

Annual General Meeting 2012 - Presidential Address

Remarks for Graham Carr

President
Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences
Annual General Meeting

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Bon après-midi à tous,

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Today, we're trying two new things: holding our AGM outside Ottawa; and partnering with a conference celebrating the work of one of Québec and Canada's most renowned scholars, Charles Taylor.

J'espère que beaucoup d'entre vous assisteront au colloque en l'honneur du 80e anniversaire de Charles Taylor, qui se tiendra demain au Musée des beaux-arts. L'événement est organisé par le Groupe de recherche interuniversitaire en philosophie politique de Montréal, le Centre de recherche en éthique de l'Université de Montréal et le Research Group on Constitutional Studies de l'Université McGill. Charles Taylor incarne la rigueur, la complexité et l'engagement social de la recherche en sciences humaines à son meilleur, et c'est un plaisir d'associer la Fédération à un colloque consacré à son travail.

As a highlight of tomorrow's proceedings, our 2012 Canada Prizes in the Humanities and Social Sciences will be awarded in a special ceremony at the Musée at noon. The Canada Prize ceremony is one of the Federation's signature events. Our Publications Program is the most important source of peer-reviewed funding for scholarly monographs in Canada and enables the publication of literally dozens of books in all disciplines in French and English each year. All four winning authors will be on hand tomorrow and you are all invited. We promise good food and all the other fine things one expects at a reception in Montréal. I hope to see you there.

Cet après-midi, Noreen Golfman, présidente sortante de la Fédération et présidente du Comité des candidatures, annoncera le résultat des récentes élections tenues au conseil d'administration, puis nos vice-présidents

présenteront leurs dossiers respectifs. Notre réunion d'affaires suivra; nous ferons alors le point sur les changements proposés à notre gouvernance.

À l'heure actuelle cependant, des dizaines de journalistes et d'intervenants sont absorbés par le Budget fédéral de 2012, dont le contenu sera rendu public dans quelques heures. Parmi eux se trouve notre directrice des politiques et des communications, Alison Hebbs. Nous avons prévu une téléconférence avec Alison à 17 h 30 pour ceux qui souhaitent savoir ce que le budget réserve à notre milieu.

And speaking of Alison, let me take a moment to acknowledge the superb work of our Ottawa-based Secretariat led by Executive Director Jean-Marc Mangin, Alison, Ann Miller, Jessica Harrington and the rest of the team. In addition to superbly managing the day-to-day operations of the organization, liaising with our members and key external collaborators, they never fail to deliver professional quality events, undertake productive, high-level consultations, and produce prime-time reports on critical issues affecting our community. Please join me in thanking them.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank my colleagues on the Federation's Executive and Board who have volunteered so much time to the organization as we began implementing the Strategic Framework adopted by this Assembly a year ago.

In particular I want to salute three members of the Executive-Malinda Smith, David Mitchell and Noreen Golfman-who are ending their terms today. Malinda has worked tirelessly to promote the Federation's commitment to equity and diversity, and increase the visibility of our work in this important area. Similarly, since joining the Executive two years ago David has pushed us to seek new partnerships and imagine different ways to sustain what we do and represent who we are. And of course, where would we be without

Noreen Golfman, who led the Federation in vital new directions during her recent terms as President. On a personal note, I can't tell you how much I've benefited from having Noreen to turn to for advice and support during the past year. And of course it's always perversely satisfying to discover there's someone who's sleeping less than you are. Please join me in thanking Malinda, David and Noreen for their outstanding contributions to the Federation.

J'aimerais maintenant prendre le temps de souligner quelques-unes des réalisations de la Fédération au cours de la dernière année et parler des importants défis et des excellentes occasions qui nous attendent. Comme la plupart des organisations universitaires, nous ne sommes pas imperméables au climat économique et avons dû apprendre à gérer des limites financières et des changements organisationnels. Malgré ces défis, nous avons connu une très belle année et la mise en œuvre de notre plan stratégique a beaucoup progressé.

That Plan is guided by 3 R's: Reach, Relevance, and Resources. I want to deviate from the trilogy just a bit to talk about: Reach, Relevance and Relationships (which has a lot to do with resources). The success of Congress, the Big Thinking lectures, and the Aid to Scholarly Publications program, together with the influence of our policy work, and improved engagement with our members, is vital to the culture of our organization. These are the vehicles through which we realize our mission, which is to "promote research, scholarship, creative activity and learning," and "to foster understanding of the contributions made by the humanities and the social sciences to Canada and the world." And in working to fulfill that mission we embrace our vision of "contributing tangibly to a free and democratic society" by "advancing equity, diversity, knowledge, excellence and innovation."

One of the greatest challenges we face, however, is how best to communicate who the Federation is and what it is we do. Recently, interviews with a variety of stakeholders reminded us that the Federation is "a significant force in marshalling the creative and intellectual capacity of Canada" precisely because we "represent people who are addressing complex issues of our times." Nous voulons nous assurer que, chaque fois que la Fédération communique à l'interne ou à l'externe, nous diffusons ce message, laissons une impression positive et faisons comprendre et reconnaître notre contribution à la société.

But in a crowded landscape of competing narratives about education, research and teaching, how does a national organization representing nearly 160 universities and learned societies get its message out to a diverse array of members, stakeholders and the engaged (or disengaged) public in ways that are seen, heard and, most importantly, internalized? So let me try to answer this question through the prism of those 3R's.

Not surprisingly, in an era when the digital humanities are increasingly hot, we're determined to capitalize on the amazing pathways of digital technology to extend the reach of our activities and expand the network of our relationships. The design of our new website-which is due to go live imminently-will better reflect the relevance of what our community does and our audiences want, rather than, as has been the case in the past, the internal workings of our organization. Our site will become a place where the activities, stories and research generated by the humanities, arts and social sciences community are featured, promoted, discussed and shared. This is just one important and necessary first step in the overall renewal of the Federation's public image, a renewal that is fundamental to our strategic direction and about which you will hear much more in the coming year.

One of the most dramatic illustrations of the Federation's successful attempts to extend our reach, relevance and relationships is the Big Thinking breakfast series we run on Parliament Hill. The impact of our Big Thinking events is at an all time high. But here's the communications piece: unless you happen to be in Ottawa, or follow the streaming of these talks on our website you may not appreciate how important Big Thinking is to the external profile of the Federation. Since last fall, we've hosted six lectures on Parliament Hill-on topics like global food security, social mobility of immigrants, and the global economic crisis. Many of the events have literally been sold out; we've turned people away. Il est intéressant de voir qui assiste à nos causeries. En plus du personnel politique, des membres d'ONG et d'organismes gouvernementaux, des chercheurs, des universitaires et de nos collègues du CRSH et de l'AUCC, nous attirons un nombre record de membres du Parlement provenant des trois principaux partis. Par exemple, plus de 30 députés et sénateurs, et même le premier sous-gouverneur de la Banque du Canada, ont assisté à la causerie de Jack Mintz, de la University of Calgary, sur la crise économique mondiale. Le nombre de participants à Ottawa et leur provenance mettent en évidence la pertinence qu'ont pour eux la série de causeries et la contribution de nos chercheurs aux discussions sur les politiques publiques.

En outre, la réputation croissante des causeries Voir grand permet de tisser des liens, de trouver des fonds et de tirer parti plus facilement des activités pour élargir le public. De plus en plus d'universités offrent de commanditer les déjeuners. Pour la causerie sur les coopératives tenue en décembre, nous avons reçu du financement de Desjardins, de l'Association des coopératives du Canada et de Credit Union Central of Canada. Grâce à ces ressources additionnelles, nous pouvons présenter nos conférenciers à différents endroits. Plus tôt ce mois-ci, quand Alexandre Sévigny était à Ottawa pour sa causerie Voir grand sur la période des questions, il a été

interviewé par la CBC, il a animé un atelier sur les médias sociaux dans l'édifice du Centre à l'intention d'une cinquantaine de membres du personnel politique et il s'est tourné vers la collectivité en participant à une causerie informelle dans un bistrot local, un genre de brasserie scientifique, avec des étudiants et des membres du grand public.

In an effort to reach beyond Ottawa, we took Big Thinking on the road to Kitchener-Waterloo in November. There, in partnership with the Communitech Hub, we introduced the entire community to Congress 2012 through an event that brought together academics, local high tech companies, mayors and city councillors, members of the public and of course our institutional partners, University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University. We have similar projects in the planning stages for other cities and are looking for more ideas to explore in the future.

Similarly, Congress impact is at an all-time high. The Federation's programming is now tied to key interdisciplinary themes, international collaboration is increasingly built-in, and our virtual reach is rapidly expanding, even when we're in smaller venues. In 2011 in Fredericton, for example, traffic to the Congress website was up almost 300% compared to the year before when we had a record attendance at Concordia in Montreal. Puisque les congressistes et les congressistes potentiels se rendent sur le site Web du Congrès pour lire et s'inscrire à l'événement, le site Web est devenu le portail d'information et de nouvelles à visiter pour le public qui veut s'informer au sujet du Congrès et participer aux vastes discussions sur les sujets qui animent la recherche en sciences humaines et en arts au Canada.

We've also entered the app world for Congress. Now, on any phone or tablet, it's possible to track what's happening each day, converse about events on twitter, find reports, blogs and videos of Big Thinking lectures and

panels. Our ability to digitize and capture content has grown, and we can now reach and engage broader audiences than ever before.

Here I want to emphasize that Congress is the single most important media moment for coverage of our disciplines in international, national, regional and local news. The efficiency and effectiveness of our media operation is such that despite having a relatively small Congress in Fredericton last year, we nevertheless secured the most extensive media coverage we've experienced to date. This year, our plans are even more ambitious and include meetings with editorial boards in Toronto, scrums for Big Thinkers, and media training for researchers in order to build public communications capacity.

Au cours de la dernière année, nous avons contribué de façon productive à des débats politiques. Jay Rahn, de l'Université York, a présidé notre Groupe de travail sur le droit d'auteur et présenté notre mémoire au comité législatif de la Chambre des communes. Jean-Marc Mangin a quant à lui exprimé notre point de vue sur l'éducation internationale à des décideurs du gouvernement fédéral et j'ai soumis au Comité des finances nos recommandations pour le budget fédéral de 2012. (Nous verrons dans quelques heures l'effet que cela a eu).

These types of efforts are time consuming, but they're paying off, particularly when they're well aligned with the lobbying activities of other Post-Secondary Education stakeholders. In the last federal budget there were significant new investments in innovation, education and training, including an increase of \$7 million per year to SSHRC. But what also caught our eye was the explicit declaration, surely a first in a federal budget, that, "this allocation of new funding among the granting councils represents a higher share for social sciences and humanities research, compared to previous budgets."

The advocacy work that the Federation undertakes is intensive and often time-sensitive. It means reacting quickly and intelligently to requests for policy input, whether the topic is the digital economy, copyright, Open Access, or even transformations to the granting agencies themselves. To do this work we have struck blue ribbon panels of scholars from across our community who have the range and depth of the knowledge and expertise that allows us to develop balanced, nuanced positions on key issues.

The academic and advocacy activities supported by the Federation foster creative and innovative scholarship, and provide multiple forums that allow researchers in the humanities, arts and social sciences to unleash their imaginations and exchange ideas within their communities and beyond. Le travail de la Fédération permet à nos chercheurs d'approfondir le discours public et de proposer des politiques publiques fondées sur des données probantes. Il nous amène de plus en plus à favoriser les partenariats et à tisser des liens entre notre milieu et les utilisateurs et leaders d'opinion qui veulent comprendre l'importance de nos recherches ainsi que la contribution de nos points de vue à l'amélioration de la société. La société a besoin de notre contribution collective pour poser de nouvelles questions, proposer de nouvelles pistes de recherche ou encore trouver de nouvelles façons d'aborder les enjeux complexes auxquels nous devons faire face. Cet esprit d'engagement est possible entre toutes nos disciplines.

To the trilogy of Reach, Relevance and Relationships let me add a 4th R: remembering. More than ever, our world needs to remember, needs to be reminded about the ineffable complexities of the human condition, and the diversities of context, conditions and experience that range across the myriad of societies we inhabit, whether local, national or global. In this regard, the sophisticated scholarship and public engagement of Charles Taylor is something that should inspire us all and, as colleagues in the

Canadian social sciences and humanities community, make us vicariously proud.

En conclusion, j'aimerais souligner que la Fédération apprécie sincèrement le soutien qu'elle a reçu de chacun de vous et de vos organisations dans la dernière année. Nous serons heureux de travailler avec vous pour promouvoir notre vision et continuer de faire progresser notre mission.

Thank you.

And now I'd be happy to take your questions.