

## President's Message

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# Reinvention and Renewal

*“The beginning is the most important part of the work”*

– Eleanor Roosevelt

*Canadianbookseller has asked me to submit my president's address to the AGM in my report. We've all lived through this past year, however the scars are deep: the closure of respected stores, unhappy customers, hurt booksellers, low margins, poor public perception, distorted media and a finance minister who clearly does not understand our industry. It is my goal this year that our Board can bring a sense of renewal to CBA. I intend to speak with as many booksellers as possible because renewal can only occur when we listen to folks—present members need to be supported and sustained, and lapsed members need to be brought back into the fold. Seeds of reinvention must be sown this year so that our association will be ready to embrace change in a proactive manner. Thank you to Past President Eleanor LeFave for steering the ship this past year when the course was so stormy and to Susan Dayus and her staff. Until my time on the Board, I never realized the tremendous work involved—I just enjoyed the benefits! I encourage you to get involved, contribute your ideas, work together for our association and make your voice heard.*

### **Hearing a new voice at the AGM**

A little about “my voice”: Although the official name of my store is BookLore Stores Inc., it is really a smaller independent store in Orangeville, ON, with an owner who regularly buys lottery tickets to support her financial strategy!

But, whatever the size of the store, it's the issues that bind us: the challenging economy, the pricing differential and supplier relations; the increased competition from online retailers and non-book retailers; the deep discounting and preferential deals often excluding independents; the never-ending embargoes to faithfully sign, only to find out someone already has it on the shelf; the promotions that list independent bookstores well after non-traditional book retailers. It's a never ending list!

So where is the excitement in bookselling? I well remember the feeling when almost 20 years ago, my late business partner and I rode up the escalator at our first convention, walked out on the show floor and realized we would meet authors, get books and learn about our industry. It was a time of passion and energy and I was proud to be a bookseller. I'm still proud to be a bookseller but the challenges of these past few years have a way of eroding the energy. I want that passion back; I want “passion in the belly” and not the bellyache we've all experienced lately.

### **What then should be our focus?**

In our store we've always lived by the premise: We must not promise more than we can deliver.

We, your Board, cannot promise more than we can deliver. We can't sit down with the publishers collectively because of potential collusion issues, but we can continue to lobby them individually. We can't change the ailing economy, but we can expand our educational program which can contribute to better business practices. We can't always meet together as booksellers, but we can redesign our website to improve communication, share ideas and know that we are not alone. We can't stop change, but we can be a conduit for the new technology that will surely come with change. We can't always be

ahead of the plots of those who don't have our best interests at heart, but we can be the watchdog and act quickly to ensure that our members have a fair hearing.

We can't (according to most consultants) get the entire GST off of books, but we can identify what we need from advocacy—always looking ahead so that we can be proactive on behalf of our association.

**We can build a strong united focus**

We can tap into the growing localism movement and start to build business alliances. We can celebrate our uniqueness and what we contribute as partners in our community. We can build a new marketing program to strengthen our “Independents Matter” campaign. We can expand our website for both internal and external use so that it becomes a hub of creativity and information: a forum of information exchange including tutorials, discussion, brainstorming and blogging for booksellers and a link to independent bookstores for the community. We can speak to the diversity of opinion in our organization by harnessing the diversity represented on our Board—regional needs, fresh ideas from younger booksellers coupled with the perspective of experienced booksellers. We can begin work on the key areas of our Strategic Planning Session—key areas that emerged from our survey of membership. You told us your priorities: education, advocacy and supplier relations and we have listened!

**We can now deliver what we promise**

Our Board is united in our determination to address these areas and build new programs—programs that have time limits and achievable goals. It is imperative that we grow our membership for the survival and health of our association. We need to spread the message by our actions that every bookseller needs our association, and I can tell you that our association needs every bookseller! We can make the choice to revive and refresh our association.

An optimist sees an opportunity in every calamity.

A pessimist sees a calamity in every opportunity.

Let's make optimism happen!

Yours in the love of bookselling,  
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