

[Home](#) / [News Room](#) / [News Releases](#) / [News Releases - 2009](#) /

News Releases - 2009

Canada Council for the Arts announces 2009 Killam Prizes

[Watch the announcement.](#)



Montreal, May 11, 2009 – Five prominent scholars from McGill University, Queen’s University and the University of Toronto are the winners of the 2009 Killam Prizes, Canada’s most distinguished annual awards for outstanding career achievements in health sciences, engineering, humanities, natural sciences and social sciences. Each Prize is worth \$100,000 to the recipient.

The Canada Council for the Arts, which administers the Killam program, announced today the scholars are Dr. Philippe Gros, Dr. Wagdi G. Habashi, and Dr. François Ricard of McGill University; Dr. John P. Smol of Queen’s University; and Professor Ernest J. Weinrib of University of Toronto.

The Killam Prizes were inaugurated in 1981 and financed through funds donated to the Canada Council by Mrs. Dorothy J. Killam in memory of her husband, Izaak Walton Killam. The Prizes were created to honour eminent Canadian scholars and scientists actively engaged in research, whether in industry, government agencies or universities. When the Canada Council was created in 1957, its mandate was to support both the arts and scholarly research. Although this changed with the creation of separate research councils, the Canada Council retained responsibility for the Killam program. The Killam Fund at the Canada Council was valued at approximately \$64.6 million as of March 31, 2008. The Killam Trusts, which fund scholarship and research at four Canadian universities, a research institute and the Canada Council, are valued at approximately \$400 million.

“In establishing the Trusts, Dorothy Killam’s purpose was ‘to increase the scientific and scholastic attainments of Canadians, and to develop and expand the work of Canadian universities,’” noted George Cooper, managing trustee of the Killam Trusts. “The five eminent scholars and researchers being honoured today amply fulfil that purpose, and the Killam Trustees are delighted to welcome them into the ‘Killam family’ of scholars.”

Joseph Rotman, Chair, Canada Council for the Arts, noted “this year’s winners epitomize the broad spectrum of arts and scholarly research. Their accomplishments are remarkable in their diversity and their impact on Canadians.”

Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, will host a ceremony for the prize winners at Rideau Hall in early fall.

[Download images of the winners.](#)

Biographical notes

Dr. Philippe Gros – McGill University – Health Sciences

A decade before the human genome project was even formulated, pre-eminent Canadian scientist Dr. Philippe Gros – a world expert in mouse genetics – was inventing and implementing strategies for genomic analysis, seeking to identify the key genes affecting human health by tracking responses to pathogens or therapeutic interventions.

Dr. Gros’s seminal discoveries have advanced knowledge in three key biomedical areas: the molecular biology of multidrug resistance; the genetic analysis of neurodevelopmental defects (e.g., spina bifida and anencephaly); and the host genetics of infectious diseases (e.g., tuberculosis, malaria, and salmonella). Not only has he pioneered the strategic approach to identifying genetic mutations in the fields of infection, cancer, and neurogenesis, he has also provided essential knowledge about disease

pathways, as well as models for much of the way modern molecular genetics is approached. His work on multidrug resistance genes has expanded the understanding of drug resistance in cancer and infectious diseases, pointing the way to more effective drug treatments of common human diseases. A prolific researcher, Dr. Gros has over three hundred heavily cited papers to his credit.

As **James McGill Professor**, Dr. Gros teaches students in the Department of Biochemistry and trains the future's top international researchers at the **Centre for the Study of Host Resistance** and the **McGill Cancer Centre**. He also contributes extensively to his field as scientific director of the **Canadian Genetic Diseases Network** and scientific co-founder of two spin-off biotechnology companies.

A Fellow of the **Royal Society of Canada**, a Distinguished Scientist of the **Canadian Institute of Health Research**, and an International Scholar of the **Howard Hughes Medical Institute**, Dr. Gros has received numerous prestigious awards. Before doing postdoctoral studies at Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dr. Gros earned a Bachelor of Science degree (Biochemistry, Université de Montréal, 1976), a Master of Science degree (Microbiology and Immunology, Université de Montréal, 1979), and a Doctor of Philosophy degree (Experimental Medicine, McGill University, 1983).

Dr. Wagdi G. Habashi – McGill University – Engineering

Working at the interface of academia and industry and at the juncture of applied mathematics, physics, computer science, and engineering, Dr. Wagdi Habashi has devoted his career to tackling, in novel ways, major computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulation problems.

Dr. Habashi's remarkable work in CFD (the science of solving, via high performance computers, the complex equations that govern the flow physics of gases and fluids) has allowed him to develop innovative simulation techniques for application in industrial settings – first within the Canadian aerospace communities, and now worldwide. His defining work in jet engine design has permitted accurate predictions of performance, reducing the need for building prototypes and testing. His pioneering mathematical research into in-flight ice formation, with its potential for simulated, real-time responses during icing encounters, represents a significant shift in technological models and will lead to increased passenger safety globally. The author of some 270 scientific papers, Dr. Habashi serves as editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Computational Fluid Dynamics*.

In addition to his role as professor of Mechanical Engineering at McGill and his post as **NSERC - Bombardier - Bell Helicopter - CAE Industrial Research Chair for Multidisciplinary CFD**, Dr. Habashi established and directs the **McGill CFD Laboratory**. He also founded and directed the **CLUMEQ** (Consortium Laval, Université du Québec, McGill and Eastern Quebec) Supercomputer Center, which has been funded twice by the **Canada Foundation for Innovation**. He serves as Research Fellow of **Pratt & Whitney Canada**, consults for many companies, and heads up **Newmerical Technologies International**, a company he established to develop software and provide services for multidisciplinary applications of CFD.

A Fellow of the Academy of Science, **Royal Society of Canada**, and of the **Canadian Academy of Engineering**, Dr. Habashi has received many illustrious awards, including the Steacie Fellowship, the Cray Gigaflop Award, and the Lifetime Achievement Award of the **CFD Society of Canada**. Dr. Habashi holds a Bachelor of Engineering and a Master of Science degree (McGill University, 1967, 1969), and a Doctor of Philosophy degree (Aerospace Engineering, Cornell University, 1975).

Dr. François Ricard – McGill University – Humanities

Dr. François Ricard's rich, cross-disciplinary writings on Quebec literature, Quebec society, and the modern novel have propelled this literary critic and essayist to a prominence that extends far beyond the McGill University classroom, where he has taught in the Department of French Language and Literature since 1971.

Dr. Ricard's groundbreaking examination of the work of francophone writer Gabrielle Roy in his 1996 prize-winning biography, *Gabrielle Roy, A Life*, and his seven-volume collection of her unpublished writings have positioned him as the expert apropos this Canadian icon. His analyses of the Czech-born, French writer Milan Kundera, particularly his essay *Le dernier après-midi d'Agnès* (2003, translated into six languages), incorporating his trademark rigour, synthetic skills, and uniquely human definition of literature, have brought him international acclaim. His depictions of the modern Quebec experience in such critically lauded texts as *Histoire du Québec contemporain* (1986) and, above all, *La génération lyrique* (1992, a literary and sociological synthesis of Quebec's Quiet Revolution period), stamp him as a major interpreter of the Quebec community. His prodigious output includes numerous research studies, collaborative studies, and critical editions; some eighty articles and book sections; as well as textual analyses rediscovering such

Quebec authors as Honoré Beaugrand, Edmond de Nevers, and Félix-Antoine Savard. Dr. Ricard has also played a leading role in the francophone community as director of the literary journal *Liberté* (Montreal, 1980-1986), as founder of *Papier collés* (the most prestigious collection of French-language essays in Canada), as a radio commentator, and as columnist for the journals *L'Atelier du Roman* (Paris) and *L'Inconvénient* (Montreal).

Dr. Ricard's numerous honours include the Governor General's Literary Award (non-fiction), the Académie française's Grande Médaille de la Francophonie, and Association francophone pour le savoir's (ACFAS) André Laurendeau prize. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and a Knight of the National Order of Quebec. Dr. Ricard holds a Bachelor of Arts degree (Laval University, 1966), a Master of Arts degree (McGill University, 1968), and a Doctor of Letters degree (Université d'Aix-Marseille, 1971).

Dr. John P. Smol – Queen's University – Natural Sciences

One of the world's elite environmental scientists and an international authority on Arctic freshwater conditions and environmental change,

Dr. John Smol has made significant contributions to the world's understanding of global environmental issues.

A pioneer in paleolimnology in North America, Dr. Smol has worked to transform a largely descriptive study of natural and human impacts on lakes into a recognized quantitative science with powerful analytical properties. His groundbreaking research on lake acidification and other forms of pollution, land-use changes, and climate change (e.g., the disappearance of entire ecosystems in the High Arctic linked to recent warming) has permanently altered views regarding the extent to which human activities affect the natural environment, and prompted key public policy and program development worldwide. He has made cardinal discoveries, developed innovative techniques and research protocols, and published over 350 journal articles and book chapters as well as sixteen books, including the acclaimed textbook *Pollution of Lakes and Rivers: A Paleoenvironmental Perspective*. His editorial leadership roles as founding editor of *Journal of Paleolimnology* (1987-2007) and as current editor of *Environmental Reviews* and the book series *Developments in Paleoenvironmental Research* all attest to his stature in the field.

Dr. Smol has mentored many of today's influential scientists, both as professor in the Department of Biology and the School of Environmental Studies, at Queen's University, where he also holds the Canada Research Chair in Environmental Change, and as founding director of the Paleocological Environmental Assessment and Research Lab (PEARL), also housed at Queen's University.

Dr. Smol's numerous prestigious national and international awards include the NSERC Herzberg Gold Medal as Canada's top scientist and engineer. A native of Montreal, Dr. Smol holds a Bachelor of Science degree (McGill University, 1977), a Master of Science degree (Brock University, 1979), and a Doctor of Philosophy degree (Queen's University, 1982). He has also been awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws from St. Francis Xavier University and an honorary PhD from the University of Helsinki.

Professor Ernest J. Weinrib – University of Toronto – Social Sciences

Professor Ernest Weinrib is Canada's pre-eminent legal theorist and an internationally leading scholar of private law. He has reconceptualized the nature of legal liability by turning attention from law's instrumental uses to its moral meaning.

Professor Weinrib's theory of corrective justice transformed academic legal discourse by providing a new understanding of the distinctive morality of private law. The application of his theory to tort law and to other bases of liability has been central to contemporary academic debate in Canada and abroad. His work addresses fundamental questions about the relationship between law, freedom, and rationality, and presents new insights into the nature of legal coherence, the limits of judicial competence, the autonomy of legal reasoning, and the relation of legal doctrine to legal theory. Combining legal and philosophical analysis, he has been a pioneer in interdisciplinary legal scholarship in Canada.

Professor Weinrib has taught at the University of Toronto since beginning his scholarly career in 1968. He now holds the rank of University Professor and Cecil A. Wright Professor of Law. His wide-ranging and prolific writings include his path-breaking book *The Idea of Private Law* (now translated into Chinese), his innovative student casebook *Tort Law: Cases and Materials* (1997, 2003, 2008), and numerous influential essays and articles. He has served as visiting professor of law at the University of Tel Aviv and Yale Law School.

A Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, Professor Weinrib has received many prestigious awards for his scholarship and his excellence as a teacher. His 2008 election as a foreign honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences was a rare honour for a Canadian. Professor Weinrib holds a Bachelor of Arts (Classics, University of Toronto,

1965), a Doctor of Philosophy (Classical Philology, Harvard University, 1968), and a Doctor of Law (University of Toronto, 1972).

General information

In addition to its principal role of promoting and fostering the arts in Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts administers and awards a number of distinguished prizes in the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, health sciences and engineering. These prizes and fellowships recognize the achievements of outstanding Canadian artists, scholars, and administrators. The Canada Council for the Arts is committed to raising public awareness and celebration of these exceptional people and organizations on both a national and international level.

For a list of the 15 members of the selection committee, which included scholars, researchers and experts, please [click here](#). The list also includes the Killam trustees who monitored the selection process.

Please visit our website for a complete listing of these [awards](#).

For more information about these awards, fellowships and prizes, including nomination procedures, contact Joanne Larocque-Poirier, head, Endowments and Prizes at 613-566-4414 or 1-800-263-5588, ext. 5041, or [by e-mail](#); or Luisa Guglielmo, program officer, Endowments and Prizes, at 613-566-4414 or 1-800-263-5588, ext. 4086, or [by e-mail](#).

For more information:

Grace Thrasher

Arts Promotion Coordinator

1-800-263-5588 or (613) 566-4414, ext. 5145

[✉ Email this contact](#)

Carole Breton

Public Relations Officer

1-800-263-5588 or (613) 566-4414, ext. 4523

[✉ Email this contact](#)

Grants
Endowments and Prizes
Research
News Room
About Us

Important Notices
Proactive Disclosure
Peer Assessment
Help
Site Map
Contact Us
Site Feedback

Art Bank
Canadian Commission for UNESCO
Public Lending Right Commission
Killam

Date Modified: 2009-05-11