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OTTAWA DIPLOMATIC ASSOCIATION (ODA)
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)
October 7, 2010, 1:00 – 3:00 pm @ Embassy of Japan Auditorium

ANNUAL REPORT
PRESIDENT OF ODA
(September 2009 – October 2010)

Given by HE Khaled Bahah, Ambassador of Yemen

I would like to welcome everyone here today to the Twelfth General Assembly of the Ottawa Diplomatic Association. We are grateful for the beautiful venue, thanks to the exceptional generosity of HE Kaoru Ishikawa, the new Ambassador of Japan. This same kindness was extended last year by his predecessor, HE Tsuneo Nishida, the former President of the Ottawa Diplomatic Association...we are beginning to feel very much at home here!

Along with many of you, I have just attended the Heads of Mission Reception to welcome the new Governor General, The Rt Hon. David Johnston, who acknowledged and honoured the Ottawa Diplomatic Association during his remarks today. We were particularly gratified by this, having greatly enjoyed the Patronage of our recently departed Governor General, the Rt Hon Michaele Jean, we feel confident that Mr. Johnston will also embrace the opportunity to continue as Patron and build a close relationship with our Association.

I would also like to recognize the presence here today of our outstanding Chief of Protocol, Mr. Robert Peck, who has been so enthusiastic and supportive of the Association and its undertakings. We are particularly honoured to welcome him here along with his colleagues, the Chiefs of Protocol of Sao Tome and Cape Verde.

OVERVIEW

It has been an exceptionally rewarding experience to have had the honour to serve as President of the Ottawa Diplomatic Association for the last year and work with such a dedicated and outstanding Executive Committee. On behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to present the following Final Report to the Association.

Indeed, in keeping with our commitment to raising the profile of the Ottawa Diplomatic Association, the Committee wasted no time in getting down to business last September. We immediately tackled the administrative items of structure, administration and marketing of the Association by designing a web site, updating membership lists, devising a membership campaign and proposing a social calendar of events that would both inform and entertain.

ACTIVITIES

We had planned to kick off September's activities with a rousing athletic event – the First Diplomatic Association Tennis Tournament, coordinated by Jose Ureta, which was to take place in the morning of Sunday, October 4th at the Ottawa New Edinburgh Club. Unfortunately, due to rain, the outdoor activities had to be cancelled – however, refusing to have our spirits dampened we proceeded onwards and enjoyed a spectacular Bar B Q jointly hosted by the ODA and former President Tsuneo Nishida which was kindly held at the Japanese Ambassador's residence. During the event we took advantage of the opportunity to present Certificates of Appreciation to all former Executive Committee Members.

October was no less active and we were able to devote energy to a number of initiatives. Ms. Stephanie Harris-Lalonde replaced Mr. Albert Galpin as the new Deputy Director of Protocol and we had the pleasure of meeting with her at our October 14th Executive Meeting. In addition, further work was completed on the website to enable it to be launched in October. Membership, which had declined to 66 in September, due to attrition, had increased by mid-October as a result of marketing efforts. The Board also directed that Associate Memberships would be pre-approved at all EC meetings prior to final approval by the General Assembly.

October 18th marked the 3rd annual Diplomatic Sky Day. Ambassador Bahah coordinated this event and we were delighted to find that it was very well attended, with over 60 people taking to the sunny skies of Ottawa – the best Sky Day attendance so far. In the morning, the Aviation Museum treated Members to private tour of the Museum and during the afternoon, the Rockcliffe Flying Club served us up Pizza and Pop.

In November, a By-laws Committee was formed; 2008/2009 Financial Statements were approved; Membership had increased to 115 and several new Associate Members were approved. The website was up and operating but required some fine-tuning. In addition a Banner was manufactured for use at all events and the revision of the brochure was underway. It was also decided that, for the first time, Season's Greetings cards would be sent out on behalf of the Ottawa Diplomatic Association to all members and key contacts.

The first Ambassadors Speakers Series events, in collaboration with Carleton's Norman Patterson School of International Affairs, took place on November 24, 2009 and featured HE Karel Zebrakovsky, the Ambassador of Czech Republic who addressed the topic "Emerging from Behind the Iron Curtain – 20 Years after the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia" which provided an illuminating perspective on a subject which is as absorbing today as it was twenty years ago.

Originally planned for November, the ODA/NPC (National Press Club) Guest Speaker Luncheon, featuring The Honourable Perrin Beatty, President and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, was moved forward to December 3rd. This was attended by 41 people and was greatly enjoyed, thanks to the organizational skills of James Levesque.

Due to Christmas holidays, the Executive Committee did not meet in the month of December, however, our social calendar continued and on December 5th, Nathalie Gissel-Menos coordinated a family tour of the Museum of Science and Technology – always a fascinating experience.

We began the exciting events for 2010 in collaboration with The Norman Patterson School of International Affairs and Larry Lederman, and an Ambassador Speaker Series event eloquently delivered by our own Executive Committee Member, High Commissioner HE Madhuker Gavai, of India. The topic "Canada and the Rise of India" captivated the audience and generated tremendous discussion. Words of thanks were delivered by ODA President, HE Khaled Bahah.

January concluded with an exceptional "Ski Day" event on the 30th at Camp Fortune which was a most memorable event. Spectators were treated to spectacular athletic performances by the experienced skiers, and greatly entertained by more unconventional but extremely courageous athletic displays by the many newcomers to winter sports! Ultimately it was a splendid day of fun, and great sportsmanship. In the evening an Awards Ceremony and Dinner was held at the Kingsway Golf & Country Club, kindly hosted by the Honourable Noel Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate and his wife Anne, along with The Honourable Peter Milliken, Speaker of the House. This provided a tremendous evening of speeches, awards,

dinner and rousing hilarity for all. This event would not have happened without the concerted efforts HE Tomas Kustelj of the Slovak Republic, and Thea Geerts.

Once again, an ever-popular Ambassadors Speakers Series was held on February 11th, in collaboration with the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs, with the fascinating topic of “Has Brazil’s Future Arrived? – The view from Canada” addressed by HE Paulo Cordeiro de Andrade Pinto, the Ambassador of Brazil, who delighted audience members with his exceptional wisdom. Words of thanks were delivered by HE Nouzha Chekrouni, the Ambassador of Morocco.

On March 2nd, the Embassy of Korea kindly hosted a spectacular Luncheon and G20 Discussion Session at the Mission. This event presented by the ODA in collaboration with the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs consisted of two discussions. The first was entitled “What Should We Expect From the June G20 Summit Meeting in Toronto?” It was moderated by ODA Vice President, HE Chan Ho Ha, Ambassador of Korea and featured guest speaker Dr. Wendy Dobson from the University of Toronto, prompting lively discussion among audience members.

The second discussion was equally stimulating with the topic, “Do Minority Governments Constrain Foreign Policy?” This was moderated by Dr. Fen Hampson of the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs and the speakers were journalist Don Newman and Michael Hart of NPSIA.

March 18th provided another Speaker Series event in collaboration with The Norman Patterson School of International Affairs. This time, the Ambassador of Spain, HE Eudaldo Mirapeix provided a fascinating overview of Spain, Europe and Canada.

Another event in March was International Women’s Day on March 30th. This event is always a favourite and was kindly contributed to by the Ambassador of Morocco, HE Nouza Chekrouni.

One of the liveliest events of the year took place over a two-week period in May and June – a major athletic event involving the overwhelming participation by Parliamentarians, Diplomats and Press Corps in a series of soccer matches held over a two-week period. Organized by the ODA and coordinated by Ashbury College, the finals held on June 9th proved to be an epic battle of will and might. Spectators were captivated by the almost unbearable suspense of the final moments as they watched the Press defeat Team America to bring home the Gold. The game was followed by a trophy ceremony plus a speech by South African High Commissioner Abraham Nkomo, whose country was host to the 2010 World Cup Soccer Tournament, in which he spoke of the ability of sport to unite mankind followed

by a reception at Ashbury to salute all participants. The overwhelming success of this event was thanks to the exceptional efforts of our own Thea Geerts.

The First Diplomatic Tennis Tournament was held on June 19th at the Rideau Tennis Club, and thanks to the tremendous efforts of Deputy-Treasurer Jose Ureta. proved to be the best attended ODA event this year. Diplomats battled one another on the courts for two hours until play had to be called off due to inclement weather – however, Mr Ureta felt that the fact that there was no “winner” provided a very diplomatic ending to the play. Later that evening a splendid dinner was held at the Club, dressed to the nines and vowing that this was destined to become an ODA Annual Event.

Executive Board Members were treated to a luncheon hosted by the Chief of Protocol, Mr. Robert Peck on June 21st. Not only is he the first Chief of Protocol to become an Honourary Member of the Club, but he has shown himself repeatedly to be a great champion and supporter of the Organization. He was accompanied by Deputy Chief Isabelle Martin, Deputy Director Stephanie Harris-Lalonde and Mike Bull of the Ottawa Tourism Bureau. The working lunch was held at Rideau Gate and provided valuable discussion of the future development of the Association and was a most gratifying testament to the tremendous support and willingness by the Office of Protocol to build closer ties and liaisons with the organization.

Sadly, August marked a tragedy of overwhelming proportions, when the Polish Ambassador and his wife suffered the unimaginable loss of their two children in a car accident in Poland. The Ottawa Diplomatic Association sent a letter of condolence on behalf of all members and the President, along with others attended the extremely moving memorial service.

With the assistance of the Chief of Protocol, we have alerted all Heads of Missions to the existence of the ODA providing them with a welcome letter and small information package to encourage them plus members of their Diplomatic Staff to join and become instantly part of the community by attending our many events.

We have received very positive feedback acknowledging that the ODA is becoming a well-known entity. Our membership has grown to 110 individuals, but due to the transitory nature of diplomats we must continue to attract new members every year. By constantly offering worthwhile and engaging activities and events, and by individually encouraging our own diplomatic staff and new arrivals at our Missions to join, we should be able to attract optimum membership.

We have negotiated on behalf of our membership and been able to offer favourable discounts with a number of enterprises. Special favourable rates have been negotiated for all

Fairmont Hotels throughout Canada; special rates at the Chateau Cartier Hotel in Gatineau and the Sheraton Hotel in Ottawa, as well as a most attractive membership at the Britannia Yacht Club.

The Executive Committee has conducted eight meetings throughout the year beginning in 2009 on September 16th, and continuing on October 14th and November 17th. In 2010 we held meetings on January 13th, March 4th, April 16th, May 31st and September 30th.

We have revised the By-Laws of the Association and look forward to presenting it at the General Assembly meeting scheduled for October 7th for approval.

PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE

We have also prepared for several exciting events to be held in the coming year. Among these are Diplomatic Refresher Courses to be held in January at Ottawa University, subject to the approval of the new Committee. These efforts have been coordinated by HE Nouzha Chekrouni of Morocco and President Khaled Bahah of Yemen.

Preparatory efforts have been made to conduct a Speaker Forum on “Diplomacy and Sustainable Development”, to be coordinated in collaboration with Ottawa University. They have received agreement in principle from three outstanding Ambassador Speakers for this event.

As our Ottawa Diplomatic Association year ends, so does the term of our much-beloved Governor General and ODA Patron, The Rt Hon Michaele-Jean, to whom we have written a letter of thanks. We are proposing that the new Committee will write a letter to the new Governor-General, The Rt Hon David Johnston, inviting his continued participation as our Patron.

PRESIDENT’S FAREWELL

To the many people who have contributed so much over the last year, I owe a debt of substantial gratitude for their invaluable efforts to bring the ODA to a maturity that has enabled it to become a significant vehicle to provide a solid network for all its members. I feel that it is also important to pay tribute to the exceptional efforts of all past Executive Committee Members who have paved the way and without whose years of hard work we would not have been able to have achieved so much during the 2009/2010 term.

As we prepare to hand the Association over to its new Executive Board Members, I am fully confident that under their capable stewardship, it will continue to gather strength, foster new ideas, promote fellowship and expand its prominence within the Ottawa community.

It is said that, “All good things must come to an end”, but when it comes to the Ottawa Diplomatic Association, our year has taught us that it is far more accurate to observe that, “All good things that are nurtured just keep getting better!”

Khaled Bahah, Ambassador of Yemen
President of the Ottawa Diplomatic Association
2009/2010