



AmbCanada

Association des anciens ambassadeurs du Canada
Canadian Ambassadors Alumni Association

Minutes of the 2026 Annual General Meeting

Thursday 18 June 2026, University of Ottawa

Overview

The fifth AmbCanada Annual General meeting was held on June 18, 2026, from 11:00–12:00. For the convenience of members attending the foreign policy conference later that day co-hosted with CIPS/uOttawa, the AGM was convened in the same room. 55 members attended in person. Unfortunately, due to a problem with the Zoom link, members who registered to attend online were not able to log on. However, the video recording of the AGM has been posted under **Board Documents** on the AmbCanada website, and a complete transcript of the AGM was sent to those who were unable to log on. All the current members of the Board were able to attend in person except for Gwyn Kutz and Chris Thornley. A full transcript of the meeting is attached to these minutes.

Agenda

1. **Welcome and voting procedures:** Vice-President Alison LeClaire welcomed all participants and explained voting procedures for the meeting.
2. **President's Report:** Michael Small delivered his President's Report. He noted that this would be his last AGM as President as his second two-year term would conclude in July 2026.
3. **Vice-President's Report:** Alison LeClaire delivered an oral report on the state of the membership.
4. **Treasurer's Report:** Phil Pinnington presented the 2025 Financial Report and the 2026 Budget.
5. **Approval of Amendments to the by-laws:** Michael Small explained the package of amendments to the by-laws proposed by the Board. Adopted unanimously by the meeting.
6. **Approval of New Board Member:** Ian Burchett as Chair of the Nominating Committee proposed that Nathalie Dubé join the Board, replacing Paula Caldwell St. Onge whose terms ended with this AGM. Adopted unanimously by the meeting.
7. **Other Business:** members asked questions of the Board concerning taking positions in public on budget cuts and staff reductions at GAC; engagement with the Minister of Foreign Affairs; and a possible new round of *Ambassadors of Note*.

See the attached full transcript of the AGM for details.

TRANSCRIPT OF THE FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
TRANSCRIPTION DE LA CINQUIÈME ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE ANNUELLE
University of Ottawa, June 18, 2026 | Université d'Ottawa, 18 juin 2026

Alison LeClaire:

Bon, bienvenue à tous et à toutes. Je m'appelle Alison LeClaire, vice-présidente d'AmbCanada, et j'ai le privilège de vous accueillir à cette assemblée générale de l'Association des anciens ambassadeurs du Canada. C'est vraiment superbe de vous voir ici, d'un nombre assez élevé.

For those of you who have been to these AGMs before, you know this venue is new to us. Our normal one, the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, is chock full of golf-related events and so was unavailable to us. We thought it would be a good idea to try this out, combining the AGM with the policy conference. While your feedback, of course, would be very welcome, it does seem as though the larger number that we've got here today is an indication that it's a pretty good formula.

Par rapport à cette réunion, j'espère que vous avez tous eu l'occasion d'examiner les documents envoyés mardi passé. En bref, l'ordre du jour comprend des rapports du président, de la vice-présidente et de notre trésorier. Par la suite, il y aura deux points pour décision. Premièrement, des modifications aux règlements administratifs et l'approbation du nouveau membre du conseil. Il y aura après l'occasion pour les membres d'enlever d'autres sujets. Bien, il faut utiliser ce micro pour les personnes qui sont avec nous en ligne. Pour les procédures de vote, elles sont très simples. Un membre du comité exécutif va faire la proposition et demander aux membres de lever la main pour indiquer oui ou non. Merci. Voilà pour les mots introductoires. Est-ce qu'il y a soit des questions ou soit des commentaires? Excellent. Sinon, j'invite Michael à prendre la parole pour son rapport présidentiel.

Michael Small:

Thank you, Alison. Merci. I'd like to begin by thanking all of you for coming to this year's annual general meeting: everybody who's here in person and those of you who are listening online. I must say it's quite striking to see how many not only current but former board members of this association and past presidents are here in this room. It's a nice indication that I think we've got a very good momentum.

Aujourd'hui a lieu notre cinquième assemblée générale annuelle depuis que nous avons commencé à les organiser en 2022. Ce sera également ma dernière en tant que président

puisque mon deuxième mandat de deux ans prend fin cet été. Le conseil d'administration désignera un nouveau président lors de sa prochaine réunion en juillet. Je ne vais pas passer en revue toutes nos activités de l'année écoulée. Vous les trouverez dans le rapport annuel qui vous a été envoyé à tous avant cette réunion. Je vais plutôt vous présenter une vision à plus long terme du chemin parcouru par l'association au cours des cinq dernières années. Et la direction qu'elle pourrait prendre à l'avenir.

When I joined the Board of AmbCanada as a member in the spring of 2021, the Association was already well launched on a process of internal reform and renewal begun under the presidency of Gilles Rivard and continuing under the presidency of Abbie Dann. Following a consultation with all our members, the Association had changed its name from RHOMA to AmbCanada. An ambitious external education project had been launched called *Ambassadors of Note*. Internal governance had been reformed by setting up a structure of committees and to focus attention on different areas of work, and a membership task force had been struck to turn around our declining membership in that time.

By the time of our first AGM in June 2022, we'd acquired an entirely new membership software system. Our new virtual office manager had been hired — that was Diane Goddard, now Karin Reinecke — to manage that system. We'd codified the procedures of the Association in a new set of bylaws, which mandated that there would be an annual general meeting, and our membership had started to increase following some concerted outreach led by Chris Greenshields, who's here today.

Perhaps the most important change at that time was consolidating our seven previous goals into just two simple objectives: the first, to build and sustain a community among our members, and the second, to help Canadians better understand and appreciate the value of diplomacy and the value of a professional foreign service.

Au cours des quatre dernières années, le conseil d'administration s'est attaché à mettre en œuvre cette vision. Dans l'ensemble, je pense que nous avons très bien réussi. Les membres du conseil sont désormais nommés par l'assemblée générale annuelle pour deux mandats consécutifs à trois ans. Il existe désormais un cycle de renouvellement annuel au sein du conseil.

With the departure of Paula Caldwell St.Onge after this meeting, the Board that launched the renewal process that I just referred to has been fully turned over and replaced by people, new people, entirely committed to the same objectives. This is the sign of a healthy organization.

Nous avons considérablement simplifié les démarches d'adhésion d'AmbCanada et nous avons clairement indiqué sur notre site Web les critères d'adhésion ainsi que les procédures à suivre. Nous venons d'achever un processus de huit mois visant à repenser et actualiser entièrement notre site Web. Nous avons désormais mis en place des procédures pour le maintenir à jour. Il s'agit désormais d'un outil qui permet à la fois d'informer les membres de nos activités et de présenter au grand public qui nous sommes et ce que nous faisons.

In the past four years, I think we've made some real progress in fulfilling our second objective of improving Canadians' understanding of the value of diplomacy. Our monthly compendium of op-eds, podcasts, TV interviews with our members, called *Members Reach Out*, continues to expand in form and content. In addition to being emailed every month to all of you, to our membership, we will now post it monthly on the website as a record for the public to see what our members are saying and speaking.

Grâce au généreux soutien financier de bon nombre d'entre vous, nous disposons désormais d'une bourse d'études solidement financée et bien établie, portant le nom de notre regrettée collègue Deborah Chatsis, destinée aux étudiants autochtones de troisième cycle en relations internationales à l'Université Carleton. Vous pouvez également consulter les profils de tous les lauréats à ce jour sur notre site web.

The biggest step in raising our public profile came last year when we hosted our first foreign policy conference in this room in partnership with the Centre for International Policy Studies here at the University of Ottawa. Most of you will be attending our second conference this afternoon on *Realities and Illusions of Canadian Foreign Policy*. It's an opportunity to showcase on the record some of the expertise of AmbCanada members alongside academics and experts from think tanks. It's also an opportunity for us to partner with a diverse range of organizations that share an interest in Canadian foreign policy, including PAFSO, the Foreign Service Alumni Forum, and Global Affairs Canada.

Nous avons également commencé à nouer des partenariats avec des universités afin d'organiser des événements publics, dans d'autres villes du Canada. En octobre, John Holmes a animé une conférence très pertinente sur l'Iran et les États du Golfe à l'Université Western, qui a été diffusée en direct pour l'ensemble de nos adhérents. En avril, notre coordonnateur pour le Québec, Benoît-Pierre Laramé, a organisé une table ronde très animée réunissant quatre de nos membres lors des Rendez-vous Gérard Lajoie à l'Institut d'études internationales de Montréal, à l'UQAM.

Canadian universities can provide the physical space and the IT capacity needed for a successful public event, and AmbCanada members can bring their expertise to the table along with faculty from the host university. Together, we can work to promote a successful event to a much wider public than we can reach on our own. This is a model I hope we can repeat in other locations elsewhere in Canada.

À l'initiative de Tim Martin, nous avons lancé un projet pilote de mentorat avec des cadets de dernière année du Collège militaire royal que nous espérons étendre cette année. Il s'agit d'un moyen de familiariser dès leur formation initiale les futurs dirigeants militaires avec le rôle de la diplomatie dans les affaires étrangères.

Through the Canadian Foreign Service Institute, we've begun a series of workshops for current heads of mission on the practice of diplomacy, which we hope will expand in the coming year. We also have an interesting proposal from CIC to co-host a regular series of interviews with former heads of mission on their platform, Open Canada. In sum, we are financially solvent, we have a growing membership, and a well-functioning and energetic Board, none of which are a

given for a voluntary membership organization. Many of you here in this audience have donated your time to expand our impact by serving on the Board or its committees, or by moderating or speaking at one of our events. If there's a particular project or activity which you'd like to support, please let us know. With the active involvement of our members, like all of you, we can continue to do great things together.

Thank you.

Alison LeClaire:

So as MC, I'm going to pass the floor to me as Vice President, give you a quick report on where I focused my efforts over the last year. This will be quick because my work has largely been covered under Michael's report, but I do want to add or expand on a couple of points.

On the website, my focus was to some extent on the member portal because I also chair the Membership Services Committee, so it was aligned with that. So it's now been launched, and hopefully we've tried to make it easier to access and more useful for members. We'll of course want to keep the site dynamic and relevant, so that work will have to continue, and your feedback will be important. On the committee itself, the launch of the new website was really critical to do an outreach campaign following on the efforts that Michael mentioned by Chris Greenshields, and I know by my predecessor, Kathleen McKay. So this was a Board-wide effort that was coordinated by the Membership Services Committee that focused on a list of some 200 people that we identified as eligible to join, but not a member.

Cette initiative continue et je pense que nous avons gagné déjà des nouveaux membres à cause de cet effort du comité exécutif. Prochainement, j'ai pris charge de notre présence aux médias sociaux et j'aimerais saisir ce moment pour remercier Anne Leahy, qui était responsable pour ce travail pendant quelques années. Avec l'accord du comité exécutif, j'ai focalisé mes efforts sur LinkedIn avec une présence anglaise et française. Du côté anglais, nous avons maintenant 195 personnes qui nous suivent et ça, c'est une augmentation de 300 % au cours des derniers 30 jours. Du côté français, nous avons maintenant 55 personnes qui nous suivent et ça, c'est une augmentation de 40 %. Quoi faire sur LinkedIn? Nos activités principales sont de publier nos événements publics et d'amplifier les contributions de nos membres aux conversations sur la politique étrangère. So, it's not just to make sure that what you're doing out there in the field of public policy discourse that we're amplifying as members of AmbCanada.

Finally, I did just want to flag an event that we had hoped would take place with the former Governor General, who is our patron, in an armchair discussion with NPSIA at Carleton University last November. That grew out of the work that Michael mentioned related to the Deborah Chatsis scholarship and was led by Bob Hage. I'm not sure if he's with us today. Thematically, it was a discussion focused on Arctic issues, but the event was really aimed at attracting students, and particularly Indigenous students, to underscore the positive elements of a foreign service career.

Malheureusement, Son Excellence était malade et l'événement a été annulé. Nous et NPSIA demeurons très intéressés et on va explorer des possibilités avec Madame Simon en tant qu'ancienne gouverneure générale. Bon, voilà pour mon rapport et je passe la parole à Phil Pinnington, trésorier.

Phil Pinnington:

So good morning, colleagues. Bonjour, chers collègues. J'ai le plaisir de vous présenter le rapport du trésorier pour 2026. Deux documents étaient inclus dans le dossier de l'AGA. Premièrement, une comparaison entre le budget 2025 et les dépenses réelles, et deuxièmement, le budget pour 2026.

So, for the 2025 budget and the final results, you will see that the deficit was higher than we had budgeted. On the revenue side, we did have an increase in the amount collected from membership fees. On the expense side, as the notes at the bottom of the page explain, lors de la présentation du budget 2025 à l'AGA de l'année dernière, trois sources potentielles de coûts additionnels ont été identifiées : la transition du bureau virtuel de Diane à Karin, la conception d'un nouveau site Web et les coûts liés au contrat avec CIPS [Centre d'études en politiques internationales], qui n'avait pas encore été finalisé. Ces éléments expliquent la majeure partie de l'augmentation du déficit.

As you're aware, the transition from Diane to Karin went well, but there were costs related to the handover period when both of them were on the payroll, as it were, and additional time was needed for Karin to learn the systems involved. The design of the website has been a long process, but I think we'd agree that the result is impressive. And, as is often the case with such projects, there was cost overrun. Due to unforeseen difficulties. I feel like I'm working for OC Transpo here. And our desire to ensure that we got it right. We did not know the full costs of the CIPS conference at the time last year but, as you can see, they were higher than we had anticipated. We have addressed this for this year's conference by raising the registration fee and lowering costs where possible.

Le conseil d'administration avait convenu l'année dernière de faire face à tout enjeu de trésorerie découlant du déficit par l'encaissement d'un certificat d'investissement garanti, mais aucun déficit n'a été encaissé à ce jour, bien qu'un montant de 2 000 \$ ait été réservé à cette fin si nécessaire. Regarding our assets, you will see that our bank account remains healthy and that we still have the \$35,000 in GICs although, as noted, \$10,000 has been earmarked to cover possible cash flow issues arising from the 2025 deficit. So turning to the 2026 budget, we are projecting a surplus. Unfortunately, the document that was published said it was a deficit and it was in red. But hallelujah, it's a surplus of \$1,450.

Du côté des revenus pour les frais d'adhésion, nous avons fixé à 30 000 \$, un montant peut-être faible mais prudent. Nous avons également reçu 1 500 \$ supplémentaires de HKC, anciennement CFSD. How the Department loves to change the titles of its units.

Projected 2026 costs are lower for the website, which is essentially done. The AGM, as discussed earlier, by moving it here and piggybacking on the conference, we have reduced the

costs. And the holiday reception. Now we have used the holiday reception to invite some special guests as part of the Association's outreach activities. We propose to reduce the number of VIPs invited and hence the cost by examining the list, as there are some who consistently have been unable to attend, and we have still paid for them. So we will lower the number of VIPs invited. As noted above, we have increased the registration fee for the CIPS conference. The amount budgeted for luncheons is less because we anticipate fewer events where we pay the costs of the speaker and administration.

Et dernièrement, les coûts de bureau virtuel seront suivis de près. C'est encore 20 000 \$, juste comme l'année passée. Mais comme j'ai dit, on le suivra de près juste pour s'assurer qu'ils ne dépassent plus 20 000 \$.

A note on two other issues. We try to set the price for lunches at the club and for the holiday reception so that those who can attend in person are paying for the full cost of their participation. There are additional costs related to livestreaming them on Zoom, which we regard as a corporate benefit. So we cover those from the fees. The ROGC or the Club did not raise the cost of the lunch for 2026, but they did say that there may be costs for using new audiovisual equipment that is being installed. But we do not know what the impact of those costs is going to be at the moment. Regarding membership fees, the Board considered whether we should raise the fees for 2027 and concluded that our reserves were sufficient at the moment to cover any likely deficit, and that there was not a case this year to raise the fees.

Cela dit, les frais sont restés inchangés ces quatre dernières années, et il se peut donc qu'à un moment donné, l'inflation nous oblige à envisager de les augmenter. Et voilà, le rapport de trésorerie pour 2026.

I'll just want to address one other issue, which is an ugly rumour that has gone out about how right after I became the treasurer, my wife and I took a round-the-world tour. And I just want to point out the size of the budget and that level of corruption would, of course, be impossible. So all I've managed was a Saturday night at the Holiday Inn in Cornwall.

I would welcome any questions or comments.

Alison LeClaire:

Thanks, Phil. So we're in pretty good time. So in addition to any questions that anybody might have for Phil, we can take a few minutes now if anybody has any questions stemming from any group Michael's report or mine.

Gaston Barban:

A question about the Mary Simon event that you said was postponed, or hopefully postponed. You mentioned that she was the patron of the organization, and I was wondering whether that is she was the patron in name or in office. In other words, is the plan to ask the current Governor General to become our patron of this organization? I think it would be fitting if we could do that, not only because the Governor General signs all our letters of accreditation, but

more importantly, the kind of prestige that would come to the organization were we to have a patron like the Governor General of Canada.

Alison LeClaire:

Thank you, Gaston. The answer's not actually very simple. We asked her to be an Honorary Member of the organization because she was indeed an ambassador. They came back to accept to be a patron of the organization. As patron of the organization, it was time limited to her office. So, she's our patron as Governor General. We've now written back to say thank you so much for serving as our patron, and we'd like to know if you would be an Honorary Member. We haven't heard back. We're continuing to pursue that. For Mary Simon herself, I think we would like to see her as an Honorary Member of the organization. In terms of your proposal to approach the current Governor General, who of course has done particularly awesome international work, I think that that's a very good suggestion and happy to take that back to the Board.

Anne Leahy:

An idea. In terms of the accomplishments over the past few years, Michael, you mentioned, I think, one that we've all really appreciated, which was an idea certainly, if not initiated, on which Gary Smith worked a lot, and that was *Ambassadors of Note*, les *ambassadeurs de marque*. Et on a eu deux rondes. Au coup, ça a pris deux ans et quelques mois pour faire un sondage pour identifier quels étaient nos ambassadeurs de marque. Et l'idée était un peu de se servir de ça comme outil pour mieux faire connaître la diplomatie et la diplomatie canadienne. We're very sorry, of course, that Gary isn't with us anymore. But I do know, and I think some of us who were on the Board at the time remember, that Gary always was counting on the third round. So I would just like, while noting I think we all regret that Gary is now gone, that we will keep in mind, and when you have the time, the resources, perhaps sooner rather than later, we should enclencher la troisième ronde des *ambassadeurs de marque*.

Michael Small:

Thank you for raising that, and I think the Board should discuss it. You may have noticed, if you've looked at the website, we deliberately created one of the columns, if you go at the top, called Canadian Diplomacy, and the *Ambassadors of Note* is a major piece of content on that. In the work in revising the website, I had occasion to look a number of times at the *Ambassadors of Note*, and I can see ways it could be renewed or expanded, though maybe not in quite the same ethos as the first two rounds. I could see a case for perhaps identifying people who were ambassadors who contributed to the diversity a bit more of the Foreign Service which, given the pool from which the ambassadors were recruited back in the day, doesn't look like the Foreign Service of today. That would be an angle we could take. I think there's a space for that discussion now. We'll talk a bit more about other possible initiatives that we could pursue. But I think there's room for discussion about revisiting that and seeing how we can build on what was already accomplished.

Alison LeClaire:

Thank you, Michael. Okay, any other questions or comments? Okay, then I think we can move to the next item on the agenda, and that is a discussion on an approval of the changes to the bylaws. So, Michael, over to you.

Michael Small:

In an ideal world, we would have devoted an entire hour to this. We would put up the existing bylaws on the screen and, like in a UN drafting committee, I would walk through every textual change, and that would probably exceed everyone's attention span except mine on this topic.

We sent you what the proposed revised bylaws look like earlier this week. The great majority of them are textual changes that improve precision and wording in the bylaws that were adopted in 2022. It would take more time than it would be worth to go through for everybody what those are. So, I'm inviting you to take it on faith that the Board did its work and cleaned things up. But there are some substantive changes. Let me just describe them to you, so that people are well aware, because I will then put it to a vote for approval for the amendments to the bylaws.

The first is we made some wording changes to the two objectives with exactly the same intention, but to be a bit more precise. The existing bylaws say that the first objective is *to build and serve the community of colleagues whose careers included serving abroad as senior-level government diplomats*. And we've just modified that to say *to build and serve a community of colleagues who share the experience of leading a Canadian diplomatic mission abroad*. We want to put the emphasis on leading a diplomatic mission because the membership of the Association are people who have been heads of mission or deputy heads of mission or chargé for more than one year, and that seemed to be the unifying factor. It's a bit more precise than referring to senior-level Canadian diplomats.

On the second objective, we just simplified the wording a little bit so that we took out a couple of subordinate clauses. So it now reads *to increase public awareness of the importance of diplomacy and the value of the professional Foreign Service to Canada's security, prosperity, and well-being*. It's a sentence I often quote in letters and talking points, so getting it in a nice concise form was important.

We changed a bit the terms for the officers. When we drafted the bylaws, we were taking a stab in the dark. For reasons that frankly elude me now, we decided that the president and the vice-president should have a two-year term that could be repeated once, and the other officers would have a three-year term. That doesn't make any sense. We're putting the president, the vice-president, and the treasurer on a two-year term. We're also saying that it can be renewed up until the end of a person's mandate. The maximum mandate for a board member is two three-year terms, i.e., six years. But in the event that you actually have somebody who is appointed in their first year on the Board and wants to keep serving in that capacity right up till the end of their time on the Board—looking at the treasurer—there's no reason why they

should be obliged to step down. We're simply making it that an officer can be renewed up to the end of your time on the Board.

A third change that we made was we had originally included two other officer positions besides president, vice-president, and treasurer: a membership secretary who would drive the membership recruitment outreach, keep track of who was retiring, who we could reach out to; and a secretary who, like in any organization, would keep the minutes. For the latter position, not surprisingly, no one volunteered to be the secretary. The last such person is here in the audience, and she isn't putting up her hand to return to repeat the experience. We found that the Board members are perfectly willing on a rotating basis to keep minutes. So we've simply changed the bylaws to say the Board can appoint a secretary because it would be dumb not to allow you to do so, but doesn't say it's expected. The membership secretary was an interesting idea, but it's been taken over by the committee that first of all Kathleen and now Alison chairs, as Membership Services. So, we're simply dropping that function. We don't need it. This reflects four years of experience with the bylaws. This sounds like an administrative tidy up, but it's important to have it right.

We've added one new section on how the Board can remove one of its officers. I hope that never has to happen, but the Board bylaws were silent on that. The Board appoints the president, the vice-president for the repeating two-year terms. So there needs to be a way of removing them for cause. There are some basic simple procedures, but we're requiring due notice and quorum and the opportunity for the person to explain themselves. That's there as a safeguard.

The last item is the most important, I think, and probably the one that's going to touch, I hope, the widest number of people. We've always been a bit ambiguous as to what the status of spouses are in this organization. They've always been welcome to participate, to come to our events. But we never exactly clarified that. Spouses have had the status of Associate Members, but there are actually two categories of Associate Members. There are Associate Members who are spouses of current members, and then there are Associate Members whose spouses have passed away or are no longer interested in being involved with the Association, but the spouse in question wants to stay connected with this community. That latter group, which currently numbers about 14, pay a fee. It's a little bit less than the regular membership fee, and they have all the privileges of participating except for voting at this meeting. As a consequence of paying a fee, they exist in our membership system and they have a profile in the directory, and we communicate with them directly. But all the other spouses who might want to be involved, some of whom are coming to our event this afternoon, do not have an organizational status.

The simple thing to do was create a status called Spousal Members. Going forward, we're proposing to have Associate Members, or people whose spouses are not a member but had been a member or could have been a member, and then Spousal Members who are spouses of any of you from the wider membership. Spousal Members will have all the same rights to participate, short of voting at the annual general meeting. They don't pay a fee. We're not planning on changing that, but it's voluntary. So if your spouse is not interested, that's fine. But

if they are interested, we'll set up procedures this summer so that they can send in a membership—well, not an application, just a registration. They will get a profile in the membership directory. They will start getting emailed directly. They can pay to attend events directly, and they're no longer connected to all of you. Look, we've all been heads of mission. This is not exactly new news for the Foreign Service, but it was time that we brought it up to date for our own practices and embedded it in the system.

I am going to stop there, and I'm happy to take any questions about what is and isn't in the bylaws, or to comment on anything I've just said.

I am not seeing anyone rushing to ask any further questions about that. So in that case, can I put it to a vote? All those in favour of these amendments to the bylaws, please just raise your hands. Great. Anyone opposed? No. Wonderful. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

Ian Burchett:

Merci beaucoup. At this time, the Nomination Committee comprising myself, Alex Bugailiskis, and Chris Thornley would like to sincerely thank Paula Caldwell for her contributions to the Board over the past number of years. She served two terms, and we are grateful for her energy and contributions to our organization.

Et ça me fait grand plaisir d'annoncer pour votre approbation le nom de Nathalie Dubé comme le nouveau remplaçant. Merci beaucoup, Nathalie. And I'd like to, with a show of hands, the General Assembly would formally agree and approve all those in favour for Nathalie Dubé. Merci. Anyone opposed or abstentions? Bienvenue, Nathalie.

Nathalie Dubé:

Merci beaucoup.

Ian Burchett:

As Michael has mentioned during his remarks at the beginning of today's meeting, he will be finishing his term as president of our organization in July. And so at the first Board meeting in July, the Board will be selecting a new president for our organization, and we just want to make sure that all of you and the members across Canada know about this decision, which will be taking place in July. Merci beaucoup.

Alison LeClaire:

So, we now come to other business. That's the end of the formal agenda. I know we have one question from online. Somebody who managed to get through even though we're still not live. We still have a technical issue. Olivier, there's a question?

Olivier Nicoloff:

Merci. Donc la question est de Phil Calvert. It's following the President's report.

Phil Calvert [question read aloud by Olivier Nicoloff]:

I understand that AmbCanada met with the Foreign Affairs Deputy Minister about the cuts to GAC before they were announced, but it seems from media reports that the cuts are more heavily focused on positions abroad. This seems extremely short sighted if Canada's aim is to build partnerships with other countries. Or are the cuts focused on U.S. posts? Given our interest in supporting and preserving the profession, is AmbCanada planning to comment on this?

Michael Small:

Thank you, Phil, for that question. So, I'll partly take that as a comment from you, which I'm sure is shared by lots of other members, but let me address some facts. Alison and I last summer after the AGM called on David Morrison. At that point, the Carney government had literally been sworn in the week before. He described in some detail the status of the renewal of diplomacy project. Clearly, deficit reduction was on the horizon but hadn't happened yet. Then, if you recall, those of you who were at the December reception, David Morrison himself spoke about what he knew at that point. I'm sure the Department, and certainly he, had already been given the targets to meet. They hadn't yet begun the rollout of the reduction process.

Once they started doing that and approaching employees in all categories, looking for people to take retirement, subject to legislation which was subsequently passed, ourselves as the Board in combination with the Forum jointly requested a meeting. We didn't go to David Morrison, but we jointly requested a meeting with Antoine Chevrier, who is the Chief Transformation Officer and in charge of human resources, plus Catherine Jobin, who's the Assistant Deputy Minister for Strategic Policy, who has overseen a lot of the operationalization of that. It was a very good briefing for about an hour. It wasn't focused at all on which positions were going to go where because, if I remember correctly, and a number of you were present from the Board were involved in that conversation, they walked us through the procedures. At that point, it was very much driven by the employees. The Department had targets they had to meet in each employee category, but they were looking for essentially volunteers, people willing to take the package that was offered in early retirement. We really discussed the procedures which they were following rather than what the net outcome was going to be. And that was the last engagement we've had directly with the Department.

Alison and I, following this meeting, are going to see the new Undersecretary or Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Arun Thangaraj, and we're going to call on two of the other three deputies as well, just to take a pulse of the current organization. So, we'll be a little better informed first-hand about what the current state of affairs is next week.

As for the issue of taking a position, I'll take the opportunity to say my view has been as President that the one area where I think the Association has a clear basis to take a position in the public is on the management of the Foreign Service. Having said that, my own view is we need to be a bit sparing about that and pick our moments and opportunities. To do so at a moment when we're well informed as to what the facts of the matter are. I'll reserve judgment

as to whether I think a proactive comment is needed after we do some soundings next week. More interestingly, we tend to respond when media calls us up. We actually got a lot of media inquiries about substantive foreign policy issues earlier in the year. Our practice is to direct those to somebody in our membership who knows that part of the world and let them speak in their own capacity, rather than us taking a position. So we're keeping a watching brief is the short answer.

The last thing I'll say: I've been the president of PAFSO, I've been the ADM for personnel, and now I'm in this job. I've been around this block a few times. There are moments particularly where it touches the role and capacity and effectiveness of heads of mission where I think we've got a clear role to play. But PAFSO is a remarkably well-funded organization compared to ours and plays exactly that kind of proactive role on commenting on cuts. So personally, I'm a little reserved about going on a proactive basis on those issues. But if people come to us and say what's the impact on Canada's capacity to deliver on foreign policy abroad, I think that's a space for us to provide some measured comment.

Phil Pinnington:

Sorry, I apologize for jumping in and adding. It's just that I know that probably everybody in this room, once you mentioned that you were ambassador or had anything to do with Global Affairs, the question always is: *my son, my daughter, they're interested, how do they join?* I just wanted to pass on that the Department had committed to do an external FS-1 process in the fall. Right now, and I'm involved in it, they're doing an internal FS-1 process, mainly because of the need. In some cases, if they hire somebody as FS-1, then obviously their position could come into play. I think that's why they've decided to go internal rather than external. But my understanding is that there is still a commitment to do an external recruitment, similar to the types of processes that brought many of us in. They're still committed to doing it in the fall. Whether they'll be able to do it or not, of course, is a different question. But the commitment is there. If you get those sorts of questions, I advise, tell people to pay attention to jobs.gc.ca because there could be something coming in a while.

Alison LeClaire:

Thanks. Michael, can I also jump in? I would just like to add one of the conversations that has sort of bubbled up in the conversations that Michael and I have had is the wealth of experience and capacity that is in this organization. We're not the only one. You know, the Forum is another. But Foreign Service officers, whether ambassadors or not, who have retired remain a resource that can be drawn on, on an as-needed basis. I know I've done a couple of short stints. There's other people in this room that have done that, either Ottawa-based or in missions abroad. Not that that replaces a strong, dynamic Foreign Service with a good pipeline. But I think that something we want to keep on the radar screen of the Department is that there is capacity to fill gaps in this organization and to offer experience and expertise that the Department may well be losing. I think one of the metrics was that something like 75% of the executive cadre of the Department is actually eligible for retirement. So that's a big chunk of

leadership that can leave if they so choose. Hopefully some will come here. But you know, I think that we become even more so a resource for the Department.

Sabine Nölke:

Just to follow up briefly with Michael, ideally, on the point that Phil Calvert raised. I think the issue that Phil is after speaks directly directly to the second objective of this organization, is making Canadians understand the value of diplomacy. And I have a sneaky feeling that the Carney government doesn't understand that, partly because, you know, whenever a really interesting, valuable, and necessary position comes up, he appoints one of his you know, economist friends, but also some of the public policy announcements that he made just yesterday, the comment at the G7 about the outcome of this so-called Iran peace deal, quote unquote. I'm not sure that there is enough input on foreign policy issues from seasoned foreign policy professionals with this government to mitigate some of the rather unfortunate things that they say and do or don't do. And of course, the cutbacks, I think, feature very, very strongly into that. When they talk about building alliances, building new agreements, et cetera, I mean, who's going to be doing that? It's going to be people like us. So I would very strongly urge the executive, when you pick your battles, to choose that one, because I think it's a really important one.

Alison LeClaire:

Est-ce qu'il y a d'autres questions, d'autres commentaires, d'autres propositions?

Anne Leahy:

Un des canaux de communications, c'est bien sûr la ministre. Et par le passé, on a toujours cherché à avoir une rencontre avec le ou la ministre des Affaires étrangères. I've noticed that Anita Anand is being interviewed tomorrow by Janet Stein at the Munk Centre, open to the media. This is the sort of thing we should be seeking again, to have a meeting as an association of EXs in whatever format she's comfortable with, but at least to make that step. I don't know if perhaps you have written her to ask that, but now would be the time because clearly, she's doing it at the Munk Centre. Therefore, there might be an awareness campaign. Hier, il y a deux jours, le 16 juin, le Québec a rendu publique sa troisième mouture en moins de dix ans d'une politique internationale. Et là, il y a des échanges, il y a des consultations, il y a une visibilité. Mais il y a peut-être quelque chose que nous pouvons faire, que l'exécutif peut faire auprès de Madame Anand.

Michael Small:

Melanie Jolie also did an appearance at the Munk Centre about the same time into her tenure, which I watched. It seems to be a destination. What the hell, I'm retired. I'm always impressed at how little our ministers actually say in public on almost any topic, the Prime Minister being a notable exception. So to be very straightforward about it, at least in my time, I haven't sought out contact at the political level. We all had a lot of that in our professional career. I thought that there was more receptivity and frankly more predictability to building a good working

relationship with the senior levels of the Department where we listened to what they had to say and offered our expertise where we could. And certainly, under David Morrison, that was invited and reciprocated. We'll see what the new regime is. Without getting into an extended discussion right now, which is a very suitable topic over lunch with everybody in this room, I'm watching the same trends you are. I'm out of this role in about four weeks' time, but the calculus is we are a voluntary association.

I think in many ways the more powerful statements come from our individual members. And that's why, as a general practice, what we've been trying to do is steer media inquiries and create platforms and opportunities for any and all of you to state your own views on the contradictions involved or the coherence in policy. It's also why we're hosting a conference in about an hour and a half, called *Realities and Illusions of Canadian Foreign Policy*, which is completely on the record and allows a mixture of our members and academics and think tank people to identify both of those things. So, it's really the trade-off between what our individual members say and how we amplify that versus what we say in the name of the Association. But it's a space to watch. And frankly, I really appreciate the feedback from people because it gives us more as a Board to chew through in terms of what profile we want to adopt going forward.

Gilles Rivard:

Je n'ai pas besoin d'y toucher. Quand j'ai joint ce qui s'appelait ACMAR il y a une dizaine d'années, on était une organisation qui était plus ou moins fragile. I just want to say that the work that has been done when I was there, our biggest challenge, and I look at my former colleague, was to keep ACMAR ahead of the water after COVID. We were going down. We found a way to keep the organization ahead of the water. But you guys, Michael, you're leaving today after four years, and the team that is here, and Paula, who is leaving, you've done a great job. Where we are now, I'm quite impressed by what I see, and I say keep going. It's a lot of work, but I think you've done something great.

Michael Small:

Thank you very much. On behalf of the whole Board, thank you for that and for everyone's expressions. These organizations don't self-administer. They don't. All of us, I'm sure, are involved, whether it's in community groups or arts groups or educational associations or foreign policy groups. We're all involved in other kinds of circles, and we know this. The fact that this organization is where we are—it's a testimony. It was founded in 1987 with the input from quite a few of you. I wrote up a history of your Association, which you'll find on the website. Most foreign services don't have anything like this. It's actually a little bit like the famous swan. You've got to put a fair amount of effort in just to keep things on track. And if you can move things forward a little bit, it's appreciated. We get there with the active interest of as many people as there are in this room. So thank you.

Alison LeClaire:

Anybody else? Okay, well, that, I think, brings us to a close in pretty good time. So let me just say, first of all, merci beaucoup. Thank you very much for coming. A couple of housekeeping

points. We still have the coat of arms cards. There are a few packages left. They're for sale on the table outside, \$10, cash on the barrel, if you would like some note cards with our new coat of arms. And then a very budget-conscious comment that there is lunch out there for those of you that have registered for the conference. One sandwich per person. And before you leave, I would just like to turn the mic over to Kathleen Mackay.

Kathleen Mackay:

So let me start with merci, Gilles. J'aimerais célébrer un peu les cinq ans de Michael Small en tant que président. I think you've all noted the initiative, energy, and dedication that Michael has shown in his five years as president of AmbCanada. I don't want to continue on. I think you're all aware of it. But si vous voulez me joindre, if you'd like to join me in a round of applause for Michael and his five years as president.