

THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS

It is vital that the Centre do more to build roots in the community through a structured approach to volunteerism. The Committee believes that the role of volunteers at the Centre is not sufficiently recognized, appreciated and developed.

The Hendry Task Force recommended that a committee of the Board be established for Outreach and Volunteers. This recommendation was based on the practice of other performing arts organizations in Canada and was dependent upon the existence of an expanded Board membership. The present committee structure at the Centre provides for an Artistic Programming and Marketing Committee which includes Fundraising. Until a separate committee can be established for Outreach and Volunteers, we urge the Centre to add to the Artistic Programming and Marketing Committee the responsibility for Outreach and Volunteers.

The Task Force suggested that a position of Corporate Affairs Officer be established. This officer would be responsible for fundraising and sponsorships and, given the outreach nature of all these activities, for outreach and volunteers. Thus, an extensive volunteer program could be developed at the Centre to complement the activities of NACOA. Volunteers should be encouraged to work for the Centre and their efforts should be recognized through a program of incentives and awards of merit.

Volunteers could assist the Centre in raising funds, they could operate services such as a boutique, or serve as guides for visitors to the Centre. These "friends" should be shown respect and be given sincere touches of recognition such as an annual gala evening held in their honour. The management of the Centre should as a matter of courtesy and policy include volunteers in its invitations to the receptions held for guest artists for example. A mark of respect towards this constituency would be repaid in kind and would generate good will throughout the community. An extensive volunteer program would also sensitize Board members and management to the pulse of the arts supporters in the community, a community they have succeeded in alienating if we are to assess the public outcry heard clearly by the members of this Committee. In her testimony before the Sub-Committee, Ms. Christina Lubbock, President, NACOA, described the point of view of the volunteers, the difficulties they face, their role in seeking funds, and the support they require from the management of the Centre:

I think I would like to just talk about what it is like to be a volunteer or what it is like to get a group of volunteers together right now. Do you know that this is a diminishing species? Most of the people on our board have full-time jobs. I do myself, and it is not easy to organize yourself to go after big, big money. You have to have really well organized committees to do that, and you have to have big committees to do that. You have to have professionalism in it.