

**GROUP OF 78
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REPORT TO MEMBERS, 2017-18
OTTAWA, SEPTEMBER 29 2018**

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, 2017-18.

GOVERNANCE

The Board of Directors met immediately after the 2017 annual meeting on September 23, elected its officers and identified priorities for action. It met again March 27, 2018, to decide on next steps, and approve the Budget for 2016. 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 and Susan Tanner (nominated by the Executive in April 2017 and ratified by the Board September 2017), comprise the Executive Committee, which serves as the management team for the Group of 78, accountable to the full Board of Directors.

The Executive met once a month to manage the programs and operations of the organization. Others elected or re-elected to the Board of Directors at the AGM in September 2017 included:

Nadia Abu-Zahra
Gordon Breedyk
Sohaib Gabsis
Gerry Schmitz
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 seven or eight of the 12 months of the year. This year's line-up included:

- Paul Robinson, *Do we still need NATO?* October 31 2017
- Madelaine Drohan, *Disaster Fraud*. November 28 2017
- Marius Grinius, *North Korea after the Winter Olympics*. January 30 2018
- Fatos Beaudoin, *Syrian Refugees: No Relief in Sight*. February 27 2018
- Linda Freeman, *South Africa and Zimbabwe: Limits to Change*. March 27 2018
- Dennis Howlett, *How to Stop Corporate Tax Dodging*. April 24 2018.
- Irvin Waller, *How can Canada regain its Reputation on Caring and Safe Communities?* May 29 2018

Special Events

In January 2016, a special membership meeting was convened to consider repurposing the Group of 78 in light of declining membership and falling revenues. One of the ideas emerging from that meeting, aimed at attracting new members and supporters, was to diversify the programming of the G8 by adding "Special Events", typically held in the evening, and usually involving a panel rather than a sole speaker. In the past year we have held four Special Events:

- Two Foreign Policy Panels featuring Ferry de Kerckhove, Peggy Mason, Angella McEwen and Julia Sanchez, moderated by Roy Culpeper, *Canada's New Posture in the International Arena*, November 9 2017 and January 18 2018
- Syed Hossein Mousavian, moderated by Peter Jones, *Iran, the U.S. and the Regional Crisis*. April 19 2018
- Nadia Abu-Zahra and Michael Lynk, moderated by Michael Atallah, *Fifty Years and Counting: is the Israel Occupation Sustainable?* June 13 2018

Advocacy

It has been a busy year for advocacy by the Group of 78. Typically the annual conference is followed by outreach based on policy conclusions emerging from the discussion. The 2017 Conference theme was *Getting to Nuclear Zero: Building Common Security for a "post-MAD" World*. At the time of writing, disseminating the results of the conference was behind schedule, as the reports took longer to finalize than anticipated. Three documents emerged to be used for dissemination: (1) A short essay highlighting key outcomes of the discussion; (2) Detailed policy recommendations; and (3) Comprehensive proceedings of the conference. All of the issues raised in the conference, and the reports produced, remain very relevant.

The conference also led to an updating of the 2016 Defence Policy Review in a paper entitled, “Defence and Foreign Policy Priorities: Recommendations by Leading Civil Society Organizations (updated April 2018)”.

On other issues, we wrote to the Prime Minister on three occasions:

- May 17 2018: Expressing support for the Government’s criticism of excessive and unjustifiable use of force by the Israeli Defence Force against Palestinian civilians in Gaza;
- June 11 2018: Expressing support for the Government’s position at the G7 Charlevoix summit in response to the imposition of punitive tariffs by the United States;
- August 10 2018: Expressing support for the Government’s demand that peaceful human rights activists in Saudi Arabia be released, but reminding the Government that the G78, along with other CSOs, have also called for the termination of sales of Light Armoured Vehicles to that country because of their use in suppressing dissent and human rights.

In addition, along with a number of other CSOs, we wrote to the Foreign Minister on July 3 2018 calling for an independent external review into allegations of misuse of Canadian arms exports to Saudi Arabia.

We also supported initiatives by others when asked for our support:

- A letter from the Yemeni Community to the Prime Minister critical of the war in Yemen by a Saudi Arabia-led coalition, March 26 2018;
- A private member’s bill submitted by Borys Wrzesnewskyj, MP, to create a new post of Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security, in response to a letter on April 10 2018;
- A letter from the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (CNANW) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in regard to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Committee Meeting in April 2018;
- A statement by CNANW on NATO and nuclear disarmament in April 2018

Conference 2018

The 2018 annual policy conference has been organized by a conference planning committee chaired by Susan Tanner. The aim is for the committee to morph into a thematic working group on climate change and sustainability, in line with the recommendations of the January 2016 discussion on repurposing the Group of 78 (similar to the working group on arms control and nuclear disarmament). This working group would continue to plan activities in its thematic area after the conference.

OPERATIONS

Membership

After falling somewhat from its historic levels of around 80, G78's membership has plateaued at around 65. This is likely a reflection of more consistent appeals for renewals and to attract new members, and also improved and more consistent record-keeping by our Executive Secretary, Sarah Bowles. The challenge continues to attract new members.

Financial Status

We have sought to mobilize fundraising through other means, notably social fundraising events. However, these have had a mixed record in terms of funds actually raised, and they require a lot of organizational effort. A fundraising committee was struck and concluded that a more low-key effort (e.g. a silent auction) may be a better option. This is being considered for late in calendar 2018.

On a positive note, as reported last year, 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 \$185,000. There may be a small addition to this amount once tax and legal issues are resolved in settling the estate. The Executive Committee has decided to transfer \$6,000 of this funding annually to support operations, and to invest the remaining funds. An investment committee of the Board has been reviewing investment options. A significant portion will likely be placed in low-risk fixed-income instruments (such as GICs) and the remainder in funds that have some growth potential as well as yielding some income. 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 now been our Executive Secretary for two years. She has taken an active role in reviewing and updating our membership records, and in our fundraising activities. She has introduced new media (e.g. podcasts) to help disseminate our events so that they reach a wider audience. She continues to display her prowess in organizing our events to help ensure their success.