

**GROUP OF 78
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REPORT TO MEMBERS, 2012-13
OTTAWA, SEPTEMBER 2013**

INTRODUCTION

This report to the Group of 78 membership from the Board of Directors accounts for the activities and operations of the organization in the past year, 2012-13. The year has been another successful one, both in terms of the programs mounted and maintaining the viability of the Group. The members have continued to be generous in their engagement, enabling the Group of 78 to continue to play a role in public discourse on Canada's involvement with global issues.

GOVERNANCE

The Board of Directors met immediately after the 2012 annual meeting, elected its officers and identified priorities for action. It met as usual in March 2013 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
- Manfred Bienefeld, Vice Chair
- Peggy Mason, Past Chair & Secretary
- Joan Broughton, Treasurer

Three other Directors joined the Officers to form the Executive Committee: Gerald Ohlsen, Roy Culpeper and Erica Noordermeer. The EC met at least once a month, sometimes more as needs dictated, to manage the programs and operations of the organization. The Executive Committee serves as the management team for the Group of 78, accountable to the full Board of Directors.

In 2011 Parliament passed a new law to govern non-for-profit organizations in Canada. The law provides for higher standards in the conduct of civil societies in the country. Under the law, existing non-profits are required to submit "articles of continuance" to the government to demonstrate their adherence to the new law. Part of this process is a review and updating of each organization's by-laws. The Executive has undertaken this work and is proposing a new set of by-laws to the membership at the annual meeting. Assuming they are adopted, the Group of 78 will be in a position to register its "continuance" as a legal entity at year ahead of the deadline, October 2014.

PROGRAMS

Luncheons

Our continuing program of luncheon speakers has been a significant draw for members and others this year, covering an interesting range of topics:

- Ilario Maiolo: *Current Challenges to International Humanitarian Law*, November 2012
- John Jacobs: *CETA: For Whose Benefit and at Whose Cost?*, January 2013
- Jamie Swift: *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety*, February 2013
- André Laliberté: *Challenges to the New Leadership in China*, March 2013
- Kate Higgins: *International Development at a Crossroads: The MDGs Beyond 2015*, April 2013
- John Christensen: *Tax: The Forgotten Element of Development*, May 2013
- Amitav Rath: *India and the World: Rebalancing Economies and Power*, June 2013

Special Event

As part of the special event series, the Rt. Hon. Joe Clark addressed a public gathering on October 30, 2012, on the theme “*Leading from Beside: Opportunities for Canadian International Policy*”. Mr. Clark drew on his considerable experience, including as Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs, to analyze and advocate for Canada’s comparative advantage as a facilitator for dialogue and negotiation in global affairs.

Afghanistan Project: Pathways to Peace

The Group continued to support the activities of the Afghanistan: Pathways to Peace initiative. In late 2012 David Lord, a member of the Pathways International Steering Committee, travelled to Afghanistan under CARE Canada funding to review programming needs with Afghan partner organizations, donor representatives and others in Kabul. This led to a detailed concept note outlining the objectives of a second full phase of activities. This proposal continues to be reviewed with potential donors. After long indifference, there is a reawakened interest in the process on the part of the Canadian government, at both the political and official level. Meetings with DFATD officials are expected to take place in October to look at possible program support.

Pathways will soon launch, for the first time, a public fundraising effort and is in the process of streamlining its management structure. It is narrowing the focus of its activities in order to appeal more immediately to donors. The process continues to discuss program possibilities with Afghan partners and to attract the interest of potential volunteers, both in Canada and internationally.

Pathways works closely with Peacebuild, its principal operating partner. It led in the organization of a semi-public meeting at St Paul’s University, at the invitation of the conflict studies program. It is expected that this will lead to closer cooperation between the University and the two organizations, possibly including their being housed on the campus.

Members are encouraged to visit the Pathways website (www.afghanpathways.org), to “Like” its page on Facebook and to follow it on Twitter.

Advocacy

Following each policy conference, the Group of 78 shares the report of the event, particularly the conclusions and recommendations, with government ministers, senior policy makers and other Parliamentarians, as well as with a swath of civil society engaged in international issues. The results of our 2012 conference on *Military Intervention: Lessons from Afghanistan* were similarly distributed to politicians and officials. Two meetings ensued, with senior advisors to ministers of CIDA (before integration into Foreign Affairs) and Foreign Affairs.

The Group also took up two crises current during the year. The first was the ongoing set of issues around Iran's nuclear program and its potential threat to peace in the region. This theme grew out of the policy conference on Afghanistan. After wide consultation, the Board adopted a position calling for avoidance of use of force, dialogue among protagonists, intelligent diplomacy and for Iran's being permitted a peaceful use of nuclear power provided it respects international conventions.

The crisis in Mali led the Group to examine this issue. The Executive proposed, and the Board concurred, to support a position of the World Federalists Canada that called for Canada to work through the United Nations to resolve the conflict and restore a constitutional order in the country.

Cluster munitions treaty ratification was a focus for the Group in the previous year and continued into this one. In spite of strong representations from many quarters to amend the legislation, the measure passed the Senate and was on deck for the House of Commons when Parliament was prorogued. This provides a new opportunity for civil society to urge a fresh start on a new draft law.

The Executive Committee has also discussed the severe crisis in Syria, considering what the Group might advocate for Canadian and international actions. As a first step to involve our members and others in this discussion, the October 2013 luncheon will address this issue.

Conference 2013

Soon after the 2012 conference, the Executive considered topics for this year's event. It easily recommended to the Board, which accepted, that it was time to examine the phenomenon of the rise of China as an economic and strategic power. Although brewing for 30 years, this emergence represents one of the most significant shifts in international relations of the twenty-first century, and the challenge for Canada and other western countries is how to respond – what political and economic policies and actions are needed to ensure a peaceful and cooperation accommodation of this new power from China? The theme selected, therefore, was *Responding to China's Global Re-emergence*. Executive Committee members, with advice from others, formed the planning committee that has mounted the conference. The Group has received welcome cooperation from the Confucius Institute at Carleton University and the US Embassy to bring expert speakers from, respectively, China and the United Nations to enrich the dialogue.

OPERATIONS

Membership

The G78 annual meeting in 2012 approved the first increase in many years for the annual membership fees. As a testament to the loyalty of members, the numbers have remained the same with this increase and a few new members have been added. The Group still has goals for membership increase to be able to cover basic program and operations but this fee change provides increased strength for the organization.

Financial Status

In addition to membership numbers, many members also responded to the yearend appeal for support in 2012. The Board highly values this support, which ensures that the Group can continue to operate with a sense of stability. The fundraising possibilities beyond the membership remain quite limited but the Board continues to explore them. Partnerships with other organizations and institutions with common interests has been a positive development. The Board will continue to seek support from the membership in the annual appeal this year.

Website

One of the key operational needs of the Group of 78 for some time has been a new website that is more accessible and usable by members and others interested in our activities and analysis of global issues. Hearing of this need, Jim Christie, a former Co-Chair, volunteered to contribute half of the funds to build a new website. In the first half of 2013, other members responded to a special appeal to secure the balance and over this summer, the Group engaged a consultant – our current webmaster, to begin development of a new site. This work is currently underway with the prospect of launching the improved website by the end of the year.

Secretariat

The Board and membership continue to be grateful for the hard work that our Executive Secretary, Mary Edwards, contributes to the activities and operations of the Group of 78. At the end of next year, after 12 years with the organization, Mary will take a well-deserved retirement, but the Group is fortunate to have her continue in her vital role for another year.

Another major change, however, is the move of the Group's secretariat to a new location. The landlord at 145 Spruce Street, sometime called the House of Lost Causes, plans changes to the site, which entails several civil society organizations finding new quarters. Immediately after the annual conference the G78 secretariat will move to the Bronson Centre in Ottawa to an improved location for its operations.

LOOKING AHEAD

Reflections from WWI: With the centenary of the First World War beginning next year, the Board has been 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. Others are interested and the Group has been discussing with the Canadian War Museum a

conference to be held there in the fall of 2014. The Executive is recommending that this event constitute our annual policy conference for next year. This event will provide the opportunity to extend our reach to other constituencies in Canada and to examine fresh reflection on some major issues and the way Canada and the international community can address them.

CONCLUSION

The Group of 78 has had a successful year, both programmatically and operationally. The Group is a small organization dealing with vital issues in a wide and difficult environment. It is also part of a larger complex of citizens' organizations trying to address and improve Canada's contribution to a more peaceful, fair and prosperous world. Part of this immense task is persuading the government to engage in dialogue and diplomacy to address and solve international problems. To do so, the Group of 78 will continue to provide an arena for analysis, dialogue, and studied advocacy.