

AmbCanada Annual Report 2022-2023

We are pleased to present to the membership the following report covering the activities of AmbCanada since the last President's Report in June 2022.

2022 Annual General Meeting

Our first ever AGM held on June 15, 2022, at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club was a big success. More than 60 members joined us in person and about 30 online. After a few questions, the proposed by-laws were approved by acclamation, as was the slate of three new Board members: Roxanne Dube, Pierre Guimond and Shelley Whiting. We then retired to very enjoyable reception in the Golf Club.

With the approval of the by-laws at our 2022 AGM, our new governance procedures came fully into effect. AmbCanada now has an annual cycle for bringing on board new Board members, appointing new Officers of the Board and for changing its by-laws. We will be following these procedures at the 2023 AGM.

Board Governance

Three current Board members will depart the Board as of this summer: Penny Reedie, Patricia Fortier and Lillian Thomsen. To replace them, the Nominating Committee has proposed three new Board members: Alexandra Bugailikis, David McKinnon and Phil Pinnington. Their names will be presented for approval by the membership at the 2023 AGM.

Shortly after last summer's AGM, Carolyn Brereton also volunteered to serve, so she was appointed to fill the new position on the Board for an Associate Member, as established under our by-laws. Her name is also being put forward at this year's AGM to be confirmed by the membership, along with Paula Caldwell St. Onge who is being nominated for a second three-year term. The Board is also proposing to the AGM a change in Treasurer: Paula will retire from this position and Shelley Whiting is being nominated to replace her.

Our new approach of encouraging regular Members and Associates to join one of the committees of the Board has proven to be a great way of expanding our pool of volunteers. It has also proven to be useful stepping stone for members to get to know the Association before putting their names forward to join the Board. Both Alex Bugailikis and David McKinnon have served as members of the Program Committee in recent months. Graham Shantz has also volunteered to join the External Relations and Governance Committee. We would welcome more volunteers this year to join our Committees.

As of 2023, we have two new Regional Co-ordinators. Pierre Guimond has taken over from Anne Leahy as our Co-ordinator in Quebec, while Sara Hradecky has taken over from David Collins as our Co-ordinator in Victoria and Vancouver Island.

Membership

As many of you will have noted, since the arrival of Diane Godard as our part time office administrator in December 2021 we offer fully bilingual assistance to members as needed. She can be reached at any time at info@ambcanada.ca.

Our major project from last year - the transition to our new membership management software, M365 - has now been completed. It means we now have an evergreen electronic Directory of all of our members accessible by anyone anywhere from our website (go to *AmbCanada.ca*, login to the members only page and then click on Directory. A PDF version of the Directory was circulated to members on May 30, 2023.

It has also made it much simpler to join. Prospective members can complete an application from the website and once approved, they receive a link to sign in and pay. For existing members, the auto-renew function is increasingly popular. We encourage members to use it as it decreases our need to follow up with members every year. By following up more systematically this year with members who had not renewed, and putting those who did not respond onto "lapsed status", we have firmed up our membership list. We are now confident that the names in our Directory are all active members.

Our overall membership numbers continue to be strong. New members join every month. Over the past year, twenty-three new members have joined [their names are listed in Appendix One]. As of writing, our overall membership stands at 350 members. This compares very favourably with our membership levels before 2020 which was under 300 and declining steadily.

Budget

Our revenues remain largely dependent on membership fees, with a little extra from book sales and CFSI support for our participation in HOM training. Also, thanks to Tradex for supporting December's very successful holiday reception. As anticipated, we spent more than we took in over 2022 as we transitioned to a new electronic membership management system. Our expenses arise largely from administrative support and technical support for operations and our website. We forecast a roughly balanced budget in 2023 and continue to maintain a healthy bank balance as a contingency. We do not anticipate any significant new expenses or sources of revenue in 2023, but welcome suggestions from members for new projects and new revenue-generating ideas.

Annual Holiday Reception

For the first time since 2019, we were able to hold a holiday season reception in the Pearson Building in Ottawa on December 7, 2022, which was attended by more than 115 members, plus special guests. Thanks to an enthusiastic team of volunteers co-ordinated by Patricia Fortier, and with considerable support from the Office of Protocol, we navigated our way past the new security features at the gates and the extensive ground floor renovations to make our way to the 9th Floor. Our host, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, David Morrison, gave a very well received welcoming speech. Also present as guests were the Deputy Minister of Development, Chris MacLennan and a number of current executives in the Department. We look forward to continuing this tradition in 2023.

Program Activities

Like many organizations, in the past year we have returned to semi-normal programming post-COVID, with a mixture of in person and online events. We have held in a hybrid format four lunch-time events at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club with a fifth scheduled for late May, and four purely online events. We have noticed that the in person turn-out for our lunches is smaller than it was before the pandemic - now around thirty people - though the speakers and the audience seem at least as keen as before to get together in person. However, at least as many members register to follow these events live online. Thus, our total participation in these events is higher than before and members across the country can benefit from the conversation in Ottawa. The purely digital format offers other benefits: it allows for us to bring in speakers from locations far from Ottawa (in the past year from Umbria to British Columbia) and to schedule events on short notice to discuss breaking events (as we did with our event on Sudan). We expect to maintain this mix of in-person and online events in the coming year.

Our annual authors lunch featuring books written by our members remains very popular. This year's lunch in January, ably co-ordinated by Ian Ferguson, featured six of our members describing their recently published books (see the list below). Evidently the pandemic was a good time for aspiring authors. We could not feature everyone who had written a book in the past two years, but we hope to catch up with some of writers we missed in our next authors lunch.

Our speakers at events since June 2022 were:

- Marta Morgan, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, September 21, 2022 (virtual)
- Ulric Shannon, Director General of Peace & Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs), October 19, 2022 (in person)
- Prof. Michael Manulak, Carleton University and Patricia Fuller, November 15, 2022 (in person)
- Authors lunch, January 18, 2023 (in person) with:
 - Brian Buckley, *Tim's Story*
 - Claire Poulin, *Arthabaska - À la croisée des destins (Arthabaska - At the Crossroads)*
 - Gar Parady, *The Scary World of Nuclear Weapons - Agenda for Elimination*
 - Carole Bujeau, *Triple Sex and Other Tales from an Ambassadors Wife*
 - Jean-Yves Dionne, *Diplomates en Péril suivi des Chroniques peu diplomatiques (Diplomats in Peril followed by Undiplomatic Chronicles)*
 - Gary Smith, *Ice War Diplomat, Hockey Meets Cold War Politics at the 1972 Summit Series*
- Eric Reguly, foreign correspondent for the Globe and Mail, February 23, 2023 (virtual)
- Jon Allen, former Canadian Ambassador to Israel, March 29, 2023 (virtual)
- Goldy Hyder, President of the Business Council of Canada, April 19, 2023 (in person)
- Nick Coghlan and Adrian Norfolk, former HOMs in Sudan, May 3, 2023 (virtual)
- Sébastien Carrière, Canadian Ambassador to Haiti, May 23, 2023 (in person)

All of these events have been recorded and can be viewed on our YouTube channel. You can find the links under the Members Only section of our website (go to Workspace / Webinars).

In addition to these AmbCanada events, along with our colleagues in the Canadian Foreign Service Alumni Forum, we helped to organize a second TransAtlantic Dialogue on April 26, 2023, with our counterparts in the U.K., the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Association, and in the U.S.A, DACOR (Bacon House). The topic for this dialogue was "Managing Rising Tensions in the Indo-Pacific: American, British and Canadian Perspectives". Jon Fried kindly agreed to be the Canadian

speaker. This proved to be a very insightful discussion and there is considerable interest from all the organizers to continue hosting one or two of these events per year. It will be Canada's turn next time to host, likely in late 2023. This is a model we may wish to explore with similar organizations representing former foreign service officers from other countries, notably from La Francophonie.

Scholarships

AmbCanada continued to support this year the Deborah Chatsis Indigenous Scholarship that we established in 2020 for an indigenous Master's student at the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs (NPSIA) at Carleton University. PAFSO jointly supported the fund-raising campaign again this year, and this year, Global Affairs promoted it to its employees as well. All told, \$15,760 was raised from these three sources on Giving Tuesday, 2022.

In addition, a special screening at the ByTowne Cinema in Ottawa was organized on February 22, 2023, by Gary Smith of the documentary film made based on his book *Ice Breaker*, about the Canada- Soviet hockey Summit Series of 1972. This event, attended by over 200 people, raised an additional \$4055 for the scholarship. Including matching funds from Carleton University, as of February this year a total of \$84,440 has been raised for the scholarship, which is more than enough to endow it permanently.

Through the efforts of Bob Hage, NPSIA faculty involved with the scholarship attended our lunch in November to express their thanks for our ongoing support. Our members also had the opportunity to hear from the first winner of the Scholarship, NPSIA student Sage Shelton. We anticipate that the funds will be used to support travel by the Scholarship winner to Geneva, to take up a paid internship opportunity there that has been created by the Canadian Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

AmbCanada also concluded its three year scholarship agreement shared between the Centre for Global Studies and the Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives at the University of Victoria. This year, our travel support has assisted Sabrina Jereza, a U Vic law student, to intern for four months at the Centre for Orang Asli Concerns in Subang Jaya, Malaysia. The Board will be reviewing our scholarship activities in the near future and will be examining other possible initiatives in the coming year.

Mentorship Program

AmbCanada has launched a promising mentorship program this past year, ably led by Roxanne Dubé, with Young Diplomats of Canada (YDC) a non-profit organization that sends Canadian university students to participate in youth delegations attached to multilateral meetings, such as the G7 and the G20. Many of their past participants are now professionals in the early stages of their careers - some with the federal government and others with the private sector. We agreed to establish a mentorship program as a pilot between 35 of their members and 35 of ours. Early assessments have been positive.

Relations with Global Affairs Canada

Over the past year, we have taken a number of small but concrete steps to make our organization more connected with Global Affairs Canada, and vice-versa. This included:

- building on our long relationship with CFSI by providing two very experienced former Heads of Mission, Alexandra Bugailiskis and Guill Rishchynski, to speak to the new HOMs course this May.

- resuming our past practice of working with the Deputy Minister's office and Protocol to organize our holiday reception in the Pearson Building on the 9th Floor;
- welcoming the previous Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marta Morgan, to speak at our lunch last September;
- arranging with GAC's Human Resources Branch to provide a letter from us to executives in their retirement packages to encourage them to join our organization; GAC encouraging their employees to join us and PAFSO in funding the Chatsis Scholarship.

The most important measure in this regard was taken by the current Deputy Minister of Global Affairs, David Morrison. In his remarks at our Holiday Reception, he specifically invited AmbCanada to comment on the Renewal of Diplomacy initiative launched by Minister Joly in May 2022. We followed up this invitation with the Assistant Deputy Minister for Strategic Policy, Alexandre Leveque, and at his request we convened as a small group of our members to provide input into this initiative in February. Our comments were well received, and we understand they had an impact on the final package that was sent to the Minister. The initiative has not yet been launched, so it is hard to say anything more concrete at this stage. However, all of these exchanges demonstrate the tenor of our current working relationship with the Department. In the longer term, this will only enhance our ability to fulfill our second objective, under our by-laws, of "reinforcing Canadians' understanding of the work of Canada's diplomats and the value of a professional foreign service".

Presented by:

Michael Small, President, AmbCanada
Kathleen Mackay, Vice-President, AmbCanada