

**GROUP OF 78
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REPORT TO MEMBERS, 2011-12
OTTAWA, SEPTEMBER 2012**

INTRODUCTION

This report is from the Group of 78 Board of Directors to the membership to summarize program, operations and the state of the organization. In 2011-12, our program events were successful and well-attended by members and attracted new people and organizations into cooperation. At the same time, we continued to experience financial challenges, to which the membership responded generously.

GOVERNANCE

The Board of Directors met immediately after the 2011 annual meeting, elected its officers and identified priorities for action. It met as usual in March 2012 for its mid-point session to review programs and issues. Its final meeting was held just before this year's annual meeting.

The Board Officers for the year have been:

- Richard Harmston, Chair
- Gerald Ohlsen, Vice Chair
- Peggy Mason, Past Chair & Secretary
- Joan Broughton, Treasurer

Three other Directors joined the Officers to form the Executive Committee: Susan Shenstone, Leslie McWhinnie and Manfred Bienefeld. The EC met once a month to manage and programs and operations of the organization.

Under By-law provisions to add to the Board during its term and on recommendation of the Executive Committee, the Board appointed Roy Culpeper as a Director in March 2012 to serve until the annual meeting.

PROGRAMS

Luncheons

Our prime ongoing program of luncheon speakers drew strong interest and response from the membership and others this year. They were:

- Susanne Tamás: *Canada's Office of Religious Freedom: What Lies Ahead*, October 26, 2011
- Dr. Monia Mazigh: *What is really happening in the Middle-East: An uprising, a revolution or a change of guard?*, December 6 2011
- Robert Fowler: *Sleeping with Al-Qaeda*, January 31, 2011
- Obang Metho: *A New Colonialism for Africa?: Hunger, Aid Dependency and the Selling Off of Land & Resources*, February 28, 2011
- Andrew Pocock: *Zimbabwe: Looking Back and Looking Forward*, March 27, 2011
- Carolyn McAskie: *Canada and Multilateralism: Missing in Action*, April 24, 2011
- Julia Sanchez: *Challenges and Opportunities for Canadian Civil Society in a Transforming World*, May 31, 2011
- Earl Turcotte & Paul Hannon: *Cluster Bomb Law: What is Wrong and How to Correct It*, June 19, 2011.

Special Event

Continuing our policy conference theme on global economics, the Group of 78 held a special event on November 28 2011. Jim Stanford of the Canadian Auto Workers addressed a large audience on *Taking Back Credit: Why Democratizing Control Over Money is Essential to Global Well-Being*.

Afghanistan Project: Pathways to Peace

The Group has continued to support the *AFGHANISTAN: Pathways to Peace* process in partnership with CSOs in Canada, Afghanistan, the UK and the USA. A report on the first phase of the process was released at a public event in June. DFAIT officials have indicated they wish to discuss the report in late October, when they are in receipt of a response to a Memorandum for Cabinet they have submitted seeking further funding for projects in the country. A social media campaign is being developed, with a website, Facebook page and Twitter account already established. CARE has provided funding for a member of the International Steering Committee in Canada to visit Afghanistan to update the action plan and renew contacts with Afghan partners. Further outreach activities, including the publication of articles and convening of public events, are planned.

Advocacy

Two advocacy actions during the year focused on aspects of disarmament. In May 2012, we circulated a petition on the ratification of the Cluster Munitions Treaty, urging the Government to correct the proposed Canadian legislation to reflect the highest possible standards under which Canada will implement and adhere to the Treaty. The legislation is before Parliament, via the Senate, and will require continued attention in the coming months.

In June 2012, the Group of 78 joined many other civil society organizations to request a strong and progressive effort by the Canadian Government in the global Arms Trade Treaty negotiations, then about to start at the United Nations. Sadly, the conference was not able to reach a conclusion on adopting a treaty.

Conference 2012

Afghanistan has represented the largest international activity for Canada in the past 10 years. With the combat role ended and wider actions winding down, the Executive and Board agreed it was timely to assess Canada's intervention to distill what can be learned for future foreign policy reference. This led to the topic *Military Intervention: Lessons from Afghanistan*. Members of the Executive with the addition of Roy Culpeper, who joined the Board in the spring, formed the planning committee and developed a program that includes examining the origins of the multi-country intervention, the present status of politics and development in Afghanistan, and the prospects for the future of the country and the region and the implications for Canada's actions in the international arena.

Other Programs: G78 Foreign Policy Jigsaw & G78 Bookshelf

In the previous year we introduced two new activities to facilitate G78 members' involvement in policy development and the exchange of book reviews among the membership. These opportunities continued in 2012 and remain open to members as they wish.

OPERATIONS

Membership

The Group added a few members in 2011-12, welcoming new interest and energy. We are, however, below a "level of sustainability" for the organization in its present form and require a push by all current members to recruit new ones.

Financial Status

The Board is grateful to members for “rallying to the cause” again in late 2011 with generous contributions to keep the organization in the black by the end of the year. The Treasurer will report fully to the membership on our current financial status, but it must be noted that another appeal to members will be necessary again this year.

Website

Our website has become more lively in the past two years with a new look and much more substantive material on it. We have also been using Facebook to widen our outreach and encourage greater participation in our activities. The social media is another area where we need to expand our activities.

Secretariat

The Board of Directors is warmly appreciative of the energy and commitment of Mary Edwards, our Executive Secretary, in her continued hard work for the activities and operations of the Group of 78. Mary has anchored our small secretariat at 145 Spruce Street in Ottawa for 10 years and deserves a strong salute from the membership.

LOOKING AHEAD

Report Card: One idea the Board is discussing is the production of an annual report on the Government’s performance in foreign policy, based on a limited number of policy areas of particular interest to the Group. The Board will advise the membership more on this idea in the near future.

Peace Lessons from WWI: With the centenary of the First World War two years away, the Board is exploring with other organizations the idea of using this occasion – which will in any case be a subject of public attention – to emphasize peace and long term lessons that can be gleaned from the experience.

Re-incorporation: According to a new law adopted in 2011 that governs non-profit organizations, all non-profits must submit “articles of continuance” before late 2014 to have their legal status continued; failure to do so will lead to removal of an organization’s incorporation. This is a relatively simple process for established organizations but it does provide an opportunity to review By-laws and ways in which it is structured and governed. The Board will undertake a review of some aspects of the Group’s By-laws and report to the membership on changes, if any, it considers appropriate.

CONCLUSION

We live in circles of concentric concern. Globally it is a time of high uncertainty, considerable danger to the peace, and complex change among and within societies. Nationally the directions of official policy raise many challenging questions and civil society faces unprecedented pressures on relevance and performance. As a small organization, the Group of 78 struggles to maintain its presence, has contributed significantly – in relation to its size – over the years, and still retains potential to increase its impact in the future. The national and international challenges suggest we should make every effort to do so.