

**GROUP OF 78
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REPORT TO MEMBERS, 2018-19
OTTAWA, SEPTEMBER 27 2019**

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, 2018-19.

GOVERNANCE

The Board of Directors met immediately after the 2018 annual meeting on September 29, elected its officers and identified priorities for action. It met again March 26, 2019, to decide on next steps, and approve the Budget for 2019. Its final meeting was held on September 27, just before this year's annual policy conference.

The Board Officers for the year have been:

Roy Culpeper, Chair
Manfred Bienefeld, Vice Chair
Richard Harmston, Past Chair
Joan Broughton, Secretary
Lew Auerbach, Treasurer

The above officers, along with Susan Tanner and Gerry Schmitz 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 about 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 2018 included:

Nadia Abu-Zahra
Gordon Breedyk
Sohaib Gabsis
Peggy Mason
Earl Turcotte

PROGRAMS

Luncheons

The Group of 78 continued to explore a wide range of international and foreign policy issues in our ongoing luncheon series, held between October 2018 and June 2019. This year's line-up included:

- Manfred Bienefeld, *Making sense of the Russia/Trump media circus*. November 6 2018
- Sarah Goldfeder, *The Division of America: after the 2018 mid-term elections*. November 27 2018
- Jean Daudelin, *Bolsonaro in power: the why, the ugly and the foggy*. January 29 2019
- Andrew Cohen, *Canada's illusory foreign policy: addressing the world, one gesture at a time*. February 26 2019
- Jean-Nicolas Beuze, *Can Canada do more for refugees?* March 26 2019
- Laura Macdonald, *Responding to the Central American crisis*. April 30 2019.
- Sen. Marilou McPhedran, *How UNDRIP could change Canada's trade and environmental framework*. May 28 2019
- Nicolas Moyer, *Assessing Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy*, June 18, 2019.

Special Events

Occasionally we convene panels or other events to discuss topics of current interest. On November 14, 2018 we convened a panel featuring Qais Ghanem, Mustafa Bahran, and Najat Sasani. The topic was "What would it take to achieve peace in Yemen?" We had hoped to convene a panel in the spring of 2019, comprising MPs to discuss Canada's international development policy, but unfortunately this did not materialize.

On March 1 2019 we convened a meeting at the University of Ottawa to discuss the deepening crisis in Venezuela and associated international tensions arising therefrom. About 20 individuals participated, from the academic, labour and NGO communities. The discussion concluded by nominating a drafting group to prepare a statement of concern urging the Canadian government and others to desist from military intervention or from instigating regime change to resolve the crisis.

Advocacy

It has been another busy year for advocacy by the Group of 78. Our highly successful 2018 annual conference was followed by outreach based on policy conclusions emerging from the discussion. The conference theme was *Meeting the Climate Challenge: accelerating the transition to a zero-carbon world*. The Ottawa Citizen published an op-ed summarizing key messages by Roy Culpeper and Susan Tanner on October 15, 2018.

An open letter to the Prime Minister containing our key recommendations was published by the Hill Times on May 20 2019, and uploaded to our website to seek signatures from the public. Meanwhile we presented our report in meetings with Patricia Fuller, Canada's Climate Change Ambassador on February 7 2019; with Joel Harden, Ontario MPP for Ottawa Centre, on May 23 2019, and with the assistant to Ottawa City Councillor Sean Menard on June 20. We have also been trying to get an appointment with Catherine McKenna, Federal Environment Minister. The Working Group on Climate Change continues to work on advocacy pursuant to the 2018 conference.

On other issues, we wrote open letters on two occasions:

- March 28 2019: An open letter, signed by 109 people, expressing concern about the crisis in Venezuela, opposing military intervention or any other measures to effect regime change. The letter emerged from a meeting convened by the G78 to bring together members of the academic and NGO communities to share their concerns and to discuss actions that could be taken. Discussion on next steps continues.
- March 5 2019: Expressing ongoing concern about Canada's arms deal with Saudi Arabia;

Subsequent to her presentation by Sen. McPhedran, G78 Chair Roy Culpeper also wrote letters to Senators Doyle, Patterson, Plett, Oh, and Tannas, urging them to expedite passage of C-262 to bring Canada into harmony with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

As a member of the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (CNANW), in June the G78 supported its open letter to the Prime Minister on "Nuclear Disarmament: Canadian Leadership Required".

On June 21, the G78 posted a discussion paper drafted by its Working Group on Arms Control and Disarmament, "What we talk about when we talk about NATO" to help civil society peace groups with disparate views on NATO find common language in discussing NATO membership of actions.

During the first half of 2019 the G78, its Working Group on Climate Change began discussions with others to seek ways of moving the action agenda on climate change with greater urgency. This resulted in exploring the scope for greater efforts on mobilizing Canadian seniors, a relatively neglected demographic in the fight against climate change. A proposal, entitled "Climate Legacy", was drawn up and resulted on July 29th in a project grant from the Ivey Foundation in the amount of \$45,000. This initiative will explore and implement effective communication strategies to motivate and engage older Canadians in climate action using an approach based on collaboration with existing seniors' clubs, organizations and retirees' networks. In this first phase, lasting 12 months, it will focus on Ontario and provide the basis for developing a longer-term national initiative.

Conference 2019

The 2019 annual policy conference on Global Markets, Inequality and the Future of Democracy (September 27/28), was organized by a conference planning committee chaired by Manfred Bienefeld. The keynote speaker, Robert Kuttner, is author of “Can Democracy survive Global Capitalism?”, and the program comprises a list of panelists and speakers. Fundraising for the conference has been quite successful, with eight organizations committing over \$20,000 in total, and with Ottawa University making available an excellent venue in its Faculty of Social Sciences building at a modest cost. The aim is for the conference planning committee to morph into a thematic working group on democracy and social justice, similar to the working groups on arms control and nuclear disarmament and on climate change, in line with the recommendations of the January 2016 discussion on repurposing the Group of 78. This working group would disseminate key messages and recommendations arising from the conference, and continue to meet to consider other advocacy initiatives related to the 2019 conference themes.

Conference 2020

The Group of 78 annual conferences are now planned on a three-year cycle, based on its three fundamental themes of peace, economic and social justice, and planetary survival. The Working Group on Peace and Security (formerly the Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament and Arms Control), having organized the 2017 conference on the theme of nuclear disarmament, is responsible for organizing the G78 annual policy conference to be held in September 2020. Preliminary discussions have been held about next year’s conference. The provisional title is “Peacekeeping and the Transition to a More Peaceful World: Why UN peace operations are critical and need to be expanded”. The Working Group will intensify its planning discussions over the fall and winter months, identifying key questions and speakers.

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 of attracting new members remains.

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 may be a better option. A jazz music and dinner fundraiser was held at an African restaurant in late March. It raised \$690.

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 decided to set aside \$10,000 as an emergency cash reserve, and to transfer \$6,000 of this bequest annually to support operations. After extensive discussion the Executive Committee has recommended to the Board to invest the remaining funds, approximately \$150,000, through Genus, an independent financial management firm with a clear commitment to sustainable and ethical investing and a strong reputation and track-record. Our intention is to use these funds, and the income generated by them, to cover the modest deficits incurred by our activities in recent years. Based on recent trends, both in the levels of our deficits, and in the expected returns generated by the investment portfolio that we have selected, this would allow annual transfers of around \$6,000 into our operating budget with no diminution in the real value of our capital base. Moreover, even if greater needs and lower returns were to upset this balance occasionally, any erosion of our capital base would be slow enough to allow us to adjust our activities accordingly. Our future financial statements will clearly identify the bequest as distinct from our operational funding in order to make transparent our operations based on our normal flows of revenues and expenditures, so that the management of our current revenues and expenditures remains clearly focused on the need to contain – or to eliminate - any deficits being generated.

Notwithstanding the fortuitous gift of the Fowke bequest, funding from memberships and donations will remain critical to the financial and organizational viability of the Group of 78. Accordingly, we must continue to ensure renewals from current members as well as recruiting new members to the G78.

Secretariat

Sarah Bowles has now been our Executive Secretary for three years and we are very lucky to have her. She has taken an active role in reviewing and updating our membership records, and in our fundraising activities; in improving and managing our audio-visual capabilities; and in introducing new media (e.g. podcasts) to help disseminate our messages more effectively. Most importantly she continues to display real enthusiasm in organizing our events, in managing our scarce resources and in becoming an important part of our collective memory when organizing new events.