



**GROUP OF 78
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REPORT TO MEMBERS, 2016-17
OTTAWA, SEPTEMBER 23 2017**

This report from the Group of 78 Board of Directors to its membership presents an account of the activities and operations of the organization in the past year, 2016-17.

GOVERNANCE

The Board of Directors met immediately after the 2016 annual meeting on September 24, elected its officers and identified priorities for action. It met again March 28, 2017, to decide on next steps, and approve the Budget for 2017. Its final meeting was held just before this year's annual meeting.

The Board Officers for the year have been:

Roy Culpeper, Chair
Manfred Bienefeld, Vice Chair
Richard Harmston, Past Chair
Joan Broughton, Secretary
Sylvie Lemieux, Treasurer

The above officers, along with Peggy Mason, comprise the Executive Committee, which serves as the management team for the Group of 78, accountable to the full Board of Directors. Susan Tanner was appointed as a member of the Executive Committee in March 2017.

The Executive met at least once a month, sometimes more as needs dictated, to manage the programs and operations of the organization. Others elected or re-elected to the Board of Directors at the AGM in September 2016 included:

Nadia Abu-Zahra
Elisabeth Barot
Gordon Breedyk
Sohaib Gabsis
Erica Noordemeer ?
Earl Turcotte

PROGRAMS

Luncheons

The Group continued to explore a wide range of international and foreign policy issues in our ongoing luncheon series, held in eight of the 12 months of the year. This year's line-up included:

- Piotr Dutkiewicz: *The Russian Threat: Real or Manufactured?* Nov. 1 2016
- Michael Hawes: *Election USA 2016: Now What?* December 6, 2016.
- Dan Ciuriak: *So Long Globalization v.2: The Causes and Consequences.* January 31, 2017.
- Rolf Holmboe: *Syria, ISIS and the Prospects for Sustainable Peace.* February 28 2017.
- Angella MacEwen: *Technology, Trade and the Future of Work.* March 28, 2017.
- Michael Rostek: *Complex Security Challenges: Whither the Comprehensive Approach?* April 25, 2017.
- Maude Barlow: *Water for Sale: How Trade and Investment Agreements Threaten Environmental Protection of Water and Promote the Commodification of the World's Water.* May 30, 2017.
- Akaash Maharaj: *Bringing Kleptocrats to Justice.* June 19, 2017.

Advocacy

Traditionally, following each annual conference, the Group of 78 has shared 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. This is an arduous, labour-intensive task that requires many hours of attention to detail and assiduous followup by someone who is usually a member of the Executive. Although a report was compiled from the proceedings of Conference 2016 on *Limits to Armed Intervention*, we are still in the process of disseminating the report.

In addition, the following list summarizes our advocacy activities over the past year:

- Letter to the Minister of International Development, Marie-Claude Bibeau, on increasing Canada's support to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees, in April 2017.
- Further promotion of the Defence Policy Review, fall 2016;

Conference 2017

The 2017 annual policy conference has been organized by the G78 Thematic Working Group on Arms Control and Nuclear Disarmament. The group is chaired by Robin Collins from World Federalist Movement Canada, and has includes a number of leaders from the Canadian peacebuilding community. Worth noting: our conference, *Getting to Nuclear Zero*, also is a product of close cooperation among a number of organizations, including Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, Physicians for Global Survival, and the Rideau Institute on International Affairs.

OPERATIONS

Membership

Our “repurposing” initiative of January 2016, launched as a result of dwindling membership, aimed at energizing the organization and attracting new members, continues to simmer. The Working Group on nuclear disarmament and arms control continues to provide leadership in its chosen field, because of the dedication and hard work of the group’s members. We are now in the process of organizing a group that will focus on next year’s annual conference on environment and climate change—and hopefully morph into a group similar to the one on arms control and nuclear disarmament. Meanwhile G78 membership continues to remain at or below historic levels. We shall continue to mount our membership campaigns but we clearly need to decide whether (1) to acquiesce in a low-membership trajectory, or (2) to identify other means of attracting new members. This has consequences for the financial integrity of the G78, considered below.

Financial Status

Given the limited revenue stream generated by our membership, we have sought to mobilize fundraising through other means, notably social fundraising events. Two such events (featuring live music, refreshments and dancing) were held over the last year—one in November, which generated \$2 004.47, and one in June, which almost broke even. While the events also provided for an enjoyable social occasion, we are thinking of organizing our fundraising events around panel discussions and debates (like the Leap Manifesto debate in September 2016) on topics related to G78’s mandate on foreign policy and international affairs.

Coincidentally the G78 has been the fortunate beneficiary of a bequest from the Edith Fowke estate, which has thus far provided us with an endowment of \$150,000. There may be a small addition to this amount later this year. The Executive Committee has decided to transfer \$6,000 of this funding into this year’s operations, and to invest the remaining funding. Our financial statements and balance sheet will henceforth clearly segregate the bequest from our operational funding in order to make transparent our operations based on our normal flows of revenues and expenditures.

Secretariat

Sarah Bowles has been our Executive Secretary for a year as of the annual conference. She has taken an active role in reviewing and updating our membership records, and in our fundraising activities. Her dedication to and her innovative ideas on supporting the G78’s work have been much appreciated by the Board and the Executive.

CONCLUSION

The new Liberal Government, after almost two years in power, has not lived up to its early promise in a number of areas, including in the defence, foreign policy, international trade and international development arenas. While the government continues to be somewhat more open to dialogue than its predecessor, it clearly provides a policy challenge for the G78's mission to promote peace, economic and social justice, and sustainability. That, in turn, strongly suggests that the work of the G78 is still critically important, and that it is crucial to identify ways of supporting its continuing work.