

AmbCanada Annual Report for 2023 - 2024

The following is our Annual Report to the Association covering the year between our June 2023 and June 2024 Annual General Meetings. The report is meant to provide a comprehensive, factual overview of our activities over the past year. Much of this has been covered piecemeal in previous newsletters and emails to members; other elements are new in this report. Highlights from the report, notably the findings from our recent membership survey, will be discussed at the June 17, 2024 Annual General meeting. (Please find the President's speaking notes for the 2024 AGM at the end of this report.)

Annual General Meetings

Our second Annual General meeting was successfully held on Tuesday, June 13, 2023, at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club. Eighty-two regular and associate members attended, including a number from outside the National Capital Region who chose to plan a visit to Ottawa around being able to attend our AGM. An Annual Report for 2022-23 was tabled from the President and Vice-President, along with a Financial Statement for 2022 and Forecast Budget for 2023 presented by the Treasurer. All of these reports as tabled at that meeting can be found under the AGM Reports tab on the Members Only section of our website. There were no motions presented from the floor, nor specific questions or points of clarification sought by members present. Three new Board members and a new Treasurer, as proposed by the Board Nominating Committee, were approved by the AGM (see next section).

One factor which complicated attendance at the 2023 AGM was construction and an accident on the bridges that day from Ottawa to Gatineau, leading to lengthy traffic jams. To reduce the traffic factor for the 2024 AGM, the Board has moved the timing up to 16:00 (from 17:00) and scheduled the meeting on a Monday which is a lower traffic day. As was done last year, the Board also approved offering an informal reception afterwards, along with a cash bar. This year as an experiment we have invited participants in the Global Affairs 2024 HOM course and their spouses to the reception. As of writing, the response has been very positive. The purpose of these additional invitations was to promote our organization with future members and to build on the relationship we hope to create with current heads of mission through our mentoring initiative with CFSI (see below).

Board Governance

In 2023, the AGM approved the nomination of three new Member of the Board – Alexandra Bugailikis, David McKinnon and Phil Pinnington. The AGM also approved the nomination of Shelley Whiting as Treasurer, replacing Paula Caldwell St. Onge.

As of June 2024, Jon Allen comes to an end of his second three-year term on the Board. Shelley Whiting also tendered her resignation from the Board in April. To replace them as Board members, the Board is proposing John Holmes and Alison LeClaire (for their bios, see separate

document which will be tabled at the 2024 AGM). In finding new Board members, the Nominating Committee this year focussed on members living in the National Capital Region. This reflects our need for more Board members in the NCR to help with hosting luncheons, the December reception and related events. The Board also proposes renewing for a second three-year term Michael Small, Doug George and Ian Burchett as members of the Board.

For President, the Board is proposing the re-appointment of Michael Small for a second two-year term; and for Vice-President the re-appointment of Kathleen Mackay for one year (as her term on the Board will end in June 2025). The Board proposes the nomination of Phil Pinnington as Treasurer. Phil has been serving as acting Treasurer since April.

After the 2023 Board meeting, Alexandra Bugailiskis took over serving as the Chair of the Program Committee, David McKinnon became Chair of the Communications Committee and Ian Burchett assumed the Chair of the Nominating Committee. Some re-adjustments will be made to the membership of the Board Committees after this year's AGM.

Membership

The Board watches closely our membership numbers as they are fundamental to our finances and our effectiveness as an organization. Fortunately, our membership is increasing at a gradual rate. Currently our membership stands at 362 - a net increase of twelve members since June 2023. Twenty-one new members have joined over the last year. Their names are listed as an Appendix 1 to this report. The decision of Human Resources Branch of Global Affairs to resume giving retiring executives a letter from us in their pre-retirement packages has helped us in recruitment. However, personal outreach to recent retirees by current members continues to be the most effective way of encouraging people to join.

Budget

Our revenues remain largely dependent on membership fees, with a little extra from sales of our two books Declassified and Not Mentioned In Dispatches. As in recent years, we are very appreciative to CFSI for the honorarium of \$2000 for our participation in the HOM Training Course. Also, we appreciate the sponsorship by Tradex of our December reception. A Financial Statement for the previous fiscal year 2023 will be presented by the Treasurer at the 2024 AGM. We continue to welcome suggestions from members for new projects and new revenue-generating ideas.

Annual Holiday Reception

Our Annual Holiday reception was held on the 9th Floor of the Pearson Building on Wednesday, December 6, 2024. One hundred and thirty members and spouses attended. The invited guests present included the Clerk of the Privy Council (and former HOM) John Hannaford, Senator Peter Boehm, and a number of senior executives of Global Affairs Canada whom AmbCanada has worked with in the past year. Our host, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs David Morrison gave a very thoughtful address to our group about the state of the world from a Canadian perspective at the end of 2023. The text of his remarks was circulated afterwards by the

President. Particular thanks this year goes to Phil Pinnington for co-ordinating our team of volunteers for this event and working with the Office of Protocol and the Deputy Minister's office to make this event happen.

Regional Events

The Association currently has two co-ordinators who organize occasional gatherings of our members in their regions respectively: Pierre Guimond for Quebec and Sara Hradecky for Victoria and the Islands in British Columbia. Approximately 35 - 40% of our membership lives outside of the National Capital Region, primarily in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia.

On November 2, 2023, Pierre organized a meeting at the Club St-James in Montreal for eighteen of our members in Quebec with the Rector of Université Laval, Sophie D'Amours, as part of the project to create the *Carrefour international Brian-Mulroney*. Members shared their views with the Rector on priorities for university training leading to diplomatic careers. They also endorsed the proposal to create a new francophone scholarship in international studies for a First Nations student, modelled on the Deborah Chatsis scholarship already sponsored by AmbCanada and PAFSO at Carleton University. This meeting was followed by a cocktail reception attended by the late former Prime Minister Mulroney, Mrs. Mulroney, and donors to the *Carrefour* project, including Pierre-Karl Péladeau. At this event, our colleague Louise Blais spoke about the importance of academic training in diplomacy and the great benefit of the *Carrefour* project for Canadian foreign policy foreign policy "in French".

A second activity for members in Quebec took place on May 30th at the Canadian Mission to ICAO in Montreal, where the group was received by the current Canadian Representative, Annik Goulet. Fourteen members were present for a light lunch and a visit of certain public spaces in ICAO Headquarters. Many thanks to Martial Pagé for organizing this event in the absence of Pierre Guimond.

On August 28, 2023, at the initiative of Sara Hradecky, forty-three of our members and spouses from across British Columbia gathered in Victoria for an elegant reception at the Lieutenant-Governor's Residence. Our members were received by Her Honour, the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, Janet Austin, accompanied by her Vice-Regal Canine Consort, MacDuff. Sara will be hosting a summer reception for members in British Columbia at her home in Saanich on June 27, 2024.

An informal gathering of members in Halifax was also organized in December by Scott Slessor and Donica Pottie. Susan Gregson organized an informal lunch for members in Vancouver in March. We hope to encourage more informal meetings of our members in locations outside the National Capital Region in the coming year.

Program Activities

In the year since our last AGM, we have convened eleven speaker events for members, either as in-person luncheons at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, or as virtual events online on Zoom. We

have also convened two special events: our annual authors luncheon and a third Trilateral Transatlantic Dialogue. Our luncheon events are all webcast live over Zoom for members who cannot be present in person. We have had issues in the past with the quality of the sound of our live-streamed events, due to the equipment available at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club but have recently been able to improve that by buying some equipment of our own.

The Program Committee has carried out an extensive survey of alternative locations in Ottawa-Gatineau for our in-person events. The Chair of the Program Committee, Alexandra Bugailiskis, will discuss the results of this survey at the 2024 AGM. Their conclusion is that the Royal Ottawa Golf Club continues to offer the best overall option for us taking into account price of the lunch, parking, location, privacy and the ability for us to live-stream the discussion. At the same time, the Committee will explore alternative venues for more informal events which need not take place over lunch.

The list of our events in the past year is as follows.

2024

June 4 – Webinar

“GAC Transformation Briefing”

Speaker: **USS David Morrison**

Moderator: **Michael Small**

May 14 – Webinar

“A sceptic dissects the Foreign Interference Commission's first report”

Speaker: **Dr. Wesley Wark**, Canadian Historian and Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto

Moderator: **Patricia Fortier**, Former ambassador to Peru, Bolivia and to the Dominican Republic

Wednesday, April 24 - Webinar

“Ranking Prime Ministers of Canada in Their Foreign Policy: The Really Good, the Good, and the Ordinary”

Speaker: **Professor Patrice Dutil**, Department of Politics and Public Administration, Toronto Metropolitan University

Moderator: **Pierre Guimond**, diplomat in residence and lecturer at the École supérieure d'études internationales (ESEI), Université Laval.

Wednesday, March 20 - Webinar

Presentation by Catalyste+:

Speakers:

Wendy Harris, President and Chief Executive Officer, Catalyste+;

Suzanne Laporte, former Ambassador to Brazil and past Catalyste+ Board Member

Darren Schemmmer, former High Commissioner to Ghana and Past Board Catalyste + Chair

Wednesday, March 6 - Luncheon at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club and Webinar

“UNPLUGGED The Back and Future Story on the Senate Report: More Than a Vocation: Canada's Need for a 21st Century Foreign Service”

Speaker: **The Honourable Senator Peter Boehm**

Moderator: **Alex Bugailiskis**, former Ambassador to Syria, Cuba, Poland, and Italy.

Wednesday, February 21 - Luncheon at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club and Webinar

“Ukraine: Winning the Fight”

Speaker: **Larisa Galadza**, former Canadian Ambassador to Ukraine

Moderator: **Alison LeClaire**, former Ambassador to Russia

Friday, January 19 - Luncheon at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club and Webinar

“Indo-Pacific strategies: from France to Canada, how allies approach the future in this region?”

Speaker: **H.E. Ambassador Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer**, Ambassador of France to Vanuatu

Moderator: **Gabriel Lessard**, former Canadian Ambassador to Vietnam and Ethiopia

2023

Wednesday, December 6

AmbCanada Holiday Reception

9th Floor, Pearson Building, 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa

Thursday, November 2 - Luncheon at Royal Ottawa Golf Club and Webinar

“A Fireside Chat with Stephen Toope”

Speaker: **Dr. Stephen Toope**, CEO of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR).

Moderator: **Jon Allen**, former ambassador to Israel and Spain

Thursday, October 19 - Luncheon at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club and Webinar

“South Africa’s Foreign Policy Choices”

Speaker: **H.E. Rieaz Shaik**, High Commissioner of South Africa to Canada

Moderator: **Paula Caldwell St-Onge**, Chair, Canada-Africa Chamber of Business

Tuesday, October 17 - Webinar

“The Causes and Outcomes of the Israeli-Hamas Conflict”

Jon Allen, former Ambassador to Israel and Spain, in conversation with
Richard Kohler, Past President of AmbCanada.

Tuesday, September 26 - Webinar

“The Future of Canada and the United Nations”

Speakers:

Denise Brown, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Ukraine

Deborah Lyons, former UN Special Representative for Afghanistan

Elizabeth Spehar, UN Assistant Secretary General for Peacebuilding Support

Moderator: **Alex Bugailiskis**, former Ambassador to Syria, Cuba, Poland, and Italy

In addition, we continue to collaborate in co-hosting a series of Trilateral Transatlantic Dialogues with the Foreign Service Alumni Forum and our counterpart organizations in the U.K., the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Organization (FCDO), and in the U.S.A., DACOR. The 3rd Dialogue, organized by the Canadian side, was:

November 9, 2023. Virtual event on: **Can the West Win Over the Rest?**

A panel discussion with:

Guillermo Rishchynski, former Canadian Ambassador to Colombia, Brazil, Mexico and the United Nations

Sir Myles Wickstead, former UK Ambassador to Ethiopia and the African Union and U.K. Representative on the Board of the World Bank

Ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne, former U.S. Ambassador to Argentina and Mexico.

In addition, on November 22, 2023, we convened our annual AmbCanada authors luncheon, featuring presentations of the following books published in the past year by our members. This year, we invited members of the Foreign Service Alumni Forum and PAFSO to participate in the lunch. The books presented this year were:

Roxanne Dubé. *Enfin Comprendre. Understanding at Last.*

Marie Gervais-Vidricaire. *Silence sur Venise: Un recontre de Marcel Proust avec Oscar Wilde, Stefan Zweig et Mariano Fortuno.*

Hugh Stephens. *In Defence of Copyright.*

Chris Thompson. *The Struggle Continues...an arduous journey of hope.*

Scholarships

In 2020 AmbCanada created a scholarship for an indigenous graduate student in international relations or public policy at the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University, which we named after our late colleague, Deborah Chatsis. As of the end of 2023,

\$108,000 had been raised for the Chatsis scholarship through donations from individual members of AmbCanada, PAFSO and other current employees of Global Affairs Canada, supplemented by matching funds from Carleton. In 2023, Carleton endowed the scholarship by creating an actively managed pooled investment fund, with a current payout rate of 4.0% (calculated on a 4-year moving average). A \$100,000 endowed gift will make approximately \$4,000 available every year to a selected student or students, since the fund can now support up to two recipients. A recipient will also have the opportunity for an internship at the Canadian Mission to the United Nations in Geneva. Through the Chatsis Scholarship, we are delighted to have been able to support these three Indigenous students to date.

Sage Shelton, a Métis student, was the first to receive the Scholarship in 2021 graduating with an MA in International Affairs from NPSIA in 2022. Sage graduated with an Honors BA from the University of Winnipeg. She pursued the “Health, Displacement, and Humanitarian Policy” stream at NPSIA focusing on refugee policy and forced displacement. Sage was part of the School’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (E.D.I.) Committee and planned to carry her interests into policy development particularly issues affecting marginalized populations.

Zachary Griffiths-Julien, a BA graduate in international relations from Bishop’s University, received the Scholarship in 2022. He graduated with an MA from NPSIA in 2023 specializing in intelligence and international affairs. Zachary joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 2017 as an Infantry Soldier and was subsequently deployed as a member of the Force Protection Team, part of “Operation PRESENCE”, the CAF’s contribution to Canada’s peace operations strategy for United Nations peacekeeping missions. Zachary currently collaborates with the *Équipe de recherche sur la politique internationale des conflits civils* (ÉPICC), as well as a student collaborator with the Network for Strategic Analysis.

Makenzie O’Quinn, from Mi’kma’ki (Nova Scotia) received the Scholarship in 2023. He graduated from Acadia University in Biology and Sociology with a Golden "A" Award and University Medal. Makenzie worked as a native student advisor in Nova Scotia as well as a Parliamentary Liaison Officer for the Embassy of Ireland in Ottawa. At NPSIA, he was a Research and Teaching Assistant. His research essay on Latin America conflicts focused on peacebuilding, justice, and criminal economy. He received his MA in International Affairs from NPSIA in international development policy.

Pierre Guimond has also been exploring the possibility of establishing a francophone scholarship for a First Nations student in international relations at Laval University.

Mentorship Programs

Our one-year pilot mentoring program with Young Diplomats of Canada (YDC) concluded in the autumn of 2023. Our survey of our mentors reported positive results, though some commented that they lacked the information to respond to mentees specific questions about how to join the foreign service. YDC ran its own survey with the mentees which found that 72% of respondents very satisfied with their experience in the program. The Board has left open the possibility of renewing the mentorship program with YDC but has decided to first explore options for a new mentorship program with Global Affairs Canada.

In April 2024, we tabled a proposal with the Canadian Foreign Service Institute to start a mentoring program aimed at two groups of employees: executives who were considering applying to be HOM for the first time; and current HOMs (whether first time or more experienced HOMs) interested in discussing how to be an effective representative of Canada in this role. The initial response from Global Affairs Canada has been positive. We hope to launch a concrete program with them by the end of the summer of 2024. Roxanne Dubé has been leading these initiatives on behalf of the Board.

Coat of Arms Project

In 2022, AmbCanada and PAFSO approved an initiative to seek a Coat of Arms for the Canadian Foreign Service. The Office of the Herald at Rideau Hall accepted our application, and the necessary funds were raised by private donations from interested members. In June 2023, the Miramichi Herald at Rideau Hall shared design concepts for the Coat of Arms and associated emblems with AmbCanada and PAFSO for our approval. Ian Burchett took the lead in obtaining feedback on the proposal from the donors to this project. On the basis of this feedback, the Herald sent the design to a professional artist. A design was recently received from the artist and has been now approved by our Board. The proposed Coat of Arms and emblems are presently with the Chief Herald of Canada for final approval. We hope to be able to release them later in 2024.

Relations with Partners

As will be evident from this report, we have established a productive ongoing partnership with the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers (PAFSO) around the joint initiatives of the Chatsis Scholarship and the Coat of Arms. We are partnering with the Foreign Service Alumni Forum on the Trilateral Transatlantic Dialogues. The Presidents of all three organization are regularly in touch and we are looking at new areas for potential collaboration around public events, or other activities relating to improving the understanding of the value of diplomacy and the work of Canadian diplomats.

Our relations with the management of Global Affairs Canada continues to be very positive. This was most evident by the initiative of the Deputy Minister to brief us in June 2024 on the progress of the Department's transformation initiative. Our briefing with him attracted 107 participants - our largest turn-out to date for an online event. The Department continues to allow us to use the Pearson Building for our annual Holiday Reception in December and invites us to brief first time Heads of Mission in the annual HOM course. Members of Board have met in person with senior executives in the Human Resources and Strategic Policy Branches to compare notes on recruitment for the foreign service and outreach to Canadian universities, respectively. Depending on the outcome of our mentorship proposal with CFSI, we may have a more focussed relationship with the Department in the coming year.

Membership Survey

Our biggest initiative this year was the launch in April of the first survey of our membership since 2020. The response rate was impressive: we received 192 responses, which represents about 55% of our total membership. 38% of respondents chose to identify themselves; the balance opted to reply anonymously. 86% of respondents reported that AmbCanada is meeting their expectations of membership reasonably well or very well. Overall, the responses indicate that we are on the right track in terms of serving the interests of a majority of our members. There were many practical suggestions for improvements about specific activities which the Board will take into account. The Board will discuss our qualitative take-aways from the written comments received at the AGM. Charts depicting the quantitative responses to the survey are appended to this report as Appendix 2.

Michael Small
President

Kathleen Mackay
Vice-President

President's Speaking Notes

for the 2024 AmbCanada AGM

- Thank you, Roxanne. It is a great pleasure to be here at our third Annual General Meeting. This is becoming a fixture in the AmbCanada calendar, marking the start of summer.
- As an innovation for this year, we have invited as our guests the participants in the 2024 HOM course. This was very well received, and many have accepted. This was done in good measure to promote our association with our future members. It was also done as we are exploring with CFSI a new mentoring program with outgoing HOMs. I will say a few words at the start of the reception to welcome them. But I would ask now that during the reception you make a point of talking to them, as well to each other. You will spot these folks from their red name tags.
- This year for this meeting, I produced an annual report for the past twelve months covering our main activities. That was sent out with the documents for this meeting and it will be posted under the Members Only page on our website. Given that you all have access to it, I won't attempt to repeat everything covered there. But I would like to highlight a couple of things and expand upon the findings of the survey.

Membership

- Overall, our organization is doing well. A key indicator for the Board is our membership numbers. I am pleased to report that as of today, our membership stands at 362, versus 350 in June last year. Naturally we lose a number of members every year due to illness and death, as well as people deciding not to renew because their interests have changed, so it is important to keep recruiting new members. I have included the names of everyone who has joined in the past year to the annual report. I would like to recognize the following new members present with us today, either in person or online:

- Danielle Ayotte
- Rene Cremonese
- Paul Gibbard
- James Hill
- Alan Kessel
- Gwyn Kutz
- Lisa Helfand
- Alison LeClaire
- Martin Loken
- Nadir Patel

One might think that the eminence of our membership means that people who were heads of mission naturally want to join as soon as they retire, and some people do exactly that. But experience shows that others need a little time and space after they leave the public service and perhaps a little nudge from people they know. So, please if you have friends and professional contacts who are eligible to become members who have not joined, encourage them to send an email to info@ambcanada.ca and we will get them signed up.

Relations with Partners

When we reviewed our membership criteria three years ago, our conclusion as a Board was to keep AmbCanada's membership focussed on people who had led Canadian diplomatic missions - as Heads of Mission, or Deputy Heads of Mission - but to do a more active job of partnering with other organizations that represent all members of the foreign service. We have developed a very good informal relationship with both the Foreign Service Alumni Forum - headed by Dan Livermore and Gerald Cossette - and with PAFSO, led by their full-time President, Pam Isfeld. In recent times, we have developed a number of joint initiatives with each of them e.g. the Chatsis Scholarship, our trilateral transatlantic dialogues and the Coat of Arms of project. I meet regularly with the Presidents of both the Forum and PAFSO to compare notes and develop ideas for future collaboration - mostly around public events building public awareness of the contributions to Canada of the foreign service.

We have also established a productive working relationship with Global Affairs Canada. As retired public servants, we naturally do our own thing and enjoy having the latitude express our own views - I think the current leadership of the Department understands that even if they don't always appreciate it. But they also recognize that one of the main reasons why people join AmbCanada is that they care about the health and reputation of the foreign service and many of us are willing to help the Department from the outside to reinforce the message that

diplomacy and diplomats are important for Canada. I think the clearest indicator of the good relationship we presently have is the briefing that the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, David Morrison, gave us two weeks ago. That was his initiative and more than 100 of you were online to hear him - about 30% of our total membership. I am having more focussed follow up meetings with the Human Resources and Strategic Policy branches of the Department this week to discuss a couple of specific initiatives. We will have more details to communicate about what emerges from those discussions in the coming months.

The Survey

I would like to highlight six take-aways for me from the survey.

- 1) Overall, we are doing a pretty good job meeting members expectations' of this organization. 86% said we are doing so "very well" or "reasonably well". That said, this endorsement is no reason to rest on our laurels.
- 2) I was pleased to see that 95% of you think you are receiving the right frequency of communications from us: not too much and not too little. The survey indicates that all of regular communications products - from notices of events, to Members Reach Out, to In Memoriam notices - are read and appreciated.
- 3) Maintaining connections with people with whom you have worked with over the years is a significant reason why people join the association and remain members. This was an important reminder to the Board, as we tend to focus of our attention on organizing events and initiatives. But other kinds of member services are important to you too. We have done some things to improve these services: the directory is available electronically (but we need to make it easier to find); Members Reach Out now includes a wider range of products, including podcasts and interviews and articles about our members - see for example the great recent piece in the Montreal Gazette about the efforts of Bob Peck and Peter MacArthur to build support for restoring the Pointe Claire military cemetery in Montreal. We promptly send out obituaries in our In Memoriam pieces, when friends and family bring them to our attention. We are very open to new ideas that could help this community-building aspect of our work.
- 4) I was surprised that about one third of our members in the NCR never come to our events, either in person or online. No doubt there is range of reasons for this. But I suspect in part this reflects a number of members who feel they no longer know as many people in the organization as they used and who may find getting to the Golf Club challenging. I hope that members here in the NCR might encourage others you know but you have not seen here to come out from time to time, perhaps by car-pooling to make the trip here easier. Alexandra has some other thoughts about this.
- 5) About 35-40% of our members (including both Kathleen and me) live outside of the National Capital. For you, we have worked hard to make all our events accessible online. From the survey, they made it clear that they would like to have a few in-person events in their region. We have very active chapters in Quebec and in Victoria, and there have been some recent

efforts in Vancouver and Halifax, but there is more that could be done in this regard. I hope I can report by next year one or two initiatives for members outside of the National Capital.

6) Finally, in terms of our potential outreach and advocacy for the value of diplomacy, I was pleased that 45% said you would be willing to speak to the media if asked; 55% said yes to speaking to universities and service clubs; 65% said yes to mentoring new HOMs and younger professionals. This confirms that there is a sufficient basis of support among the membership for new initiatives along these lines. The Board will focus on these areas in the coming year.

Thank you.