

ANNUAL REPORT

June 2026

The following report covers the Association's activities from June 2025 to June 2026.

Annual AmbCanada–CIPS Foreign Policy Conference

Last year we convened our first-ever public foreign policy conference with the Centre for International Policy Studies (CIPS) at the University of Ottawa on May 12, 2025. Following the success of that event, the Board agreed to hold a second policy conference this year in partnership with CIPS on June 18, 2026.

In consultation with CIPS Director Dr Alexandra Gheciu, we agreed on the theme: *Realities and Illusions in Canadian Foreign Policy*. We decided that last year's formula worked well for our purposes: a half-day event from 13:00–17:00 (convenient for all Canadian time zones) organized around three one-hour panels, each with a moderator and three speakers. We tried to ensure that all speakers participated in person wherever possible. (In the end, due to academic obligations, one panellist participated virtually from Waterloo.)

The second conference proved to be as successful as our first. It also sold out a few days beforehand, with 146 people registered in person, and 176 people following it online. To promote it, we partnered again with the Canadian Foreign Service Alumni Forum (CFSAF), PAFSO, the Canadian International Council, the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, the Global Centre for Pluralism, and the Parliamentary Centre. Global Affairs Canada offered to provide financial support for our speaker from outside of Ottawa and a significant number of current Departmental employees attended, in person and online.

To organize the event, I convened a small steering committee. I would like to thank Patricia Fortier, David McKinnon, Kerry Buck, Alison LeClaire, Kathleen McKay, Doug George, and Karin Reinecke for their strong support. This year, we increased the in-person registration fee from \$20 to \$50—comparable to the cost of similar public events—to cover a greater share of catering costs. CIPS and AmbCanada agreed to split the remaining expenses. We hope this will be a more financially sustainable model for organizing public events in the future.

Audio recordings and complete transcripts from the conference can be found on our website under [Conferences](#), in the **Events** menu.

Convening these policy conferences is an important step forward in making AmbCanada a more public-facing organization, consistent with our objective of promoting public understanding of the value of diplomacy and of the importance to Canada of a professional foreign service. They

provide an opportunity to showcase some of our members—who are experts in their own right—in dialogue with academic and think-tank experts. Making them open to the public and on the record allows us to disseminate conference recordings on our website and encourage media coverage and audience commentary.

2026 Annual General Meeting

This year marked our fifth AGM since we began the practice in 2022. The Board decided to convene our 2026 AGM immediately before the policy conference, in the same location at the University of Ottawa. This change reflected both the unavailability of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club (our usual AGM venue) until late June and the convenience of enabling members to attend both events on the same day.

In addition to receiving reports from the President, Vice-President, and Treasurer, members at this year's AGM approved the Board's nomination of a new Board member—Nathalie Dubé—to replace Paula Caldwell St.-Onge. The AGM also approved a set of amendments to our by-laws, reflecting the Board's experience of working with the existing by-laws over the past four years.

All the reports presented to the AGM plus a complete transcript of the meeting can be found under **Board Documents** in the **Members Portal** of our website.

Financial Situation

The Association's fiscal year runs from January 1–December 31. The Financial Report for 2025 attached to this report, as presented by the Treasurer to the 2026 AGM, shows a larger than anticipated deficit in 2025 of \$12,780.72, compared to the forecast deficit of \$6,398.00.

The higher deficit was largely due to increased costs for the Virtual Office, update of the website, and our first policy conference, co-hosted with CIPS. Virtual Office costs were higher, in part because of the 2025 transition from Diane Godard to Karin Reinecke, and the extra time required for Karin to get fully up to speed on using M365 as our operating system. They were also due to an increased volume of emails which we sent members, providing a wide range of membership services. Website costs rose because additional Virtual Office time was required for editing and proofreading new content. The higher conference cost reflected the full amount of \$6000 which the Board had budgeted in advance, rather than just the catering and room rental costs which were the basis for the projected 2025 budget.

Fortunately, the Association has a very substantial reserve of \$35,000 in GICs. The Board's decision in 2025 to fund the policy conference was intended to begin spending down some of these funds on projects which would advance the Association's objectives. As of the June 2026 AGM, the Treasurer had not yet needed to cash any of the GICs in order to cover the 2025 deficit. Depending on the cash flow over the remainder of 2026, the amount needed to cover the 2025 deficit may be smaller than reported.

The 2026 budget presented to the AGM forecasts a surplus of \$1450. The Board anticipates reduced costs for the Virtual Office now that Karin is well settled into the role and the website

redesign is done. As noted above, we increased the registration fees for the 2026 policy conference. We also saved money on the AGM by holding it at uOttawa, in conjunction with the conference.

At its May 2026 meeting, the Board examined whether there was a need to increase fees for 2027. We concluded that as we had substantial savings in GICs, a fee increase was not warranted for next fiscal year. However, AmbCanada's fees have remained constant since 2023, so at some point in the future, a fee increase will be needed to keep up with increasing costs.

Membership

As of June 16, 2026, the Association has 372 members in total: 357 Regular Members; 13 Associate Members, and 2 Life Members.

Distribution of Members by Location of Residence

In Canada by province

Ontario	239
Quebec	56
British Columbia	49
Nova Scotia	7
Alberta	4
Saskatchewan	1
New Brunswick	1
Total	357

Outside Canada by country

United States	4
United Kingdom	3
Austria	1
Denmark	1
France	1
Germany	1
Malaysia	1
Mexico	1
New Zealand	1
Thailand	1
Total	15

New members since the May 2025 AGM

Name	Member since
Ron Hoffmann	2026-05-25
Marina Laker	2026-05-22
Todd Kuiack	2026-04-20
Stefanie Beck	2026-03-03
Deborah Paul	2026-02-20
Lisa Rice Madan	2026-02-20
Evelyn Puxley	2026-02-03
Donald Bobiash	2025-11-29
Marie-Geneviève Mounier	2025-11-28
Jennifer Daubeny	2025-11-24
Stephen Potter	2025-11-20
Nathalie Dube	2025-11-19

Name	Member since
Bob Rae	2025-11-16
Hilary Childs	2025-11-12
Robert Vanderloo	2025-10-29
Jeanette Stovel	2025-10-03
Louis Dumas	2025-10-01
Sylvain Fabi	2025-09-08
Christopher Thornley	2025-08-26
Graeme McIntyre	2025-08-16
Pamela O'Donnell	2025-08-01
Christina Hantel-Fraser	2025-06-03
Stephen de Boer	2025-05-20

Following the launch of our new [website](#) (see below), the Membership Services Committee has begun reaching out to a long list of former Heads of Mission who have not yet joined AmbCanada. In many cases, retirees were unaware of their eligibility or simply needed some personal encouragement from existing members to join. The results of this initiative will be reported at next year's AGM.

Looking ahead, a key membership priority will be implementing the new Spousal Member category—as proposed in the amendments to the by-laws—in our membership platform (Member365). Interested spouses will be able to complete a simple registration process to provide their own contact and biographical information and obtain their own membership number, recognizing them as individual members in their own right rather than as secondary contacts of Regular Members.

New Website

The most time-intensive project the Association undertook in the past year was a complete overhaul of our website, ambcanada.ca. Our last redesign, six years ago, professionalized the site's look and feel and highlighted key initiatives such as *Ambassadors of Note*. However, without a plan for regular updates, the site quickly became dated and many external links stopped working. When we reviewed the site in summer 2025, it was clear that a complete rebuild was needed.

The new home page is intentionally simple: a brief statement of our mission and upcoming events. A navigation bar provides access to all sections, along with links to our public YouTube channel and LinkedIn account. We retained much of the valuable content from the previous site but reorganized it under new drop-down menus. We removed all the stock photos and replaced them with reproductions of the two murals by the Quebecois artist Alfred Pellon, which hung

for decades in the lobby of the Lester B. Pearson Building. We also changed the font and formatting of the AmbCanada logo text to give the page a much cleaner look.

The following is a brief explanation of how the content is organized under each of the drop-down menus.

About presents our by-laws, our annual reports and photos of current Board members. It contains new entries on the history of the Association, the Canadian Foreign Service Coat of Arms, and the story behind the Pellan paintings on our home page.

Membership outlines information for prospective members—who can join, why, and how. If you know a former Head of Mission who is not yet a member, please direct them here.

Events provides an up-to-date listing of speakers, conferences, and Transatlantic Dialogues since 2022, with video recordings where available.

Canadian Diplomacy highlights the people behind our profession, particularly past and present Heads of Mission.

Partnerships explains how the Association contributes to a broader understanding of diplomacy through scholarships, mentorships, and collaboration.

Publications lists contributions by our members to international relations, including a six-month archive of *Members Reach Out*.

Members Portal provides secure access to the Membership Directory, recordings of member-only events, and a photo gallery of our social events. All content in the Members Portal is password protected. To access the portal, members need to set a new password. If you cannot find the link that was emailed to you on May 4, 2026, please request a new one from info@ambcanada.ca.

A small team—Carolyn Brereton, Alison LeClaire, Karin Reinecke, and Michael Small—shepherded this project to completion, with Olivier Nicoloff reviewing the French-language content. A plan is now in place to keep the new site up to date.

More content from our members can certainly be added to the site, in particular to the Photo Gallery and YouTube channel. The list of [Books on Canadian Diplomacy](#) written by members of the Canadian foreign service could also be expanded considerably. If you have ideas for new items to include and would like to volunteer some time to make this happen, please let us know.

Program Activities

Speaker events for members have been a signature feature of AmbCanada since its founding as RHOMA, and the Program Committee is the busiest committee of the Board. We convened ten

events over the past year: seven in-person events (all offered in hybrid format with online participation) and three that were entirely virtual, as follows:

September 9: **John Hannaford**, former Clerk of the Privy Council, on *Canada in the Current International and Institutional Setting*. Luncheon at the ROGC.

September 29: **Dennis Horak**, former Head of Mission in Iran and Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, and **Masud Husain**, former Ambassador to the UAE, on *Iran and the Gulf States: Navigating a New Middle East Reality*. In-person event at Western University.

October 8: **Paul Meyer**, former Ambassador to the United Nations, Geneva, and **Sabine Nölke**, former Permanent Representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, on *The Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention: Two Multilateral Security Regimes Under Stress*. Virtual event.

October 27: **Kirsten Hillman**, Canadian Ambassador to the United States, on *The State of Canada-U.S. Relations*. Luncheon at the ROGC.

November 18: **Alex Neve**, former Secretary-General of Amnesty International Canada, on *Universal: Renewing Human Rights in a Fractured World*. Luncheon at the ROGC.

January 27: **Jon Allen**, former Ambassador to Israel, on *The Situation in Gaza*. Virtual event.

February 26: **Bob Rae** was the Canadian panellist along with counterparts from the UK and the USA in our sixth Transatlantic Dialogue on *The Practice of Diplomacy in a Dystopian World*. Virtual event co-hosted with CFSAF, FCDOA (UK) and DACOR (USA).

March 17: **Authors' Event**, featuring books by **Christy Climenhage**, **Nicholas Coghlan**, **Jean-Yves Dionne**, **Michael Malloy**, the Hon. **Sergio Marchi**, and **Claire Poulin**. Coffee morning at Beechwood.

April 14: **Jim Mitchell**, former senior public servant, on *A New Blueprint for Reshaping Government and the Public Service: Is Carney on the Right Track?* Luncheon at the ROGC.

May 9: **Philippe Rheault**, Director of the China Institute at the University of Alberta, on *Canada-China Relations at a Strategic Crossroads*. Luncheon at the ROGC.

A more complete description of each event is available under [AmbCanada Events](#) on our website. Recordings of on-the-record events are posted on our public YouTube channel while recordings of events held under the Chatham House Rule are posted, with the speaker's permission, under **Event Recordings** in the **Members Portal**.

It is worth elaborating on what is involved in organizing these events. The Program Committee meets throughout the year and maintains a running list of prospective speakers. We aim to hold events about once a month from September to November and from January to May,

keeping December free for the annual holiday reception, June for our policy conference, and July and August for the summer break.

Each event requires a Committee member to contact a prospective speaker to determine their willingness to participate and availability. Once agreement in principle is secured, a decision is made on whether to hold the event in person in Ottawa or online. The in-person option is often more appealing to speakers, but given time and travel constraints, virtual events are easier to organize for both speakers and organizers.

Once a format and date are agreed, we decide with the speaker whether the event will be non-attribution (i.e., under the Chatham House Rule) or on the record. We like to convene both kinds of events: the former is usually better for current or recently retired senior public servants, as it allows them to speak more freely; the latter is better suited to public figures seeking to reach a wider audience, especially if they have recently published a book.

If an event will be in person in Ottawa, we then decide on the venue. We have a long-standing relationship with the Royal Ottawa Golf Club for our in-person lunches. Despite varying degrees of satisfaction with the menu and their inadequate sound equipment (which we have to supplement with our own), after reviewing the available alternatives, it remains our preferred option as it provides a completely private room at no extra cost and free parking.

Beginning in March 2025, and following the lead of CFSAF, we have experimented with holding a small number of morning events at Beechwood. Beechwood also provides a private room at no charge, offers free parking, and is in a more accessible location for most Ottawa-based members. However, it only offers coffee and tea service, makes the room available only until 12:00, and its AV equipment is even more limited than that of the Golf Club, so it cannot fully replace the advantages of the Club. For the coming year, we plan to continue using both locations for our in-person events.

Once these issues are settled, we decide whether to restrict a speaker event to members only or open it to a wider audience. In the past year, we have invited members of PAFSO and CFSAF, along with current employees of Global Affairs Canada, to a number of our sessions. There are advantages to both formats: restricting attendance works best for speakers who prefer to speak under the Chatham House Rule; more open events are better for speakers seeking a wider audience. For example, in the last three years, we have opened our annual Authors' Event to CFSAF and PAFSO members, in the interest of helping authors promote their books. This will likely become standard practice for this always-popular event.

Finally, on the day of the event, we rely on a number of volunteers to fill several roles: a host who calls everyone to the table, cues staff to begin and end service, and delivers announcements on behalf of the Board; a moderator who introduces and thanks the speaker and often poses questions to them as well; a volunteer to manage the AV equipment and the livestream (a role filled since 2021 by our Board member Doug George); one to monitor and read out online questions; another to circulate the microphone for in-person questions; and at least one person to greet members at the registration table (our Virtual Office Manager, Karin Reinecke, has performed this role since January 2025).

We have been fortunate that a number of members have served as moderators over the past year, including John Holmes, Olivier Nicoloff, Martin Loken, Gwyn Kutz, John Noble, Rob McRae, and Don Bobiash. Ian Ferguson plays an indispensable role in organizing our most complex event—the annual Authors’ Event. We welcome offers from members to help with any of these roles.

Our 2024 membership survey indicated strong interest from members living outside the National Capital Region in attending in-person events in other Canadian cities. We have made modest progress in this area over the past year.

In September 2025, Kathleen Mackay, the Regional Coordinator for Toronto, organized the first-ever gathering of AmbCanada members in the GTA+ area. Approximately 20 members gathered for an informal social lunch at the Duke of York Pub. In March 2026, she sent a short survey to members residing in the L, M, and N postal code regions to gather input on ideas and interest in future in-person events.

In October 2025, John Holmes, who was a visiting Fellow at Western University in London, Ontario, organized an event on Iran and the Gulf States featuring two AmbCanada members, Dennis Horak and Masud Husain.

In April 2026, our Quebec coordinator, Jean-Benoit Laramée, organized an AmbCanada panel with Anne Leahy, Guy Saint-Jacques, Gilles Rivard, and Raymond Chrétien at a conference convened by IEIM at UQAM in Montreal. The common denominator for both events was that a university provided the venue, AV support, and much of the audience—all of which would be difficult, if not impossible, for us to replicate with our own resources. This is also the model we have adopted with the University of Ottawa for our annual foreign policy conference, and one we are keen to explore further with the assistance of members in other Canadian cities.

Mentorship Initiatives

Over the past year, AmbCanada expanded its mentoring activities in two areas.

The first was a pilot program launched by Tim Martin with third- and fourth-year cadets at the Royal Military College. The aim was to increase future military leaders’ awareness of the value and role of diplomacy in Canada’s foreign policy. Five RMC cadets were paired with five AmbCanada members and met several times over a six-month period to discuss the diplomatic aspects of their individual research projects. Given the positive results, we hope to repeat and expand the program to reach more cadets and to formalize it in RMC’s curriculum so that participants earn academic credit.

Second, we have begun an initiative with current Heads of Mission to convene small workshops on the tradecraft of diplomacy. We held three sessions in February and March 2026 focused specifically on networking skills for Heads of Mission. The workshops were very well received by a diverse group of participants, who valued the opportunity to share practical ideas and solutions with one other and with experienced former Heads of Mission. We plan to offer these workshops again beginning this autumn.

AmbCanada Board of Directors

In 2025, four new members joined the Board: Gwyn Kutz, Olivier Nicoloff, Scott Proudfoot, and Chris Thornley. At the same time, our Vice-President, Kathleen McKay, concluded her six-year term on the Board. Alison LeClaire agreed to succeed her as Vice-President.

The new Board decided to merge the two previous committees dealing with External Relations and Communications into a single joint committee charged with steering our outward-facing initiatives toward public audiences. It also decided to expand the remit of the Membership Committee into Membership Services and to give it a mandate to review all inward-facing member activities. Alison LeClaire took over from Kathleen McKay as Chair of the Membership Services Committee. John Holmes agreed to chair the new External Relations and Communications Committee. Alex Bugailiskis and Ian Burchett continued to serve as Chairs of the Program and Nominating Committees, respectively.

Only one Board member is leaving the Board after this year's AGM: Paula Caldwell St. Onge. Nathalie Dubé was approved by the AGM as her replacement. My second two-year term as President will also conclude after this year's AGM. A new President will be appointed by the Board at its next meeting in July.

Let me conclude my fourth Annual Report since becoming President in March 2022 by saying that it has been a genuine pleasure to serve in this role over the past four years. I join an impressive list of previous Presidents of RHOMA/AmbCanada, whose photographs can be found at the end of the [History](#) page on our website. I look forward to continuing to advance many of the above activities in my final year on the Board.

Michael Small
President