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## Le devoir de mémoire, ou pourquoi c'est en Belgique que j'ai encore plus apprécié le Canada.

Par Olivier Nicoloff



Photo: de l'auteur

*L'auteur, alors Ambassadeur du Canada auprès du Royaume de Belgique, prononce un discours lors d'une cérémonie de commémoration tenue au cimetière militaire canadien d'Adegem.*

Ma dernière mission à l'étranger fut à Bruxelles, où j'ai servi en tant qu'Ambassadeur auprès du Royaume de Belgique et du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, de 2016 à 2020. Passer quatre années de sa vie dans cette Belgique accueillante et où l'on mange si bien est évidemment un plaisir. Je savais avant d'y arriver que nos deux pays étaient proches et que de multiples liens, historiques, économiques, politiques, culturels, nous unissaient. Mais

je ne m'attendais pas à ce que le souvenir du Canada en tant que pays libérateur à l'occasion des deux guerres mondiales, soit toujours aussi fortement ancré dans la population. J'ai vu plus de drapeaux du Canada en Belgique que jamais je n'en ai croisé ici !

Mais c'est d'abord l'actualité qui retenait l'attention à l'automne 2016. Notre Premier ministre Justin Trudeau devait venir à

Bruxelles quelques semaines après mon arrivée pour un sommet avec l'Union européenne. Durant ce Sommet, les dirigeants devaient signer l'ambitieux Accord économique et commercial global (AECG, ou CETA en anglais), qui allait dynamiser les échanges entre le Canada et les pays membres de l'Union. Or la Belgique, à quelques jours du Sommet, ne pouvait toujours pas signer elle-même cette entente : le gouvernement fédéral belge, très en faveur du projet, ne pouvant pas le faire sans l'accord de toutes les entités fédérées. La situation était bloquée, le Sommet annoncé retardé, notre Premier ministre et les dirigeants de l'Union européenne attendaient, les belges discutaient entre eux.

Il y avait un peu d'ironie dans cette histoire. La Belgique est, comme le Canada, une fédération où coexistent deux communautés linguistiques, flamande et wallonne (il y a aussi là-bas un troisième groupe, germanophone, mais il est nettement plus petit). Deuxième parallèle, un des deux groupes

## FORUM

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Gérald Cossette  
*Co-éditeurs / rédacteurs en chef*

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Email: [edit.forum99@gmail.com](mailto:edit.forum99@gmail.com)

Web: [www.forumdiplocan.ca](http://www.forumdiplocan.ca)

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linguistiques principaux se sentait historiquement lésé : les francophones au Canada, et les flamands en Belgique. Pour cette raison, le mouvement nationaliste québécois se voulait proche des nationalistes flamands. Mais en même temps, les échanges entre le Québec et la Wallonie francophone étaient extrêmement riches, féconds et faciles, en raison de cette langue française partagée.

Or c'est cette même Wallonie francophone qui refusait de donner son accord à la signature de l'AECG, dont les autorités québécoises soutenaient avoir été les instigateurs. Les dirigeants wallons, quand je les rencontrais, insistaient pour dire que leur refus de l'accord n'était pas un refus du Canada et surtout pas du Québec. Leurs collègues flamands, anxieux de voir l'AECG signé, étaient exaspérés, et certains d'entre eux y voyaient une raison supplémentaire de progresser vers leur autonomie.

La ministre Chrystia Freeland, responsable du dossier à l'époque, s'était déplacée en Belgique à la recherche d'une solution, qui fut finalement trouvée. Et c'est avec seulement quelques jours de retard, le 30 octobre 2016, que le Premier ministre Trudeau a pu venir rencontrer les dirigeants de l'Union européenne et signer l'accord.

Cette solution qui permit à la Belgique de signer l'accord fut l'occasion d'un moment amusant pour moi. Je n'avais toujours pas présenté mes Lettres de créance au Roi des Belges et devais donc, selon le protocole, me faire discret. Surprise, le ministre belge des Affaires étrangères m'invitait à la signature de l'accord par son pays et, croyant que j'allais être discrètement parmi le public, j'acceptais. Non seulement j'étais à la table principale avec le ministre belge Didier Reynders et la Commissaire européenne au commerce extérieur Cecilia Malström, mais le ministre,

une fois son discours terminé, se tournait vers moi en disant que l'Ambassadeur aurait certainement un mot à dire aux nombreux journalistes réunis à l'occasion. En me levant pour aller au micro, j'essayais, du regard, de signifier à la cheffe du protocole que je ne pouvais pas refuser une invitation de son ministre. Mais pour mon devoir de discrétion, c'était franchement raté.

Tous mes interlocuteurs belges du moment, wallons et flamands, me répétaient constamment que cet imbroglio n'avait rien à voir avec le Canada; ce n'étaient pas notre pays ni l'excellent état de nos relations qui était en jeu ici. Le Canada est un pays aimé, apprécié, admiré des belges, me disait-on souvent. Je le sentais bien dans les regards souvent embarrassés de mes interlocuteurs wallons, responsables du blocage. Et je le voyais bien, d'abord par les innombrables échanges, de toute nature et à tous les niveaux, qui caractérisent nos relations, mais aussi par la facilité avec laquelle mon travail se faisait. Pour moi, en tant que représentant du Canada, les portes étaient toujours ouvertes, le dialogue aisé et agréable. Mais j'allais surtout dans les jours et les mois à venir découvrir comment cette relation reposait sur un socle historique très profond et qui continue à ce jour de le nourrir.

J'en ai eu un premier aperçu quelques jours seulement après la signature de l'AECG fin octobre 2016. Le 10 novembre, je me rendais au village de Zoenebeke, au Mémorial canadien de Passchendale, pour assister à une cérémonie à la mémoire de nos soldats tués au combat en 1917. Ce site est le lieu d'une des plus difficiles et cruelles batailles auxquelles les troupes canadiennes ont été confrontées durant la Première guerre mondiale, (le lien pour plus d'information sur cette terrible bataille de Passchendale est ici ).

Je savais que le gouvernement belge, tout comme celui de la France voisine, organisait régulièrement des cérémonies de commémoration pour rappeler leur reconnaissance aux sacrifices consentis par les pays amis. Mais voilà que cette belle cérémonie de Zoenebecke était organisée par la population elle-même, et se terminait par un spectaculaire défilé au flambeau. Et il y avait foule au monument, et des drapeaux canadiens partout, et beaucoup d'émotion. N'ayant toujours pas présenté mes Lettres au Roi, je ne pouvais pas intervenir publiquement, et j'étais heureux de laisser le Conseiller de l'Ambassade prononcer le discours d'usage. Qu'à cela ne tienne, les organisateurs avaient demandé in extremis à ma conjointe de jouer un rôle dans la cérémonie. Elle n'avait pas signé pour cela, mais s'y est prêtée de bonne grâce.

De là je me rendais à une cérémonie du souvenir en hommage aux militaires tués durant la défense de la ville de Ypres durant la Grande Guerre, mais disparus sans laisser de trace. Cette cérémonie très simple se tient chaque soir depuis le 2 juillet 1928 à la Porte de Ménin, monument où sont gravés les noms de 55,000 soldats qui n'ont jamais été retrouvés. Je n'arrivais pas à croire qu'une telle cérémonie puisse se dérouler sans interruption, sauf pour la période de la deuxième guerre mondiale, tous les soirs, depuis 1928. Plus de 33,000 fois aujourd'hui ! Et encore une fois, comme à Zoenebecke, il s'agissait aujourd'hui d'une initiative privée dont maintenant le Last Post Association est responsable (plus de détails, en anglais, ici ).

Durant mon mandat de quatre années, j'aurai participé à plusieurs

reprises à cette cérémonie du Last Post à la porte de Ménin à Ypres, amenant chaque fois que je le pouvais mes visiteurs canadiens également étonnés, et émus, de ce dévouement au devoir de mémoire. J'y étais lors de grandes cérémonies nationales, en présence du Roi; j'y étais aussi souvent discrètement, sans m'annoncer. Et j'ai encore la gorge serrée quand je pense à la cérémonie tenue en présence de vétérans canadiens de la deuxième guerre : ces derniers, alors très âgés, se déplaçaient lentement depuis leur hôtel tout proche jusqu'à la porte de Ménin, et le public nombreux, apprenant leur présence, s'était réuni des deux côtés du chemin pour les applaudir chaleureusement. Il y eut beaucoup de larmes ce soir-là sur ces joues abimées par le temps.



*L'orchestre du Royal 22<sup>ème</sup> Régiment, présent pour le 100<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire de la terrible bataille de Passchendaele, ouvre le défilé aux flambeaux organisé à cette occasion.*

Le devoir de mémoire auquel tant de belges se sentent toujours si attachés ne se limite pas à des cérémonies. Des marches de commémoration sont également tenues. J'ai participé à une première, de 23 kms, qui se terminait au cimetière militaire canadien d'Aldegem. Le parcours suivait les combats de la bataille de l'Escaut, après la libération de l'important port d'Anvers, pour assurer l'avance et l'approvisionnement des troupes alliées qui progressaient vers l'Allemagne. Les participants à cette marche du souvenir s'arrêtaient régulièrement pour des explications sur le déroulement des opérations militaires (vous trouverez des détails sur cette bataille ici).

J'étais le premier Ambassadeur à participer ainsi à cette marche, et je remarquais que les soldats canadiens présents à l'occasion marchaient vite ! Si ma participation fut bien notée et apparemment appréciée, plusieurs personnes pendant la journée m'avaient fait remarquer que je ne devais pas manquer une autre marche de commémoration, de 33 kms celle-là, celle de Knokke-Heist. Qu'à cela ne tienne, je m'engageais également à la faire.

Et quelle ne fut pas ma surprise en apprenant le matin du départ de cette marche, que près de 7,000 participants étaient inscrits à l'évènement ! Soixante-quinze ans plus tard, ces milliers de personnes marchaient dans les pas des soldats canadiens pour se souvenir de leur sacrifice et les remercier de leur rôle dans la libération de leur coin de pays. Et des centaines de drapeaux canadiens flottaient aux balcons de la ville à notre arrivée à Knokke.

Une marche de 33 kms pour un habitué du travail de bureau, ce n'était pas peu, surtout qu'il me fallait suivre le pas rapide de nos soldats ! Mais je n'avais pas fini avec cet aspect physique inattendu de mon travail, puisque j'allais plus tard participer à un tour cycliste télévisé, à l'occasion

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***Et les soldats s'étaient approchés d'eux et leurs avaient donné des bonbons. « Monsieur l'Ambassadeur », m'a dit la vieille dame, « vous ne pouvez pas comprendre ce que le Canada veut dire pour nous ». Et elle pleurait à chaudes larmes.***

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des 100 ans de la libération de la ville Mons, en 1918.

Là encore il s'agissait d'un événement grand public, organisé cette fois dans le cadre d'une émission de télévision visant à faire découvrir aux téléspectateurs certains coins du pays. J'avais peu avant reçu la Gouverneure générale Julie Payette pour l'inauguration dans cette région de Mons d'un monument dédié à la mémoire du dernier soldat du Commonwealth tué au combat à la fin de la Première guerre, le canadien George Price, de Nouvelle-Ecosse.

Selon les organisateurs, plus de 7,000 personnes s'étaient présentées le 18 août 2018 avec leurs vélos pour faire ce tour et, entre autres, passer près du monument George Price. Ce ne fut pas un parcours très aisé pour moi et ma conjointe, alors que nous devions rester en tête de file parce que j'étais filmé en direct commentant les événements de l'époque. (Plus d'info sur cette initiative ici.)

Vers la fin de mon mandat mon engagement envers le devoir de mémoire devint plus personnel. Liée au cimetière militaire canadien d'Aldegem, l'association Belgique-Canada avait lancé une nouvelle initiative : il s'agissait pour des individus d'adopter une tombe,

et de s'engager à la fleurir une fois par année. Un soldat enterré là se nommait Alexander Nickoloff, tué à l'âge de 19 ans.

J'adoptais la tombe de cet homonyme, ayant appris grâce à Anciens Combattants Canada que sa famille trouvait ses origines, comme la mienne, dans la région macédonienne de la Grèce. Eux aussi avaient immigré au Canada, comme nous. Toujours grâce à mes collègues, j'ai aussi pu retrouver des descendants de sa famille et les informer de mon geste, dont ils ont été bien reconnaissants.

Mais il y a surtout une image de cet exceptionnel effort de mémoire que je garde en tête aujourd'hui. Certaines cérémonies auxquelles je participais étaient très imposantes, et les foules nombreuses. A deux reprises, un couple de personnes âgées s'était approché de moi timidement, s'excusant de prendre de mon temps. Ils voulaient m'expliquer qu'ils étaient là, sur cette rue où nous nous trouvions, lors de l'entrée des troupes canadiennes libérant leur ville. Et les soldats s'étaient approchés d'eux et leurs avaient donné des bonbons. « Monsieur l'Ambassadeur », m'a dit la vieille dame, « vous ne pouvez pas comprendre ce que le Canada veut dire pour nous ». Et elle pleurait à chaudes larmes.

Je serai toujours reconnaissant à mes amis belges de m'avoir fait comprendre et surtout mieux apprécier le rôle exceptionnel que le Canada a joué dans leur histoire et dans leurs vies. La mémoire de nos soldats est toujours bien vivante en Belgique. ■

*Olivier Nicoloff, membre du conseil d'administration de Forum, a oeuvré en tant qu'agent du service extérieur de 1988 à 2022. Après plusieurs postes à l'étranger en Afrique et en Europe, il a terminé sa carrière comme Ambassadeur du Canada à Bruxelles.*

# FORUM's Tenth Issue: Three years of progress

*By Daniel Livermore and Gérald Cossette*

This issue of FORUM is our tenth number. When the Canadian Foreign Service Alumni Forum (CFSAF) started in 2020, we hadn't counted on a global pandemic and a host of minor problems hindering our path forward. But we've come a long way, thanks to our executive board and a number of volunteers across Canada, and thanks to contributors who have made FORUM an important medium of communication for everyone who has shared a foreign service vocation.

We also appreciate the financial support of those readers who have joined CFSAF, and our three sponsors whose advertisements in each issue help defer the costs of publication.

In the months ahead, we're focussing on the following four items:

- Expanding our membership, especially among recent retirees and those from the admin/consular and development assistance streams, who have new stories to tell and different experiences from their time in the foreign service;
- Pursuing new initiatives, like enabling our members to be in contact with archival institutions to store some of their historic materials; carrying forward partnerships with AmbCanada, PAFSO and colleagues in other foreign services; and working towards ideas to give Canadians

a better idea of the value and significance of the foreign service;

- Following up on other communications ideas, so that foreign service veterans can remain in touch, as well as follow the debates and discussions on current foreign policy issues.
- Improving CFSAF's website, for which we need a few capable IT volunteers.

So, as we enter another year of progress, please encourage friends and colleagues to join CFSAF and volunteer for assisting with some of our initiatives. Get in touch with us at: [edit.forum99@gmail.com](mailto:edit.forum99@gmail.com). ■

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## Le dixième numéro de FORUM : trois ans de progrès

*Par Daniel Livermore and Gérald Cossette*

Ce numéro de FORUM est notre dixième. Lorsque le Forum des anciens du service extérieur canadien (FASEC) a débuté en 2020, nous n'avions pas prévu qu'une pandémie mondiale et une foule de problèmes mineurs viendraient entraver notre cheminement. Mais nous avons parcouru un long chemin, grâce à notre conseil d'administration et à un certain nombre de bénévoles à travers le Canada, et grâce aux contributeurs qui ont fait de FORUM un important moyen de communication pour tous ceux et celles qui ont vécu de la vocation du service extérieur.

Nous apprécions également le soutien financier des lecteurs qui ont rejoint le FASEC et de nos trois commanditaires dont les publicités dans chaque numéro aident à couvrir les coûts de publication.

Dans les mois à venir, nous nous concentrerons sur les quatre éléments suivants :

- Élargir notre adhésion, en particulier parmi les récents retraités et ceux des filières administratives/consulaires et d'aide au développement, qui ont de nouvelles histoires à raconter et des expériences différentes de leur passage dans le service extérieur ;
- Poursuivre de nouvelles initiatives, comme permettre à nos membres d'être en contact avec les archives de certaines institutions universitaires pour entreposer certains de leurs documents historiques; poursuivre les partenariats avec AmbCanada, l'APASE et des collègues d'autres services étrangers; et travailler à la recherche d'idées pour donner aux

Canadiens et Canadiennes une meilleure appréciation de la valeur et de l'importance du service extérieur;

- Développer d'autres idées de communication, afin que les anciens du service extérieur puissent rester en contact, ainsi que suivre les débats et discussions sur les questions d'actualité en matière de politique étrangère.
- Améliorer le site Web du FASEC, pour lequel nous avons besoin de quelques bénévoles compétents en informatique.

Alors que nous entamons une autre année de progrès, encouragez vos amis et collègues à se joindre au FASEC et à se porter volontaires pour contribuer à certaines de nos initiatives. Contactez-nous à : [edit.forum99@gmail.com](mailto:edit.forum99@gmail.com). ■

# Un candélabre sorti de l'enfer...

Par *Gérald Cossette et Eric Pelletier*

Nous étions à l'avant dernier jour de la réunion mi-terme du GATT (la ronde Uruguay) de Montréal en décembre 1988. Cette ronde va s'éterniser; mais, c'est une autre histoire. Le Canada était l'hôte ce soir-là, au Windsor sur Pell, d'un dîner des Chefs de délégation et des ministres.

Nous faisons partie d'un groupe d'agents et d'agentes de liaison des Affaires extérieures dépêchés à Montréal pour donner un coup de main aux organisateurs canadiens de l'événement sous la houlette de l'infatigable et énergique Jon Fried.

Vers midi, le jour de ce dîner, nous étions chargés de préparer les plans de table du dîner des ministres et chefs de délégation.

Nous avions des instructions assez précises sur la composition des tables canadiennes, mais peu d'indications quant aux autres. Plus problématique encore, nous n'avions pas de connaissances particulières gouvernant la confection d'un plan de table qui serait réussi. Nous n'avions pas non plus à notre disposition des outils pour en faciliter la préparation. Comme si cela n'était pas suffisant, nous disposions d'information incomplète, changeante ou carrément erronée sur plusieurs participants de pays avec peu de présence consulaire à Montréal et avec lesquelles les communications étaient limitées et ce malgré tous les efforts herculéens de nos autres collègues agents de liaison auprès des dites délégations.

Nous nous sommes attelés à cette tâche avec détermination. Nous étions relativement satisfaits du produit final. Du moins, nous le pensions. Nous avions bien sûr prévu un certain



*Photos dans les collections du Musée McCord, Université McGill*

nombre de places vacantes, soit trois tables, juste au cas... Dans l'ensemble, le tout s'était quand même avéré une opération assez fastidieuse car ce dîner impliquait plusieurs centaines de personnes.

Comme nous étions responsables de ces plans de table, on nous pria de nous installer à la table d'accueil en face de la salle de bal au rez-de-chaussée du Windsor, fraîchement rénové, sans la moindre idée de la tempête qui nous menaçait.

Les premières dix minutes furent relativement ordonnées. Puis, les problèmes commencèrent à s'empiler rapidement. Certes, non seulement beaucoup de délégués n'apparaissaient pas sur nos listes, mais plusieurs des premiers arrivés se sont installés aux tables qu'ils désiraient, plutôt qu'à celles assignées, sans nous alerter, évidemment. L'effet domino ne s'est pas fait tarder et s'ensuivit une période très houleuse. Le plus long 15 minutes de notre vie d'alors.

Vers la fin de cette période mouvementée de services aux clients agités, certains fort mécontents et prompts à le démontrer, dont une ministre du commerce d'un petit pays européen qui vint à l'accueil d'un pas rapide. Visiblement remontée, la ministre était agacée de ne pas avoir été invitée à une réception pré-dîner et sa place assignée au dîner avait été prise par un autre convive. Le ton monta. La ministre rentra insatisfaite dans la salle, ses adjoints nous poignardèrent des yeux. La situation n'a pas été aidée lorsque l'un des ministres canadiens, hôte du dîner, est allé spécifiquement évoquer, sous couvert d'un humour disons plus ou moins diplomatique, ce pays en particulier.

Puis, le Secrétaire à l'agriculture des États-Unis marcha lentement vers nous, guidé d'un jeune "marine" martial dans son uniforme. Celui-ci s'approcha de notre table d'accueil pour connaître la table du dignitaire. On lui demanda s'il s'agissait bien

dudit Secrétaire - il répondit par un tonitruant « Yes sir ! » qui nous fit littéralement bondir de nos chaises vu l'état fragile de nos nerfs.

A peine entré dans la salle, revoilà dans notre direction ce "marine" accompagné dudit Secrétaire. Nous étions inquiets à la pensée que quelqu'un d'autre s'était installé à sa place. On se prépara pour le choc. A notre grand soulagement, il ne cherchait que les toilettes. Probablement aussi à son grand soulagement.

Lorsque qu'enfin, un calme relatif fut revenu, et que nous étions à nous concerter sur l'endroit où nous souperions, l'agent du protocole, chargé du dîner, affolé vint à la vitesse d'un TGV dans notre direction et nous enjoignit de le suivre promptement. « On ne peut pas laisser une table vide, vite assoyez-vous avec moi ».

On s'y installa. Premier constat, à peine installés nous observons

certaines failles de nos plans de table. Sans nous concerter, lors de l'avalanche de délégués non-inscrits, nous les dirigeons vers deux tables en particulier. Or, notre table était dans le milieu. Nous étions donc entourés de deux tables de concentration continentale suspecte... Comme la nôtre tout compte fait !

Puis, lorsqu'on pensait que la journée ne pouvait pas aller plus mal, notre niveau d'anxiété s'accru d'un coup.

Des immenses candélabres trônaient au centre des tables. Notre table était, manque de chance, disposée juste en dessous d'une immense grille d'aération activée au maximum.

Alors que les chandelles disposées le long des nombreuses branches des candélabres des tables voisines se consument paisiblement en dispensant une douce flamme d'ambiance, les nôtres nous illuminaient de leurs longues flammes. Une grande lueur jaunâtre nous entourait. Des coulées de cire

blanche formaient rapidement des stalactites aux coudes des branches. Même les serveuses et serveurs s'approchaient de notre table avec un regard anxieux. Plusieurs convives jetèrent également des regards inquiets dans notre direction. Pas très facile alors de passer incognito dans les circonstances...

Disons, notre soulagement était indicible lorsque ces chandelles furent toutes consumées et que le dîner s'est terminé sans devoir recourir aux services d'incendie de la ville de Montréal.

Heureusement, les ministres et hauts fonctionnaires canadiens était tous enchantés de leur dîner. C'était ce qui comptait, nous rassura notre patron ! ■

*Lors de son dernier passage à Affaires mondiales Canada, Gérald Cosssette était sous-ministre délégué. Éric Pelletier a passé la majeure partie de sa carrière à travailler sur les enjeux américano-canadiens.*

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# On the Ground in Cyprus: The Extraction of Canadians from Lebanon in 2006

By Richard Belliveau

One sunny Sunday afternoon in mid-July, 2006, the day after my birthday, I received a phone call on my primitive Nokia cell phone while lolling on a Tunisian beach at Raf Raf. Our senior administrative assistant from the Canadian embassy in Tunis was calling to tell me that I had to get in touch with Ottawa immediately. I wanted to drive back to Tunis to access a more reliable connection. But no, I was instructed to call on the little Nokia.

Which I did. The gist of the conversation was that I should get myself post haste to Cyprus where Canada was assembling a team of government and military officials to assist in an evacuation of possibly thousands of Canadian citizens and their dependents from Lebanon, where Israel had imposed a maritime blockade while it struggled in a conflict with Hezbollah insurgents and terrorists based in that unhappy country.

I was at that time posted as Chargé d'affaires at the Canadian

embassy in Tunis, on a temporary assignment following retirement after 39 years in Foreign Affairs Canada, including a most recent assignment as ambassador to Algeria. Canada does not have a resident diplomatic establishment in Cyprus; it is accredited from the Canadian embassy in Bucharest. But the ambassador had recently left and his replacement was not yet in place. Ottawa needed someone to head up the team of dozens of officials who were being recruited and sent to undertake the operation on the ground in Cyprus. I was nearby, had a former ambassadorial title, and, presumably, I could get to Cyprus quickly. (It took two days – through Rome.)

The operation in Cyprus turned out to be one of the three focal points of the largest overseas evacuation of Canadian civilians in our history. We had no non-military precedents for it, although the processing of refugee boat people from Viet Nam thirty years earlier offered lots of lessons.

The crisis had broken out when the terrorist organization Hezbollah in southern Lebanon made a cross-border attack July 12 on Israeli personnel. The Israeli response targeted sites within Lebanon, like roads, bridges and infrastructure, that Israel determined supported Hezbollah operations. Israeli actions included the bombardment and closure of airports and a naval blockade of Lebanese ports.

In order to enable non-combatant maritime passage, the Israeli navy permitted restricted daylight entrance and exit of ships through the port of Beirut. Only within this restricted window of time could shipping enter and leave Lebanon. This was the opening through which the Canadian government proposed to evacuate the thousands of Canadians resident in Lebanon who wanted to escape the conflict.

Countries like Canada who had large expatriate populations residing in Lebanon scrambled to adopt measures to protect or evacuate their citizens from the war-torn country. In Ottawa, an interdepartmental Crisis Operations Centre was set up at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to coordinate our response.

The plan was that once small transport vessels left Beirut, we would bring the evacuees to the ports of Mersin and Adana in Southern Turkey, where the Canadian embassy in that country had set up reception and transit centres. The other reception point would be Cyprus, more specifically the port of Larnaca on the southeast coast, from which evacuees could be transferred to the international airport there for a charter flight to Canada.



Map courtesy of US Air Force

On my first day in Cyprus, I met with the small team already in place and consulted with the Honorary Canadian Consul, a well-connected Cypriot lawyer who was our principal contact on the ground. We had a meeting that evening with the dozen or so Canadian officials who had so far arrived from Ottawa and from nearby posts to conduct the operation. Fortunately, one of them was an experienced consular officer, accustomed to emergencies, who could efficiently pull things together. At the end of this first session, somebody said - I thought jokingly - that the Prime Minister was thinking of flying his CAF plane from Paris to Cyprus on his return home from the G-8 Summit conference in Moscow, to pick up some of the evacuees.

The next day, I got a call from David Mulroney, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's senior foreign policy advisor, who was then in Paris. He told me that the PM was considering the feasibility of bumping journalists from his official aircraft so that the plane would be able to fly to Cyprus to take as many as 80 of the Canadians coming from Beirut. "Rick," said David toward the end of the conversation, "you are taking all this very calmly". My thanks go the person who at least put the idea in my head the night before - it is much easier to be calm when you are not surprised.

And it did come to pass. Mulroney confirmed that the Prime Minister was coming to Cyprus. His party would be accommodated aboard the aircraft and would not require hotels. I rushed over to the Foreign Ministry in Nicosia to request approval, and very quickly the Cypriot authorities agreed. In addition, they offered the use of their VIP reception area at the airport, and announced that their Minister of Foreign Affairs would be at the airport to greet the Canadian Prime Minister.

And so it transpired that the first boatload of Canadians evacuated from Lebanon would be arriving in Larnaca, and some of them

would fly to Canada on the Prime Minister's plane.

The procedure was this. The Israeli naval blockade of Beirut would be lifted for controlled access and egress of vessels only during daylight hours. The vessels chartered by the Canadian government, most of them modest-sized cruise vessels or coastal ferries, would enter in the morning and had to be loaded as quickly as possible, then leave Beirut before six p.m., and sail the four to six hours it took to get to Cyprus (or to Turkey if that was the destination, a slightly longer trip). That meant that most of our arrivals by sea were at nighttime, which always makes for heightened drama.

In the port at Larnaca, we would meet them with buses, transport them to a reception centre, process their papers, feed and water them, assign them to flights (when we knew a flight was coming in), and then get them to the airport to board their plane. In the course of three weeks, our team in Cyprus did this for nearly 10,000 Canadians and their dependents, with essential support from headquarters, and much of the task by the seat of our pants. At the peak, we managed a chartered flight capacity of 800-900 seats every two days.

The first ship with some 250 of our people arrived, unusually, early in the afternoon, and it was an exciting event. Several people were waving from the bow. We had booked a large wedding reception centre that could accommodate 300 people; bottled water and lunch were available. Our first chartered flight would be at the airport that afternoon, and so was the Prime Minister's special plane. We had visa and security officers at the reception centre to check passports and create the two flight manifests, and the arriving refugees seemed both tired and relieved.

One young boy, perhaps ten years old, grabbed my sleeve, and asked in French if he could get more water for his family. I chatted with him and took him over to get more bottles.

He looked around and exclaimed with a bright smile, "Isn't Cyprus beautiful!" By early evening we had him and his family, as well as the rest of them, on the way to the airport for flights to Canada. It all looked so easy.

We were lucky because in fact it was not easy.

After that first ship and the "prime ministerial visit", things really started to roll.

Our team filled up quickly. It was composed of volunteer foreign service personnel both from headquarters and missions overseas, and even some locally-engaged staff from various Canadian missions who could offer special talent, like languages and consular experience (one locally-engaged officer from Moscow knew Greek and was perfect for managing our pool of drivers and hired vehicles). Two of our senior consular officers came from posts in Australia and South Africa. In addition to personnel from various branches of DFAIT, there were visa officers from Customs and Immigration Canada, CSIS screening officers, Health and Welfare people and an RCMP liaison officer. The Department of National Defence extended its Operation Lion in the eastern Mediterranean to include a team of personnel rotating to Cyprus. Over three weeks, more than 70 DFAIT staffers and about a dozen immigration officers would pass through to assist our operation in Cyprus, most of them staying for a week before going back to their home base.

With chartered planes coming in every couple of days, and boats from Beirut (and one from Tyre) coming whenever they could, we could not count on a one-day turnover in Larnaca. At first, Cypriot authorities found us an empty school to house our refugees, but the facilities were completely inadequate. Then they made available a bright and spacious indoor basketball stadium

which looked great after the dumpy school. Through the good offices of the Cyprus Civil Defence Force, several hundred camp beds and blankets were requisitioned for our use. A number of local caterers were contracted to provide meals for our visitors. That was our reception centre. Waiting for planes, we had to keep hundreds of people overnight and sometimes two nights.

Not all the persons whom we evacuated were Canadians. Canadian citizens were permitted to bring with them properly-documented non-Canadian spouses and close family members, and one adult for each additional minor child. These persons all had to be screened to ensure admissibility to Canada on the onward passage, and thus the need for visa and security officers. Over the three weeks, our officials issued more than 600 visas. Some six persons were found to be inadmissible, and we undertook to fly them to an acceptable destination such as Syria or Jordan. Cyprus would allow the non-Canadian passport holders only 48 hours in the country.

My role as head of the evacuation mission in Cyprus was rather unclear, except of course to be the main contact with the Cypriot government, with the task force in Ottawa and with interested media on the ground. The real work was done by the rotating team of volunteers – the professional consular officers from DFAIT and visa officials from CIC, and the other ministries and military personnel who were assigned to make it all work. I would be part of twice-daily conference call with the task force operations centre in Ottawa, exchanging information on how things were going on the ground, what we needed in support, and what was coming. Frequently, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Peter MacKay, was on the call. On one occasion, the suggestion was floated that the Minister was considering a visit to Cyprus to see how things were going.

Rather cheekily I replied that we would be delighted to see him and that we would certainly be able to find him a bunk in the arena while he was here.

Relations with the media were also important. The Harper government, at that point only a few months in office, had made it clear that only designated government spokespersons would speak for the government, and all ambassadors overseas had to clear their public statements with headquarters before making them public. In this case, we three heads of mission operations (myself and the ambassadors in Lebanon and Turkey) were the only officials permitted to speak with the media. In the first week or so, I did a number of interviews with the few Canadian journalists on the ground along with a few telephone calls from Canadian radio. It must have gone well because I emphasized that, while the whole operation was unusual, in fact there was very little real drama taking place on the ground in Cyprus, and indeed after the first week, media interest waned.

The most satisfying aspect of the experience for me (aside from getting through without any serious glitches) was seeing the willingness, flexibility and professionalism of those colleagues who volunteered for this operation, and to revel in their problem-solving effectiveness.

Indeed, what was equally impressive was the general cooperative attitude of the evacuees themselves in a not very comfortable situation. From the beginning, we had decked out the Canadian officials in yellow tee-shirts with “Canada” printed on the front (and our non-uniformed soldiers in black tee-shirts with “Security”). We found that many of the younger people among the groups arriving from Lebanon were pleased to assist with moving baggage, distribution of food and bedding, keeping children amused with games and such. Consequently, we printed up

another batch of tee-shirts with the word “Volunteer” on them, and these were worn by anyone who helped out in various ways. Virtually all of them wanted to keep the tee-shirts as souvenirs of their passage through Cyprus. At one point, after we had messed up the passenger list for the day’s flight by including some persons who arrived in Larnaca later than others at the arena, I located a megaphone and held an impromptu talk with the 300 or so folks in the area – in English and French. The explanation and assurances were well received, and that crisis was passed. The reality was that we were all Canadians in it together, and as long as people knew what was happening, they were satisfied.

After the first week or ten days, virtually every other country that was evacuating their nationals from Lebanon had completed the task. The Cypriot government, though uniformly helpful, was getting a bit edgy about how much more time the Canadians needed to do their work. The reality, however, was that Canada had probably the largest expatriate population in Lebanon of all countries seeking to do as we were doing. It was easy enough for France to send a large naval vessel to take off French nationals and sail them back to France in a matter of several hours. We still had to fly our people across another ocean. It was a rather more complex operation, and required some patience. When our job in Larnaca was mostly completed, we threw a thank-you banquet at a large restaurant (there were several such large local establishments catering to wedding receptions, *entre’autres*) to show our appreciation for as many of the Cypriot officials, security personnel, airline and port employees, drivers and of course the Canadians who were still there, to express our gratitude for their generous support of our effort.

In the end, the Canadian team in Cyprus had enabled the transfer to

Canada of more than 10,000 of the total of 15,500 persons evacuated from Lebanon, most of them over a three-week period. We filled 45 flights out of Cyprus. I was told that one Sunday, the last Sunday in July, was the busiest in the history of Larnaca airport – which was carrying on with its many other summer charter flights in support of its tourist industry.

Some 175 additional DFAIT staff had been deployed to manage the project, including 75 staff members from 39 Canadian diplomatic missions overseas to assist with our missions in Lebanon, Turkey and Cyprus.

By the end of that summer, I could count forty years working in Canada's foreign service. This was perhaps the first time I did not have to struggle to

explain to friends and family exactly what we in the foreign service were doing for Canadians in the world. ■

*Richard Belliveau joined External Affairs in 1966, and over the next 39 years had assignments on five continents, including Head of Mission at three Canadian posts, in Shanghai, Brunei Darussalam and Algeria, before retirement.*

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## Notes from Iran, November, 1979 to January, 1980

By Junior Gosse

In the fall of 1979, Iran was undergoing a revolution, and the Canadian embassy employed Military Policemen (MP) to provide Embassy Security, a rare role during this time. A fresh section of MP, of which I was part, were switching out the MPs who had been stationed at the embassy for the previous 6 months.

The Canadian embassy was a four-story structure near downtown Tehran. The building had limited security features, with a front entrance reception area with a secured portal. There was a secure vault for the crypto-communications equipment, with an area containing printing equipment for incoming communications. The Ambassador had a suite on one floor furnished with a couple of chairs and a glass-top desk. It truly intrigued me that an ambassador could conduct his important duties and not have stacks of files and papers to deal with in an era where paper was the norm. Despite my thoughts, Ambassador Taylor carried out his duties from this glass-top desk and became the most highly-decorated ambassador to serve Canada, an accomplishment that still stands today.

On 4 November, 1979, demonstrators/terrorists overwhelmed the US embassy,

taking everyone inside hostage. It was initially thought that tensions would ease and things at the US Embassy would return to normal. But as time went by, there was no end in sight. Shortly after my arrival in Iran, Sgt Claude Gautier, held a TOP SECRET meeting with me, informing me that the Canadian Embassy was harbouring six US diplomats who would be referred to as "houseguests". These houseguests had escaped the US

Embassy, some running out the back door as Iranians entered the front. The houseguests were being hidden from Iranian authorities at the residences of Ambassador Taylor and Mr. John Sheardown, the Chief Immigration Officer. Sgt Gautier informed me that he needed help from me regarding the houseguests and that I was not to discuss this with anybody other than those directly involved. I immediately agreed.

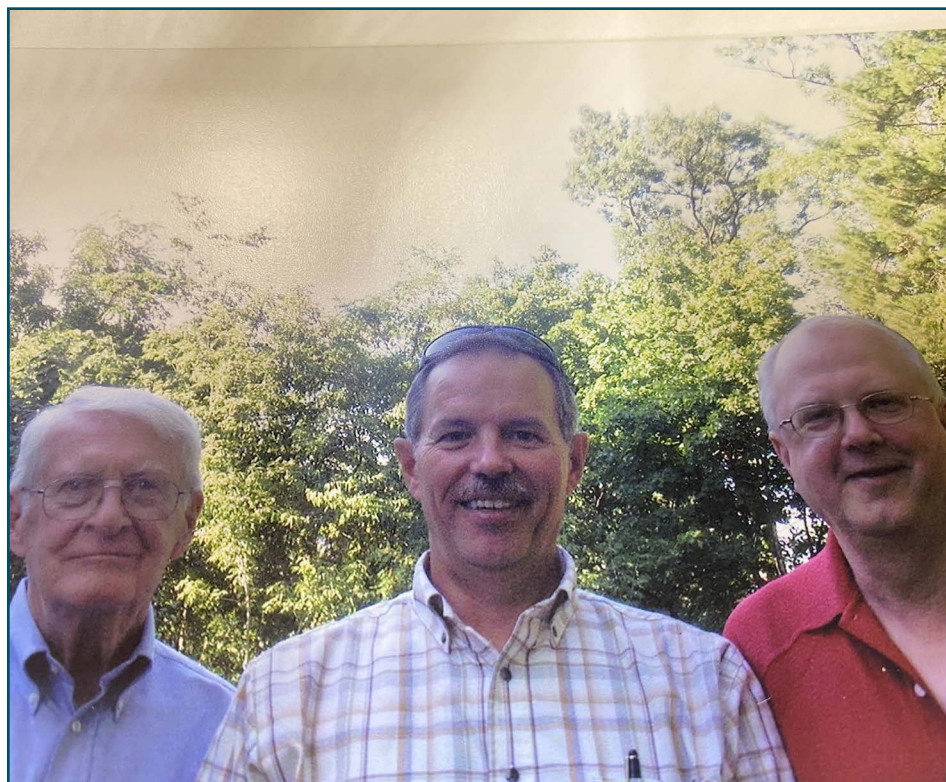


Photo: Junior Gosse

During one of my first night shifts, I answered a telephone call from Iranian Authorities questioning me on the identity of someone by the name of Jim Edward whom they had detained. I was able to confirm that Jim Edward was a member of the Canadian Embassy, and he was released. This call seemed suspicious; Ambassador Taylor was notified and he immediately came to the Embassy. I learned later that Sergeant (Sgt) Jim Edward, MP, was collecting intelligence information to be used for the US Military operation (OP) "Eagle Claw". Sgt Edward quickly departed Iran as a result of this potential compromise, and fortunately he was not linked by the Iranian authorities to intelligence-gathering. Op Eagle Claw was later executed by a US joint-force operation in an attempt to rescue the hostages held at the US Embassy. During the execution of Op Eagle Claw, a crash occurred at a rendezvous site in a desert southeast of Tehran, involving US military aircraft and helicopters preparing to advance on the Embassy. US military assets were destroyed; servicemen lost their lives, and the mission was aborted.

My TOP SECRET duties involved accompanying Sgt Gautier to purchase groceries for safe houses that we were setting up in Tehran in the event that the houseguests had to be moved quickly. The safe houses had food, water and beds to accommodate the houseguests and accompanying escorts. I was given a cover story that I was part of a British cement company setting up business in Tehran, and that there could be different people coming and going from the safe houses at various times. I often wondered later if I were questioned, and with my best Newfoundland accent and Sgt Gauthier with his best French-Canadian accent, whether we would have raised enough suspicion to blow our cover. Fortunately I didn't have to explain any of my actions.

As time passed and the hostage situation continued, with no end in sight, arrangements were being made to scale back Canadian Embassy staff. Staff who departed Iran were notified that they could not return. Those remaining behind were tasked with packing up their belongings. From mid-January 1980 until we departed, MP personnel were tasked with destroying classified documents. The lone embassy paper shredder was in dire need of repair, so a burn-barrel was used on the roof. At one point, a telephone call was received asking about the burning on the roof. As a result, we reverted to the paper shredder, greatly hindering the destruction.

During one night shift, the crypto device that punched holes in the decoder paper-roll was running low on paper. The on-duty MP decided to tape the new end of the paper strip to the old roll passing it through the device, punching it out as it went along. When the Embassy communicator ran the decoder paper strip through the decoder the following day, it jammed at the spot where it was taped, causing the decoder to break at a critical time with no backup.

An escape plan was developed by Canadian and US governments to provide false Canadian passports and documents (driver's license, health card and others, commonly referred to as "pocket litter" in the spy world) to the houseguests, and they were given a cover story by the CIA. They were in Tehran as a Canadian film crew scouting out locations for a fictitious movie called "Argo". The title selected was based on the Knock Knock line: Knock! Knock! Who's there? Argo! Argo who? Argo F \_ \_ \_ yourself. One may say it was a fitting statement to the Iranians, provided that the Operation went as planned.

During my final days in Tehran, I worked the night shift, and during the day, I attended the Sheardown

residence with the four houseguests living there. I provided a low-level of security and chatted with them about anything Canadian, helping them take on their new Canadian identities. At night I destroyed classified equipment with a sledge hammer, causing holes to appear in the floor near the Communications Room, where you could see through, to the floor below. I also helped drive departing staff to the Mehrabad Airport to familiarize myself with the route and be a driver on the day of the escape. The departure of the houseguests was risky, as Mr. Jean Pelletier, the Washington, DC, correspondent of the Montreal newspaper, LaPresse, had figured out that US Embassy staff were being hidden from Iranian Authorities by the Canadian Embassy.

On 28 January 1980, I locked the Embassy and transported the Ambassador's secretary and my immediate supervisor to the Mehrabad Airport for our flight, in advance of the houseguests' arrival. My immediate supervisor was aware we were closing the Embassy and returning to Canada. However, he was unaware of the true reason.

Clearing security checks at the airport was a critical point of the departure, as there was a serialized entry form completed when you entered Iran that was held at the airport. You were required to provide the second copy of the serialized form upon departure. Presumably, both forms were matched up. The houseguests did not have a matching serialized form as their documentation was fake. Fortunately, when the houseguests were processed, all cleared the checkpoints. CIA Operative, Mr. Tony Mendes, whom I had briefly met the day before, was in the crowd, observing the houseguests progress through the checkpoints.

The Ambassador's secretary, Ms. Laverna Dollimore, was aware of the clandestine departure.



*Junior Gosse at the Embassy in Tehran c. 1980*

However, she had not met any of the houseguests face to face. While in the departures area and without the presence of my immediate supervisor, I pointed out each houseguest to her. At one point, one of the houseguests, Mr. Lee Schatz, who knew me, noticed a Canadian flag on my bag and in an attempt to show a calm and friendly demeanor, spoke to me, making small talk about Canada and asking me where I was travelling, knowing fully, the reason why we were both there. He did well with his American greeting of “Canadian Eh!”. I departed Iran for England and the houseguests departed for Germany. Upon clearing Iranian airspace, Ambassador Taylor, Mr. Roger Lucy, First Secretary, Ms. Mary O’Flarity, our communicator, and Sgt Gauthier, MP, sent a final TOP SECRET message to Ottawa indicating that the houseguests had cleared Iranian airspace. Our final crypto-equipment destruction was carried out by Sgt Gauthier, resulting in him receiving the moniker “Sledge” from Ambassador Taylor. They immediately departed Iran.

I reunited with fellow MPs in London, England, and the following day, while flying home, news broke about six US Diplomats escaping Iran with the help of Canadian Embassy staff using fake Canadian passports. On arrival in Montreal, the Canada Customs officer who was checking our passports congratulated us for our successful operation. I denied any knowledge until a classified debrief was conducted with proper authorities in Ottawa the following day. I felt ridiculed by my fellow MPs and disloyal to my immediate supervisor for knowingly putting their lives in a more dangerous situation than had already existed. Being part of the inner circle of this clandestine operation required me to conduct additional tasks my fellow MPs were not called upon to do. I was questioned by them, and I had to make excuses and lie. Had this operation been uncovered at any time while in Iran, the end result would have been drastically different for everyone. When news broke about this successful escape, US-Canada relations rose to an unprecedented high. When the CIA made its involvement in this

operation public some 25 years later (something rarely seen in CIA Operations), further positive accolades were made towards Canada and its Embassy staff.

Several years following this operation we had a reunion, and Mr. Bob Anders, one of the houseguests, had a presentation to make to Mr. John Sheardown. Mr. Anders had shown up at Mr. Sheardown’s residence in November, 1979, with only the clothes on his back, and he was given several pairs of Stanfield’s underwear by Mr. Sheardown. Some 25 years later, he returned the gift. The Canadian Embassy staff and Stanfield’s Ltd, a proud Canadian Company, were behind the houseguests’ behinds in more ways than one.

This operation resulted in the production of two movies: “The Canadian Caper” and later “Argo”, following the rare move by the CIA to declassify their operation. The actions that took place during this time still garner the interest of Canadians, Americans and others around the world. They show how Canada and its Embassy staff helped Americans during a time when help seemed to be elusive. ■

*Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) A. Junior Gosse, MMM, CD served for 28 years in the Canadian Armed Forces as an Infantryman and Military Policeman, serving overseas and coast to coast in Canada. Following his service he initially worked at Halifax Stanfield International Airport as the Security Manager and later as a Transport Canada Aviation Security Inspector. Now retired, he enjoys woodcarving and spending time with family.*

# Humanity: The roots of the universal declaration of human rights

By *Bertrand Ramcharan*

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a document of the people, for the people, and by the people. It is an eternal document and will last forever in the hearts of humanity.

At the time of the drafting of the Covenant of the League of Nations, in 1919, representatives of peoples from different parts of the world came to Paris to press the case for recognition of equality and justice, and for protection of people under persecution.

Even as the Second World War was being fought, representatives of peoples from Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe organized, researched, wrote learned studies and papers, and made representations for the forthcoming United Nations organization to be grounded in respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Peoples' representatives, and leaders of non-governmental organizations, strenuously advocated at the UN's founding conference in San Francisco, in 1945, for the promotion and protection of human rights to be the lode-star of the new world body.

When the Commission on Human Rights provided for under the UN Charter set out on its journey to develop an International Bill of Rights, representatives of non-governmental organizations made numerous substantive contributions to the drafting of the Universal Declaration.

Thus it was that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights opened, in its first article, with the ringing statement that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of fellowship.

Admittedly, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted on 10 December, 1948, large parts of the world were under colonial rule or foreign domination. But the Universal Declaration was the inspirational document for these very peoples when they claimed their right to self-determination.

One could see this in the historic Freedom Charter of South Africa, in the demands of the peoples of China, India, Ghana, Indonesia, South Africa, Vietnam, and others claiming their birthright as free beings, as free countries. Herein lies the explanation why the opening article of the two international covenants on human rights enshrines the right of self-determination for all peoples.

Without a doubt, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was and is a hallowed document of the people, by the people, and for the people.

The sources of international law, as specified in the Charter of the United Nations, more specifically the Statute of the International Court of Justice, include "international custom, as evidence of a general practice accepted as law". The peoples of the world have continuously given their assent to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as binding international customary law.

The practice referred to in Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice cannot be limited to the practice of Governments. How can this be, when Governments are the ones that grossly violate human rights in numerous parts of the world? It would be an utter travesty of justice to limit the practice concerned to those of Governments, including rogue governments.

This year, the seventy-fifth year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is the moment to recognize a shift in contemporary international law, namely that the voice of the people must be decisive in determining what is international human rights law, what is justice, and what are norms of international public policy.

This is an important submission. For the seventy-fifth year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights finds the world in multiple dimensions. In one dimension, the peoples of the world are clamouring for their rights as recognized in the Universal Declaration – economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. The strength of the Universal Declaration among the peoples of the world is quite firm.

In a related dimension, there are numerous successor international conventions and solemn documents reaffirming the Universal Declaration, as well as regional and sub-regional documents, courts or commissions doing the same in Africa, the Americas, Europe, and parts of Asia and the Pacific. One recalls in this regard the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights.

In a third dimension, all 193 Member States of the United Nations participating in the Universal Periodic Review process of the UN Human Rights Council profess acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and proceed on this basis. They submit reports on the efforts they are making to implement international human rights norms and engage in mutual dialogues and exchanges of experience on how they are proceeding in their mission to uphold human rights. This is taking place

even as many of the Governments participating in this process are unrepresentative or are engaged in the commission of gross violations of human rights.

In a fourth dimension, some powerful governments are asserting that they did not participate in the drafting of unspecified parts of international law and therefore do not consider themselves bound by those unspecified parts. But this argument cannot possibly be allowed when it comes to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, with the participation of governments world-wide, resoundingly reaffirmed the universality of human rights and the centrality of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the same spirit, the Millennium Declaration adopted by Heads of State and Government world-wide sets out values for the twenty-first century anchored in the human rights of the Universal Declaration.

Humanity has thus spoken convincingly in support of the

continuing validity and centrality of the Universal Declaration, and we have to insist that the voice of humanity is decisive when it comes to determining what are international norms of human rights. The very Governments that violate human rights cannot be allowed to call the shots on this vital matter.

The fact that human rights are being grossly violated by Governments and others in numerous parts of the world does not diminish the binding legal nature of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In national legal



Photo: UN

*Partial view of the first meeting of the 8-member Drafting Committee on International Bill of Rights, Commission on Human Rights, appointed by Mrs. Eleanor D. Roosevelt, Commission Chairman, 1947. Members of the committee are from left to right : Dr. P.C. Chang, China, Vice-Chairman; Henri Laugier, Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the UN Department of Social Affairs; Mrs. Eleanor D. Roosevelt, USA, Chairman; Prof. John P. Humphrey, Canada, Director of the UN Human Rights Division; Dr. Charles Malik, Lebanon, Rapporteur; Prof. Vladimir M. Koretsky, USSR.*

systems the validity of laws is not affected by the fact that people breach them, whether criminal or civil laws.

Likewise, the fact that Governments and others are grossly violating human rights cannot be allowed to detract from the legal bindingness of the human rights norms of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The mission of the international human rights movement can be presented in the form of a centre of commitment surrounded by concentric circles. At the centre of commitment stands the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Around this centre there is a first circle of achievements: the norms, machinery, and institutions adopted to advance human rights worldwide. Outside this first circle there is a second circle of opportunities: to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to build national, regional and international protection systems,

to foster a universal culture of human rights, and to strive for the prevention and cessation of gross violations of human rights. Beyond this, there is a third circle, the circle of justice, currently occupied by the UN human rights treaty bodies, the fact-finding mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council and by the International Criminal Court.

Our challenge as we celebrate the seventy-fifth year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to build-up national, regional and international protection systems, to foster a universal culture of human rights, and to strive for the prevention and cessation of gross violations of human rights. Along the way, we must continue our efforts to enhance and strengthen the circle of justice.

By insisting that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights takes its legal validity and strength from

the support of humanity, that the very Governments that grossly violate human rights cannot be allowed to diminish the binding character of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and by striving to enhance national human rights protection systems in every country of the world, we shall come nearer to implementing the vision of the Universal Declaration.

This principle is elegantly stated in the opening article of the Declaration: all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of fellowship. This, indeed, is the will of the people, the will of humanity. ■

*Dr. Bertrand G. Ramcharan served for more than thirty years in the UN system, beginning his work in the 1970s in the UN's Human Rights Division, and serving as Under-Secretary General as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.*



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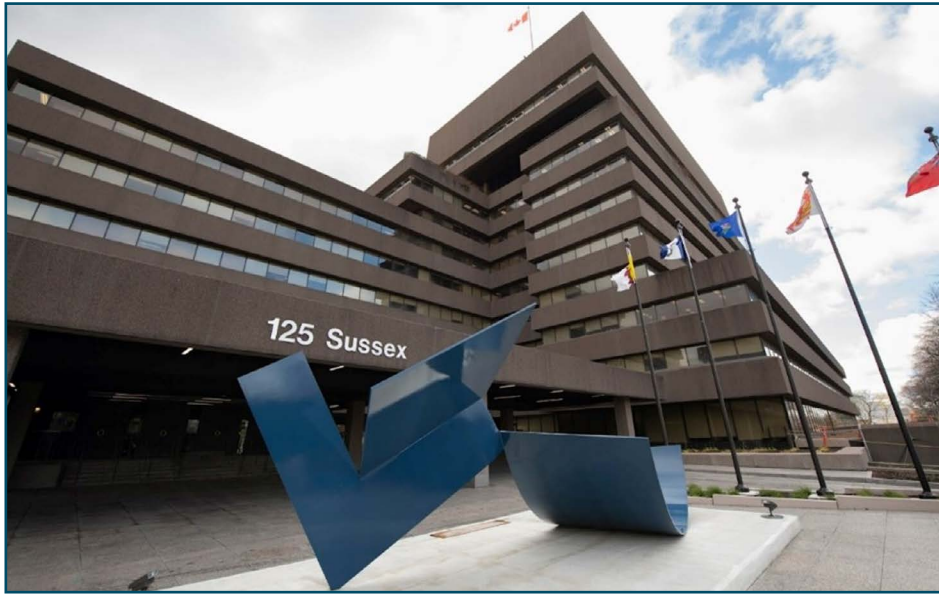
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# The Move to the Pearson building, 1973

By Ron Pearce

Photo: Courtesy of Public Services and Procurement Canada



A pre-renovation photo.

Prior to 1969 no Federal Department, External Affairs included, had a Finance Division. Financial management was done by the Chief Treasury Officer of the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury, under the Department of Finance. Prior to 1969, the External Affairs' Chief Treasury Officer was R.H. (Harry) Matthews. After 1969, as a result of the Glassco Commission, the offices of the Comptroller of the Treasury were folded into the departments, becoming their Finance Divisions. There are only about three of the original Finance Division employees still alive, and I am one of them.

Prior to moving to the L.B. Pearson building, we had offices on the top floor of the Langevin Block on the corner of Wellington and Elgin streets, the top floor of the Copeland Building on the corner of Kent and Albert streets, and also on the main floor of the Daly Building, on the corner of Mackenzie and Rideau streets.

The move to the L.B. Pearson building was greeted with great excitement. We were able to get rid of the old wooden desks and chairs and were given modern modular desk and

office chairs, which was a real treat. We finally were able to work in an air conditioned office.

The Finance Division was on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, the top floor, of Tower C. We had the whole floor, so with the floor to ceiling windows we got a panoramic view of the whole city. It was a real joy to work there.

The technology in the building was fascinating at the time, an example of which was the forwarding of mail in boxes between floors and towers with the press of a button. The art work in the building was another fascination and at times the brunt of jokes or head-shaking at the prices.

Prior to the move, we got to take a tour of the building. During the tour, I crudely filmed the tour with my SUPER 8 Camera. It can be seen on the DFAIT RETIREES FACEBOOK page at the following site: <https://www.facebook.com/ron.pearce.908/videos/335620913118860/?idorigv=148095822070>

It is in the Time Capsule on a VHS VIDEO TAPE CASSETTE (remember those??). The Time Capsule is in the front of the Building between the two steps and doors.

We stayed on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of Tower C for a few years and then were moved to the main Floor of Tower C and the Legal Bureau took over our place on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of Tower C.

We used to say putting lawyers on the top floor of buildings was the closest lawyers would get to heaven. ■

*Ron Pearce is a retired finance officer.*

## The Transatlantic Dialogue: Canada, the US and the UK

The third Transatlantic Dialogue, featuring speakers from the diplomatic services of Canada, the US and the UK, was held on 9 November, 2023. It was organized and introduced by Bob Hage on behalf of AmbCanada and the Canadian Foreign Service Alumni Forum. The topic under discussion was "Can the West Win Over the Rest?"

Alex Bugailiskis moderated the session (as it was the Canadian turn in the chair), and the speakers were Guil Rishchynski on behalf of the Canadian organizations, Tony Wayne on behalf of our US partners, and Sir Myles Wickstead for the UK.

The recording of this session can be found on You Tube at the following address: <https://youtu.be/t3NDNItkEQA>

The second Dialogue was held on 26 April, 2023. The three speakers for this session, on the subject of "Managing Tensions in the Indo-Pacific Region", were Jonathan Fried, on behalf of the Canadian organizations, Stapleton Roy on behalf of our US partners, and Sir Jeremy Greenstock for the UK.

A recording of the second dialogue can be found at the following link: (197) Second Transatlantic Panel Discussion Managing Rising Tensions in the Indo-Pacific – YouTube

The dialogue will resume in the first months of 2024.

# The move to the LBP – From gothic splendor to the clean, dull lines of modern Ottawa

By John Graham

The move from downtown Ottawa to the L. B. Pearson building in 1973 – fifty years ago – was a long overdue improvement, functionally if not aesthetically. It was not a surprise that most of my colleagues had a positive view. We were scattered across the External Affairs gulag in centre town: the Daly Building, the Bankal Building and other office space rented to accommodate the overflow from the East Bloc.

I had worked in both the Bankal Building (Information Division) and the Daly Building (Legal Division). Neither was blessed with charm nor any remote architectural or historical interest. I particularly recall the Bankal (corner of Bank and Albert). Facing Bank St, it was distinguished by a bright green plastic exterior sheath. Inside, many of its activities and most of the FS probationers therein were subject to the tight stewardship and iron grammatical discipline of Mary Quarles Dench – the cause of several departures for better paying jobs. As I recall, one of the few advantages of the Bankal was its proximity to the Cathay restaurant.

The immediate reason for our exit from the East Bloc was to make room for the rapidly expanding Privy Council Office, whose officers were expected to be closer to the centre of action – the Prime Minister and the cabinet offices – than those in External Affairs.

Those of us comfortably installed in the East Bloc watched with rising alarm as the linoleum that ran along all the hallways was gradually replaced by authentic wool carpeting. The carpeting advanced and the foreign service retreated.

For me the move was a different story. I was (forgive the hyperbole)

enraptured by the East Bloc – its history, gothic splendor, the forest of ornamental cast iron spires and finials on its copper roof and those of its neighbours on Parliament Hill and the knowledge that fourteen prime ministers had their offices there. Such a setting invited respect and eccentricities.

Before I met her, my wife Judy worked there as well. She recalls commissionaires charging down the halls with raised brooms chasing bats, in the winter RCMP officers encased in enormous fur coats, and in summer, the sound of the band and the colour of bushied and red-coated soldiers of the Governor General's Foot Guard, who changed the guard almost at our door step.

I was in no hurry to leave, and in my case there were a few months of reprieve. My boss at the time was Mitchell Sharp, Secretary of State for External Affairs – I was his speech writer and correspondence officer (foreign affairs, not political letters). Mr. Sharp saw many disadvantages in moving out of shouting range of the PM and other ministerial colleagues, and he delayed his move and that of his immediate staff: Tony Malone (question period), Jon Church (chief of staff), Dick Gorham (press officer), his excellent secretary and me. In the end there was a compromise. For several months he commuted between his old office in the East Bloc and the new one on Sussex Drive.

Eventually, of course, we all moved, but leaving was hard. The partially mullioned window in my office on the second floor looked out across a green sward to the Centre Bloc. My desk was enormous and, allegedly, had for a time been used by Sir John A. Macdonald. The office, like most on

the west side of the second floor was part of the occasional guided tours of the building. A few steps in front of the desk was a marble (no longer functional) fireplace. Originally the fireplace signaled status and a marble fireplace signaled high status – alas, my presence was not earned but solely the consequence of building upheaval.

The East Bloc was a special experience – one of the most bewitching and fascinating buildings in the country. In 1861, the architecture was praised by the English visitor and novelist, Anthony Trollope, for “nobility of detail”.

On first arrival at the ministerial ninth floor of the LBP, I was surprised to learn that I had a choice of offices- one with a magnificent view north across the Ottawa river to the Gatineau Hills and the other a view south over the Rideau river, the lovely Minto bridges and bits of New Edinburgh. In a moment of uncharacteristic sado/masochism I chose south on the grounds that the view north would lead to idle gazing when I should have been composing speeches.

The LBP had other attractive features: a reasonably good cafeteria (although not a patch on the one in the West Bloc), an excellent library, very good hospitality capacity, bicycle racks and ample underground parking. It was also served by friendly commissionaires who, because I often mislaid the real thing, allowed me into the upper floors on the strength of my Camp Fortune Ski pass. ■

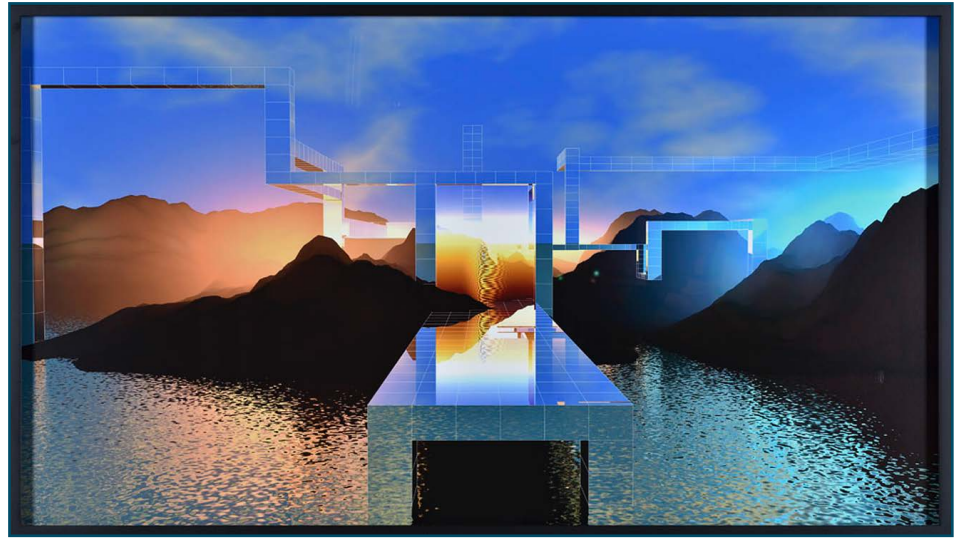
*John Graham enjoyed a long, satisfying and entertaining career in the foreign service, as well as a period as a senior official in the Organization of American States (OAS).*

# GAC's Visual Art Collection: Celebrating 100 years

By Evelyne Laurin

The Global Affairs Visual Art Collection is the largest collection of modern and contemporary Canadian art on display internationally. Originating in the 1920s, it now contains over 6,500 works on display in over 100 cities worldwide. The collection celebrates the power of art for cultural diplomacy purposes and the importance of infusing the representational areas of Canada's embassies, high commissions, consulates and official residences abroad with a diverse and inclusive image of contemporary Canada.

These artworks represent decades of excellence in Canadian art in all mediums. Most were acquired before these artists and their artwork became part of many other notable collections. These acquisitions can be credited to forward-thinking Canadian art professionals, diplomats and artists who over time selected, purchased and created these pieces. Today, our missions showcase works by artists such as members of the Group of Seven, Jean-Paul Riopelle,



**Sabrina Ratté**, *Undream*, 2019, laminated Archival Pigment Print, 86 x 152 cm, Global Affairs Canada Visual Art Collection ©Sabrina Ratté

Alfred Pellan, Marcelle Ferron, Charles Gagnon, Rita Letendre, Mary Pratt, Alex Janvier and Michael Snow, as well as a whole new generation of artists, including Nadia Myre, Jordan Bennett, Sabrina Ratté, Nico Williams, Caroline Monne – to name but a few.

A century of collecting has yielded a valuable cultural asset, and

our objective now is to continue acquiring artwork while addressing gaps in the collection to make it representative of Canada today. In recent years, the Global Affairs Visual Art Collection started addressing these gaps with acquisitions from one of artists of the National accessArts Centre, the country's first multidisciplinary



**Richard Johnson**, *Ice Village # 9*, L'Anse Saint-Jean, Saguenay River, Quebec, 2010, digital photograph, 72.6 x 156.2 cm, Global Affairs Canada Visual Art Collection ©Richard Johnson

disability arts organization, as well as our latest acquisition, which focused on artworks from Yukon artists.

The Visual Art program serves several purposes that go beyond enhancing the interior spaces of our missions abroad. It tells Canadian

stories and provides a welcoming image of our great country. It also supports Canadian art and artists by acquiring and promoting their works abroad. Furthermore, it creates connections and fosters cross-cultural exchanges while supporting our cultural diplomacy

through highlighting Canadian policy, engagement, values and perspectives. ■

*This article is courtesy of Evelyne Laurin of the Visual Art Program, Global Affairs Canada.*

## Collection d'arts visuels d'AMC : 100 ans d'existence

*Par Evelyne Laurin*

La Collection des arts visuels d'Affaires mondiales Canada (AMC) est la plus grande collection d'œuvres canadiennes d'art moderne et contemporain exposées à l'échelle internationale. Créée dans les années 1920, la collection contient maintenant plus de 6 500 œuvres exposées dans plus de 100 villes partout dans le monde. Elle met en valeur le pouvoir de l'art à des fins de diplomatie culturelle et l'importance de refléter une image diversifiée et inclusive du Canada contemporain dans les aires vouées aux fonctions de représentation des ambassades, des hauts-commissariats, des résidences officielles et des consulats canadiens à l'étranger.

Ces œuvres d'art représentent les décennies d'excellence de l'art canadien dans tous les moyens d'expression. La majorité d'entre elles ont été acquises avant que ces artistes et leurs œuvres ne fassent partie de nombreuses autres collections remarquables. Le mérite de ces acquisitions peut être attribué aux spécialistes de l'art, aux diplomates et aux artistes canadiens avant-gardistes qui ont choisi, acheté et créé ces œuvres au fil du temps. Aujourd'hui, nos missions exposent des œuvres créées par des artistes comme les membres du Groupe des sept, Jean Paul Riopelle, Alfred Pellán, Marcelle



**Stan Hunt**, *Supernatural Raven*, 2006, red cedar, acrylic paint, and cedar bark, 124.5 x 22.8 x 22.8 cm, Global Affairs Canada Visual Art Collection ©Stan Hunt

Ferron, Charles Gagnon, Rita Letendre, Mary Pratt, Alex Janvier et Michael Snow, ainsi que celles d'une toute nouvelle génération d'artistes, dont Nadia Myre, Jordan Bennett, Sabrina Ratté, Nico Williams, Caroline Monnet – pour n'en citer que quelques exemples.

Au cours du dernier siècle, grâce aux œuvres collectionnées, on a créé un bien culturel de grande valeur. L'objectif est maintenant de continuer à acquérir des œuvres d'art et à combler les

lacunes dans la collection afin que celle-ci soit représentative du Canada d'aujourd'hui. Au cours des dernières années, on a commencé à combler les lacunes dans la Collection des arts visuels d'AMC par l'acquisition d'œuvres, comme celles de l'un des artistes du National accessArts Centre, la première organisation artistique multidisciplinaire pour personnes handicapées au Canada. Il en est de même pour notre dernière acquisition, qui est axée sur les œuvres d'artistes du Yukon.

Le programme a plusieurs objectifs qui ne se limitent pas à l'embellissement de l'intérieur de nos missions à l'étranger. Il raconte des histoires canadiennes et présente une image accueillante de notre grand pays. Il soutient également l'art et les artistes canadiens, car il permet l'acquisition de leurs œuvres et la promotion de celles-ci à l'étranger. De plus, il crée des liens et favorise les échanges interculturels, en plus de soutenir notre diplomatie culturelle par la mise en évidence des politiques, de l'engagement, des valeurs et des perspectives du Canada. ■

*Cet article est une gracieuseté d'Evelyne Laurin du Programme d'arts visuels d'Affaires mondiales Canada.*

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### On the Web:

PassBlue, the digital news source for information on the United Nations, has an interesting interview with Bob Rae, Canada's Ambassador to the United Nations. The conversation between Ambassador Rae and Stephen Schlesinger can be found at: [Why the UN Still Matters: A Conversation With a US Historian and a Canadian Diplomat – PassBlue](#)

And here are some interesting Facebook groups for some of us in the foreign service community: [CIDA alumni: \(20+\) CIDA Alumni | Facebook](#)

[External Affairs/Foreign Affairs/GAC retirees: \(20+\) External/Foreign/Global Affairs Retirees | Facebook](#)

[Former Foreign Service Communicators: \(20+\) Canada's Former Foreign Service Communicators | Facebook](#)

We're happy to add other groups. Let us know what they are.

### Communications from our readers:

I have seen the mention of the British Diplomatic Oral History Programme. in the latest edition of Forum.

You may also be interested in a series of booklets produced by the FCO/FCDO Historians on a variety of subjects. Some of them are about major world events/ crises in which FCO staff were deeply involved (eg the Rhodesia Settlement, the Berlin Crisis, etc). Others relate to the changing attitude towards staff issues in the FCO (Class in the FCO, Women and the Foreign Office, Race and the Foreign Office, etc). Some of them are now a little out of date – but you may find them interesting nevertheless. The link is at <https://issuu.com/fcohistorians>

*Stuart Gregson*

## How to join the Canadian Foreign Service Alumni Forum

The Canadian Foreign Service Alumni Forum (CFSAF) is a non-governmental organization consisting primarily of retired, or about-to-retire members of the Canadian foreign service, from several departments and various occupational groups. CFSAF's bulletin, FORUM, is published three times per year. Individuals wanting to subscribe to FORUM can send an email to: [edit.forum99@gmail.com](mailto:edit.forum99@gmail.com). We do not send FORUM to persons who have not requested it.

There are three different types of membership in CFSAF. First, there is an "annual membership." The fee is \$25 per year, and CFSAF will bill annually, roughly at the beginning of each calendar year. Second, there is a preferred option, to join as "life members," at a cost of \$200. This fee is paid only once. After that time, there is no hassle again about paying bills.

Third, our top level of membership is "benefactor". This is a life membership for which a member chooses to pay \$250 or

more in support of the organization. It is a one-time payment, although benefactors sometimes offer additional financial support in subsequent years. If benefactors concur, it is our intention to publish their names as a tangible sign of our gratitude for advancing CFSAF's work.

There are two different ways of paying for membership in CFSAF. The first and most convenient way is by electronic transfer. Payers can send their payments, for the appropriate amount, to the following email address: [forum99@gmail.com](mailto:forum99@gmail.com). This account has an auto-deposit feature. There is no need for a security question and answer.

Please accompany this payment with an email with your name and email address. We know who you are, but we don't know how to contact you!

The second method of paying is by cheque and mail. Send your cheque to the following address (again, please ensure to include your name and email address):

**CFSAF/FASEC**  
c/o 11547 13<sup>th</sup> Ave NW  
Edmonton, Alberta T6J 7A8

## Comment se joindre au Forum des anciens du service extérieur canadien

Le Forum des anciens du service extérieur canadien (FASEC) est une organisation non gouvernementale composée principalement de membres retraités ou sur le point de prendre leur retraite du service extérieur canadien, de plusieurs ministères et de divers groupes professionnels. Le bulletin du FASEC, FORUM, est publié trois fois par an. Les particuliers peuvent s'inscrire à FORUM en envoyant un courriel à : [edit.forum99@gmail.com](mailto:edit.forum99@gmail.com). Nous n'envoyons pas FORUM aux personnes ; de même, si des personnes souhaitent se « désinscrire » de FORUM, elles peuvent envoyer un courriel à [edit.forum99@gmail.com](mailto:edit.forum99@gmail.com) avec un message disant : « se désinscrire ».

Il existe trois différents types d'adhésion au FASEC. Premièrement, il y a une «adhésion annuelle». Les frais sont de 25 \$ par année, et FASEC facturera annuellement, environ au début de chaque année civile. Deuxièmement, il existe une option privilégiée, celle d'adhérer en tant que « membre à vie », au coût de 200 \$. Ce frais n'est payé qu'une seule fois. Passé ce délai, on n'a plus à se soucier du paiement des factures.

Troisièmement, notre plus haut niveau

d'adhésion est "bienfaiteur". Il s'agit d'une adhésion à vie pour laquelle un membre choisit de payer 250 \$ ou plus pour soutenir l'organisation. Il s'agit d'un paiement unique, mais le membre "bienfaiteur" est libre de faire des dons supplémentaires ultérieurement. Si le bienfaiteur est d'accord, nous publierons son nom. Comme un signe tangible de notre gratitude pour l'avancement du travail du FASEC.

Il existe deux manières différentes de payer l'adhésion au FASEC. Le premier moyen, et le plus pratique, est le virement électronique. Les payeurs peuvent envoyer leurs paiements, pour le montant approprié, à l'adresse courriel suivante : [finance.forum99@gmail.com](mailto:finance.forum99@gmail.com). Ce compte possède la fonction auto-dépôt. Il n'est donc pas nécessaire de fournir une question et une réponse de sécurité.

Il est important que vous envoyiez un courriel avec votre nom et votre adresse courriel. Nous savons qui vous êtes, mais nous n'avons pas un adresse courriel pour vous contacter!

La deuxième méthode de paiement est par chèque et courrier. Poster votre chèque à l'adresse suivante (avec votre nom et votre adresse courriel):

**FASEC /CFSAF**  
a/s 11547 13<sup>th</sup> Ave NW  
Edmonton, Alberta T6J 7A8

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**Nous invitons nos lecteurs à envoyer des lettres aux éditeurs concernant le contenu de ce bulletin à : [edit.forum99@gmail.com](mailto:edit.forum99@gmail.com).**

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