**GROUP OF 78**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**REPORT TO MEMBERS, 2024-25**

**OTTAWA, MAY 28, 2025**

**May 12 2025 draft**

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, 2024-25.

**GOVERNANCE**

The Board of Directors met, virtually, immediately before and after the 2024 annual general meeting on June 17, 2024 and again on January 14, 2025. Prior to the 2024 AGM the outgoing Board reviewed the Financial report, Report to the members for 2023-24, Upcoming programming, the Report of the Nominations committee, and a preview of the AGM. Immediately after the AGM the newly-elected Board appointed its officers and discussed priorities for action.

The Board Officers for the year have been:

**Chair:**Roy Culpeper

**Vice-Chair:** Susan Tanner

**Treasurer:**Gordon Breedyk

**Secretary:** Edward (Ted) Jackson

The above officers, along with Richard Harmston, Past Chair, and Ruby Dagher, member at large, comprise the Board’s 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, supported by the Executive Secretary, Maude Stephany.

The full Board of Directors previously elected, elected or re-elected at the 2024 AGM are:

Manfred Bienefeld, re-elected for 2 years (2026)

Bruce Campbell, continuing to 2025

Gordon Breedyk, continuing to 2025

James Christie, re-elected for 2 years (2026)

Roy Culpeper, continuing as Chair to 2025

Ruby Dagher, re-elected for 2 years (2026)

John Foster, re-elected for 2 years (2026)

John W Foster, continuing to 2025

Richard Harmston, re-elected for 2 years (2026)

Sylvie Lemieux, re-elected for 2 years (2026)

Angella MacEwen, re-elected for 2 years (2026)

Peggy Mason, re-elected for 2 years (2026)

Susan Tanner, continuing as Vice-Chair to 2026

Ted Jackson, elected for 2 years (2026)

Henri Sader, continuing to 2025

**PROGRAMS**

***Working Groups***

There are two Working Groups that meet regularly to discuss programming and advocacy initiatives arising from our scheduled events, or more broadly relating to the mandate of the Group of 78. The Working Groups strive to advance the policy objectives of the G78, notably, peace and security (a group currently led by Ruby Dagher), and climate change (currently led by Susan Tanner). Efforts in the past two years to reactivate a third Working Group focused on economic and social justice have proved elusive. Every three years in rotation, each Working Group takes the lead in organizing the annual policy conference. Following each conference, the relevant Working Group helps to distill its principal messages and implications for policy, which provide a springboard for advocacy initiatives. In addition, the Working Groups provide analysis and suggestions for other G78 policy positions and ideas for further activities. Membership of the Working Groups is open to Board members and others who have an interest in the G78’s work and bring their expertise or knowledge to the groups.

***Annual Policy Conference 2024***

The 2024 Annual Conference, “Citizens Confronting Climate Chaos” was a hybrid event and there were several exciting in-person discussions. The speakers were eloquent on the need for urgent action on Climate Change. Links to YouTube Videos of each presentation are available on the website. These include keynotes by Tzeporah Berman on the ground-breaking Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, Catherine Abreu on progress in international negotiations recognizing Fossil Fuels as the culprit and the EcoJustice case of Youth versus the Ford Provincial Government for insufficient action on Climate. An Executive Summary of recommendations is available on the web site in English and French.

***Webinars***

The Group continued to explore a wide range of international and foreign policy issues in our ongoing webinar series, held between June 2024 and April 2025. While we began the business year with only virtual webinars, the Group of 78 is moving toward more hybrid events and luncheons. This year’s line-up of speakers included:

John F. Packer & Fanny Dagenais- Dion. **The Relevance of the Geneva Conventions, 75 years later; Reflections from Practice** September 5, 2024

Angella MacEwen, Toby Sanger, Katrina Miller, Lauren Ravon, **The Growing Inequality Crisis & the Call for Global Tax Reform** November 13, 2024

Adam Sneyd and Ruby Daghe,r **The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals - Hidden Politics and How to Hold the UN Accountable**, December 4, 2024.

With IF20 - Reuven Schultz & Peter Larson, **Potential Paths to Just Peace for Israel and Palestine,** January 13, 2025.

With IF20 – Walter Dorn, Paul Meyer, Peggy Mason, **Ukraine and Russia: The Increased Nuclear Threat in these Uncertain Times,** February 13, 2025

 While in March 2022 public health authorities announced that public gatherings may again be held, out of an abundance of caution our annual conferences will continue to follow a hybrid format, with at least one in-person event and a series of virtual webinars. Going forward, some of our programming will utilize the hybrid format enabling the participation of speakers and audiences from distant locations, but working towards more in-person participation for our audience in the Ottawa region, including some luncheon speakers’ events.

***Special Initiative—Climate Legacy Project***

The Group of 78 initiated the Climate Legacy Project in mid-2019. It aims at mobilizing a particular demographic—Canadian seniors—to engage in climate action (i.e. tackling climate change) either as individuals or as members of particular groups (e.g. as pensioners or as voters). It was hosted by the G78. While Climate Legacy operated autonomously, there was active collaboration with the G78. Since Climate Legacy has found another financial host (Small Change Fund) in February/March 2024, the relationship between G78 and Climate Legacy has changed. While we still enthusiastically promote their events and webinars, as we no longer have financial obligations to CL; we retain a cooperative relationship on dialogue and advocacy.

***Advocacy***

Advocacy has always been part of the bedrock of the Group of 78’s existence. It stems from the first action before the Group was formally created – an open letter signed by seventy-eight prominent Canadians to the Prime Minister of the day, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, in 1981 to urge more forceful attention and action on several issues in Canada’s international policies. When the organization was subsequently launched with the name of the Group of 78, the intention was to stimulate dialogue and learning across the broad range of international affairs and to share our thinking and views with the government. Discussion was only half of the equation; it was important also to express a position. The annual policy conferences became the prime vehicle for assembling analysis and findings for the Group to advance and, over time, it added positions to respond to more immediate issues and concerns that arose between conferences. In recent years, the Group has worked with more determination to add its voice to public discourse and to impress on government the need to adopt a decidedly progressive lens to policy making and Canada’s actions in the world.

In addition to advocacy arising from our annual conferences, the G78 engaged in advocacy initiatives pertinent to its mandate, typically in the form of letters to the Prime Minister, other Ministers, or key officials. These letters and statements are typically compiled on our website. A letter was sent on November 18, 2024 to the Prime Minister and Minister Joly requesting Canada’s continued funding of UNWRA. The Group of 78 also echoed the call of two of our members in sending the Prime Minister and Minister Joly a message on July 2, 2024 calling on Canada push for a NFU (no first use) agreement amongst the nuclear powers. In November and into early 2025 we began sending the Report and Recommendations of the G78 2023 Conference to Federal Ministers, Premiers, Mayors of some of Canada’s largest cities, and to civil society organizations. Few responses were generated from this exercise, and we look forward to finding other ways to share what we learned from the 2023 Conference to help create a just peace worldwide. In mid-March 2025, we sent a survey asking Federal Party leaders, directors, and teams about their stances on foreign policy issues. The NDP and Green parties replied, others did not. Results were shared with members and friends of G78.

**ORGANIZATIONAL COOPERATION & PARTICIPATION**

**CNANW**

Sylvie Lemieux has stepped down as co-chair (with Robin Collins) of CNANW in 2024. Jonathan Downs took over as Chair, but recently stepped down. Earl Turcotte accepted that role as of March 2025. Thanks to Sylvie and Robin’s leadership, CNANW enjoys a stronger relationship with Global Affairs Canada (GAC). Following an informal meeting by Zoom with Kirsten Mosey, Policy Officer in Nuclear Weapons, Non Proliferation and Disarmament, a one and a half day Consultation between Government and Civil Society took place November 14-15 in Ottawa. Paul Meyer acted as liaison coordinator and together with Ms Mosey compiled a list of topics for discussion.

CNANW’s invitation-only Special Roundtable on “Revitalizing Nuclear Disarmament after Ukraine” was held on October 19th 202. Cosponsored by Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Canadian Pugwash Group, Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, and Project Ploughshares, the four groups came together and produced an outcome document entitled “ **Canada’s Role In Nuclear Disarmament an a Multipolar World.”** This was circulated widely among parliamentarians, key officials and embassies and received positive response from the International Security office.

G78 and CNANW members Douglas Roche and Tariq Rauf: 9 May 2024: “How Canada Can Regain Leadership in Nuclear Disarmament” Examined the “complementarity” of the TPNW and the NPT with the potential of reviving nuclear weapon diplomacy.

 “Why Two Percent?” Oped published in the THE HILL TIMES. March 25th 2024 by Robin Collins and Sylvie Lemieux Co -chairpersons CNANW.

In December 2023, CNANW sent a Proposal to UN Summit of the Future which was scheduled to take place in September 2024 The CNANW Steering Committee put together a report and presentation for this event for the category International Peace and Security (Chapter 11).

CNANW elected its first Steering Committee Youth Representative. Marissa Hum lives in Toronto, and is a Board member of IPPNWC. She is a lawyer and has a strong interest in “women and nuclear disarmament.”.

**CAFES**

In 2024, CAFES and G78 decided to engage in a mutual membership swap to benefit each of our organizations. This relationship was established to support each of our organizations and to ensure that we are sharing information about each other’s climate-related activities. Our organizations have decided to continue this relationship for 2025.

**VOLUNTEER OTTAWA**

The Group of 78 recently joined Volunteer Ottawa to attract members to our organization and find individuals to help us with particular tasks.

**OPERATIONS**

***Membership***

Membership in 2024 grew to 66 members, a considerable improvement from our numbers in 2023. Current membership stands at 52. While this is still a significant difference from our previous years pre-COVID, we are pleased to see the recent growth in numbers of youth members. Our growth can partially be related to our resumption of some in-person luncheons and meetings in west Ottawa. Due to the spread of our membership across the nation, we have opted to keep our annual policy conference a hybrid event, allowing those who are able to attend in person that experience. Our monthly gatherings are still being held primarily via Zoom, and we are working on improving our reach through cooperation and collaboration with other organizations with a similar mandate (i.e. IF20). There has been a concerted effort to invite former members to join us now that in-person activities are occurring more often.

Currently, the Executive is exploring the idea of pursuing casual in-person gatherings for drinks (coffee/tea/other) in various locations across the country to stimulate membership growth and camaraderie.

***Financial Position and the Future of the G78***

The G78 is currently in a financially strong position but that status is largely dependent on the G78’s Fowke bequest, originally at a level of $235,000 when first gifted to the G78 in 2019 but, five years later, now stands at $120,000. Recurrent deficits in the operating budget have been covered by drawing down the bequest. If this continues, over the next five years it will result in the complete exhaustion of the bequest. Unless other ways are found to balance the operating budget through increased membership or donations, or topping up the bequest through an endowment campaign, the G78 may be forced to drastically alter its modus operandi.

Thus, after a distinguished 43-year history of timely events on foreign policy and policy advocacy, financial pressures may force the G78 to close down. We currently face three alternative scenarios:

1. Status quo: continue as is, and fade away in about 5 years

2. Orderly closure: within next three to five years

3. Revitalizing G78: three options

a. Significant expansion of memberships/donations

b. Grant financing through philanthropic foundations

c. Merge with another organization

The first two scenarios anticipate the closure of the G78, either (1) by default (by running out of funds) or (2) as a deliberate strategy to close down perhaps with a big event (“with a bang”).

Option 3 is aimed at keeping G78 alive through aggressive measures to increase memberships and/or donations, including a possible endowment campaign. Option 3 (a) articulates our current strategy, focused on increasing memberships, donations, and building out our endowment. Option 3 (b), to seek grant funding from philanthropic donors, is currently being explored. We have as yet to identify such a philanthropic donor to support our work. Option 3 (c) is to merge with another better-funded organization that would continue the G78’s mission. This is a remote possibility, but we are retaining it for completeness.

Our current strategy of emphasizing growth in memberships and donations is so far yielding modest results. The number of members remains between 50 and 60, after dipping to 35 two years ago, compared to historic levels of 100 or more.

In 2024 the Board recommended striking a committee to examine options for the revitalization of the G78, including but not restricted to the three scenarios sketched above. The committee’s report, which is summarized below, was presented to the Board for its approval meeting prior to this AGM. We would welcome input from members on this report.

***Revitalization Committee***

The G78 Revitalization Committee met six times between fall 2024 and spring 2025. Members of the Committee included Ted Jackson (Chair), Gord Breedyk, Tim Brodhead, Joan Broughton, Jim Christie, Roy Culpeper, Ruby Dagher, Richard Harmston, Shane Roberts, Susan Tanner, and Maude Stephany. Overall, the tenor of the committee’s deliberations was consistent with pursuing a modest growth path for the Group of 78 over the next two to three years.

More specifically, the Committee’s January 2025 interim report called for the following steps to be taken: 1) ranking the viability and appropriateness of the organization’s various options for the future; 2) engaging university students and other young people in the planning and execution of G78 webinars and the 2025 conference, perhaps providing modest honoraria; 3) reaching out to recruit mid-career and late-career professionals to join as members; 4) preparing the tools for fundraising for modest growth (a brief strategic plan, a detailed prospectus, and strengthened website and social media presence); 5) encouraging a carefully identified sub-set of members to contribute larger donations, from $500 to $2,000; 6) stewarding and appreciating the contributions of smaller donors; 7) planning a campaign to grow the endowment through legacy gifts from members and supporters; and 8) working toward a final, consensus-based Revitalization Committee report in May 2025.

***Secretariat***

Maude Stephany became G78 Executive Secretary in December 2022. Maude (who prefers the pronouns they and them) is based at their home in Guelph, Ontario, and provides G78 secretariat support remotely. Maude brings us many years of communications, organizational and artistic skills, and experience running their own organization, the Transartivist Project. Maude has brought new perspectives and much enthusiasm to the G78, including many new ideas for fundraising and expanding the membership base.

**Conclusion**

The world has changed profoundly since the G78’s last AGM in June 2024. The new Trump Administration inaugurated in January of 2025 has upended the political order both in the United States and throughout the world. Globalization, much revered by neoliberal supporters and reviled by progressives for the last three decades, is giving way to trade wars, economic instability and global disintegration. Further uncertainty and turmoil lie ahead for Canada and the world. Even Canada’s existence can no longer be taken for granted given President Trump’s oft-repeated assertions that Canada should become the 51st state.

Meanwhile, existing threats to global peace and security, to climate sustainability and to economic and social justice, continue to grow. Devastating wars in Sudan, Ukraine and Palestine rage on with mounting death tolls and physical devastation. The spectre of a nuclear holocaust is intensifying with the proliferation and modernization of nuclear arsenals and the abandonment of arms reduction treaties.

Add to this the existential threats and risks of rising new technologies including artificial intelligence—notwithstanding their benefits for human welfare. It is clear that the need for the Group of 78, with its focus on global peace and security, economic and social justice, and planetary viability, remans as pressing as ever. The challenge facing the G78 is not simply to deplore, but to look beyond the world of polycrisis, and work with like-minded progressive organizations and individuals, to help identify ways forward for Canada and the world.

With new leadership in a revitalized organization, the Group of 78 has an obligation to play a crucial role in coming policy debates on foreign policy in Canada and around the world in the years to come.