDITION TO ACTUAL MATERIAL CHANGES WE WANT TO MAKE, WE ARE SLOWLY BUT SURELY WORKING OUR WAY THROUGH ALL THE AGREEMENTS, RENEWING AND REFRESHING OLD, AND IN MANY CASES, SERIOUSLY CLUNKY LANGUAGE. WE ARE ALSO TRYING TO STANDARDIZE THE WAY WE NAME THINGS. AS AN EXAMPLE, IN ONE AGREEMENT ALONE WE USED ALL OF THE FOLLOWING TERMS:

INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTS ; ENGAGEMENT CONTRACT; CONTRACT OF ENGAGEMENT; CONTRACT; "NAME OF ENGAGER" AGREEMENT ENGAGEMENT CONTRACT; INDIVIDUAL ENGAGEMENT CONTRACT; MEMBER'S CONTRACT; ARTIST'S CONTRACT; EQUITY CONTRACT; ARTIST'S INDIVIDUAL ENGAGEMENT CONTRACT; ARTIST'S INDIVIDUAL CONTRACT...

AND TWO MORE THAT ARE VERY SPECIFIC TO THE PARTICULAR ENGAGER - ALL TO REFER TO EXACTLY THE SAME THING. THE PROCESS OF CLEANING ALL THAT FLOTSAM AND JETSAM IS PAINSTAKING AND IS – HOPEFULLY – GOING TO ULTIMATELY LEAD TO EASIER TO UNDERSTAND DOCUMENTS.

SOME TIME AGO, COUNCIL INSTRUCTED ME TO REDUCE THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN ON SMALL-SCALE ENGAGERS AND PARTICULARLY, MEMBERS SELF-ENGAGING. THEY ALSO INSTRUCTED ME TO TAKE A MORE FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO MANAGING THOSE KINDS OF ENGAGEMENTS. THE BUSINESS REP STAFF NOW APPROACH EVERY INQUIRY WITH “OK, HOW DO WE FIND A WAY TO MAKE THIS PROJECT WORK?”

THIS COLLABORATIVE APPROACH IS MUCH MORE LABOUR INTENSIVE. “NO, YOU CAN’T DO IT LIKE THAT” IS EXTREMELY EFFICIENT. “YES, LET’S WORK TOGETHER AND FIGURE OUT HOW TO DO THIS” TAKES A GREAT DEAL MORE EFFORT AND IMAGINATION. FLEXIBILITY TAKES TIME AND A LOT MORE DISCUSSION AND EMAILING BACK AND FORTH. THIS HAS INCREASED THE WORK LOAD ON THE STAFF.

AT THIS TIME LAST YEAR, I ADVISED YOU OF THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES SURVEY, A JOINT INITIATIVE BETWEEN PACT AND EQUITY TO COLLECT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORK OUR MEMBERS ARE DOING UNDER THE CTA. IT TOOK LONGER TO BE ABLE TO ROLL THAT PROJECT OUT THAN EITHER ONE OF US HAD IMAGINED BUT IT HAS BEEN IN THE FIELD FOR AWHILE.

I’M NOT SURE IT HAS BEEN A GREAT SUCCESS AS I DON’T BELIEVE THAT OUR MEMBERS HAVE PROVIDED THEIR INFORMATION WHEN REQUESTED AND I DON’T BELIEVE THAT ALL THE PACT ENGAGERS ARE ASKING EQUITY MEMBERS TO PROVIDE THE INFORMATION ON A CONSISTENT BASIS. BUT... I CAN TELL YOU WITH ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE THAT SARA MEURLING, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PACT, WHO YOU WILL MEET LATER TONIGHT, IS COMMITTED TO DIVERSITY ON CANADIAN STAGES AND TO MAKING THIS PROJECT WORK. SARA AND I WILL MEET (NOT ENTIRELY SURE WHEN AT THIS MOMENT IN TIME) TO WORK OUT HOW WE CAN ENCOURAGE BETTER PARTICIPATION FROM BOTH OF OUR MEMBERSHIPS. THIS DATA COLLECTED THROUGH THE SURVEY WILL COMPLEMENT THE DATA WE HAVE COLLECTED IN OUR CENSUS.

WE HAVE BEEN RELEASING SECTIONS OF THE CENSUS DATA IN THE LAST FEW ISSUES OF EQ MAGAZINE. I MENTIONED LAST YEAR THAT WE – QUOTE – HAVE A TON OF DATA TO PLOW THROUGH – UNQUOTE AND WE ARE STILL PLOWING THROUGH IT, COMPARING EARNINGS TO OUR OWN DATABASE. THE FIRST OF THE EARNINGS FIGURES WERE IN THE LAST ISSUE AND THE NEXT SET, LOOKING AT EARNINGS BY AGE, GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND ABILITY, WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE NEXT ISSUE. SEVERAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, INCLUDING THE CANADA COUNCIL THEATRE SECTION, ARE VERY KEEN TO RECEIVE COPIES OF THE COMPLETE REPORT AND WE WILL BE SETTING UP MEETINGS THIS SPRING AND SUMMER IN OTTAWA TO PRESENT THE FINAL REPORT.

THE NEW LIBERAL FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS KEPT ITS INITIAL PROMISE TO INCREASE FUNDING TO THE CANADA COUNCIL, AS WELL AS OTHER ARTS AND CULTURE INSTITUTIONS. ADDITIONALLY, THEY COMMITTED TO RESTORING FUNDS PREVIOUSLY DISTRIBUTED THROUGH THE CANCELLED *PROMARTS* AND *TRADE ROUTES* PROGRAMS. THESE FUNDING STREAMS PROVIDED ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR INTERNATIONAL TOURING AND SUPPORTED INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS SHOWCASING CANADIAN ARTISTS. ONCE THESE NEW PROGRAMS ARE ANNOUNCED, WE WILL GET THE INFORMATION OUT TO THE MEMBERSHIP. ALTHOUGH THERE IS MUCH PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT TO REDUCE AND REVISE CANADIAN CONTENT REGULATIONS IN FILM AND TELEVISION IN ORDER TO BE “MORE COMPETITIVE”, IT SEEMS THAT FOR THE TIME BEING, LIVE PERFORMANCE WILL NOT BE AFFECTED.

ON THE PROVINCIAL FRONT, WE ARE KEEPING AN EYE ON THE PRECARIOUS WORKERS REVIEW WHICH IS ABOUT TO BE RELEASED HERE IN ONTARIO, AND WE ARE GEARING UP TO DO SOME ADVOCACY WORK WITH OUR BC MEMBERS IN ADVANCE OF THE UPCOMING PROVINCIAL ELECTION.

LAST YEAR AT THIS TIME, I INTRODUCED YOU TO KRISTIAN CLARKE, OUR NEW SPECIAL PROJECTS MANAGER, AND HE WILL BE PRESENTING THE WORK OF THE SAFE AND RESPECTFUL WORKPLACES COMMITTEE WORK IN THE SECOND PART OF THIS EVENING BUT I WANT TO TAKE A MOMENT TO TALK ABOUT THIS PROJECT. WHEN YOUR COUNCIL REVIEWED THE RESULTS OF THE SAFE WORKPLACE SURVEY, THEY WERE SHOCKED BY WHAT THEY READ, AS WAS THE STAFF. ALTHOUGH WE ALL KNEW THAT THERE WERE ISSUES IN THE WORKPLACE I DON'T THINK ANYONE IMAGINED THAT THEY WERE SO WIDESPREAD. A COUNCIL COMMITTEE WAS TASKED WITH DECIDING WHAT TO DO WITH THIS INFORMATION. IT WAS CLEAR TO ME THAT WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS A NATIONAL WORKPLACE ANTI-HARASSMENT CAMPAIGN. IT WAS ALSO CLEAR THAT WE NEEDED TO REVIEW EQUITY'S INTERNAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES, TO ENSURE THAT THEY WERE UP TO DATE AND SUFFICIENTLY SUPPORTIVE AND USER FRIENDLY TO ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO COME FORWARD TO REPORT INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR.

I CAN SAY THAT SINCE WE BEGAN TO TALK ABOUT THIS ISSUE, WE HAVE HAD MORE COMPLAINTS AND CERTAINLY MORE MEMBERS INQUIRING ABOUT WHAT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE. I AM HOPING – AND I KNOW THIS SOUNDS WEIRD – THAT WE GET EVEN MORE COMPLAINTS AS A RESULT OF THIS CAMPAIGN. THE OVERT INTENTION IS TO STOP HARASSMENT BEFORE IT HAPPENS – TO MAKE IT SOCIALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO BULLY, INTIMIDATE, HARASS, OR SEXUALLY HARASS ANYONE IN THE WORKPLACE.

IF WE CAN'T STOP THIS IMPROPER BEHAVIOUR BEFORE IT HAPPENS, WE WANT TO EMPOWER YOU – THE MEMBERS – TO TAKE IT ON IN THE MOMENT, WHEN IT HAPPENS – TO FEEL CONFIDENT AND SAFE ENOUGH TO CALL OUT BAD BEHAVIOUR WHEN YOU SEE IT. KRISTIAN WILL TAKE YOU THROUGH THE VARIOUS MATERIALS WE HAVE CREATED AND HE AND SARA FROM PACT WILL TALK TO YOU ABOUT A JOINT PILOT PROJECT WE HAVE DEVELOPED TO INTRODUCE THE CAMPAIGN AND THE MATERIALS INTO SELECT WORKPLACES ACROSS THE COUNTRY. A LARGER ROLLOUT, FOR ALL EQUITY MEMBERS WORKING UNDER ALL CONTRACTS IS COMING THIS FALL.

WE NEED TO FINISH OFF THIS PROJECT AND GET OUR CENSUS DATA INTO THE HANDS OF SOME KEY DECISION MAKERS AND THEN MOVE ON TO OTHER AREAS OF SERVICE TO THE MEMBERSHIP. ONE OF THE NEXT BIG PROJECTS IS TO CONSULT WITH YOU ON MATTERS RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE. THIS IS A SUBJECT THAT AN INCREASING NUMBER OF INDUSTRIES ARE GRAPPLING WITH AND IT IS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN IN OUR INDUSTRY WHERE A PRECARIOUS FINANCIAL EXISTENCE CAN EXACERBATE ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION. STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS IMPORTANT TOPIC LATER ON IN THE YEAR.

SOME PROJECTS WE TALKED ABOUT LAST YEAR HAVE BEEN (OR ARE JUST ABOUT TO BE) COMPLETED - WE LAUNCHED EVERYBODY COUNTS, AN ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGNED FOR NEW MEMBERS TO ADD KEY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (AS COLLECTED IN THE EQUITY CENSUS), THE BETA TESTING OF ONLINE DEPUTY ELECTION AND THE ELECTRONIC FORMS GO LIVE WITHIN A WEEK, AND MOST OF THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY PHOTO EXHIBIT UPDATES HAVE BEEN SELECTED.

LASTLY, OUR **DANCEEQUITY** OUTREACH PROJECT WILL HIT THE STREETS IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THIS OUTREACH ACTIVITY, PARTICULARLY ABOUT DIFFERENT WAYS OF COMMUNICATING, HAS NOW BEGUN TO INFORM THE WAY WE REACH OUT TO OUR “REGULAR” MEMBERS. THIS ACTIVITY HAS GIVEN US NEW IDEAS AND INSPIRATION ABOUT HOW TO REACH NON-MEMBERS TOO. OLD DOGS CAN LEARN NEW TRICKS – IT JUST TAKES THEM A LITTLE LONGER THAN WHEN THEY WERE PUPPIES, THAT’S ALL.

LASTLY, AS WE COME TO THE END OF OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR, I WANT TO REMIND YOU ALL OF HOW FAR EQUITY HAS COME AND HOW DEDICATED WE ARE TO CONTINUING TO ADVANCE THE NEEDS OF OUR MEMBERS. FINDING BETTER WAYS OF ADMINISTERING, COMMUNICATING AND NEGOTIATING KEEP US UP AT NIGHT. OR AT LEAST THEY KEEP ME UP AT NIGHT.

THERE IS NO RESTING ON OUR LAURELS – THERE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING ELSE WE COULD DO OR SOMETHING WE COULD DO BETTER. DESPITE THE FACT THAT IT MIGHT NOT ALWAYS BE AS FAST OR AS VISIBLE AS YOU MIGHT LIKE, I CAN PROMISE YOU THAT WE, ALL OF THE EQUITY STAFF, ARE CONSTANTLY REVIEWING AND REVISING THE ASSOCIATION, IN ORDER TO MAKE YOUR WORK LIFE BETTER.

I'M GOING TO TURN THE FLOOR OVER TO OUR COMPTROLLER, DOUG IRONS, WHO WILL GIVE YOU A HAPPY FINANCIAL REPORT –THANKFULLY – BUT BEFORE I DO THAT, I WANT TO, AS I ALWAYS DO, TAKE A MOMENT TO RECOGNIZE THE HARD WORKING STAFF WHO IS HERE TONIGHT. I WANT TO REMIND YOU THAT WE PROCESS BETWEEN 12,000 AND 14,000 CONTRACTS A YEAR FOR BETWEEN 2000 AND 2200 DIFFERENT PRODUCTIONS. THAT IS A HUGE VOLUME OF WORK AND YOUR STAFF WORKS DILIGENTLY ON YOUR BEHALF. AS ALWAYS, THEY ARE CHEERFUL, FUNNY, GENEROUS WITH THEIR COLLEAGUES, HARD WORKING AND DEDICATED.

AS ALWAYS, IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR ISSUES, PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO CALL OR EMAIL ME (excedir@caea.com) AT ANY TIME AND I'LL BE HAPPY TO SPEAK WITH YOU.

In solidarity,

Arden R. Ryshpan