

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - 2003

Gradually, the eventful year 2002 drew to a close as the various new appointees worked into their roles and became familiar with their portfolios. We all look forward to a more settled 2003 in which we will be able to bring to fruition or further develop the many initiatives begun in 2002.

With these words, I concluded my report on the previous year. We were coming to the end of a period of **revitalization** which began when Col. Brian MacDonald took over the presidency in 1998. We were looking forward to **repositioning** the Atlantic Council of Canada as an organization that would provide knowledge about NATO and transatlantic relations, and leadership in promoting informed discussion within Canada about the value of this relationship in cultural, economic, and security terms.

We did, indeed, charge forward. Both our Spring Conference on the theme, “Now that Saddam’s Gone – What’s Next?” and our Fall Conference on “NATO’s New Frontiers” with a focus on Afghanistan, broke records in attendance. Informative speakers generated lively discussions during the sessions as well as during the breaks. Both conferences were televised and continued to reach wider audiences well after the actual events. Many of the speeches were made available on the ACC web site, which is frequently consulted by secondary, post-secondary, and graduate students as they do research for their studies in national and international economic, political and security issues.

The transformation of NATO was a theme that surfaced again and again during the year. James Appathurai, recently appointed NATO spokesperson, introduced the topic when he spoke at a very successful dinner in February to honour our outgoing Chairman, the Honourable Donald S. McDonald, and introduce our new Chairman, the Honourable Roy MacLaren. Michael Rühle, Head, Policy Planning and Speechwriting Section, NATO Headquarters, elaborated on future roles for NATO at the Spring Conference in May. L. Gen. Jean Fournet, Assistant Secretary General of NATO for Public diplomacy, discussed the ongoing transformation of NATO at a Roundtable jointly organized with the Royal Canadian Military Institute on October 14. Dr. Bernd Goetze, Secretary of the North Atlantic Council and Director of the NATO Ministerial and Summit Task Forces, provided more insights to ACC members at a lunch on October 28. Lastly, at the Fall Conference, L. Gen. Michel Maisonneuve, Chief of Staff, HQ Supreme Allied Commander Transformation in Norfolk, Virginia, spoke about the process and challenges of transforming NATO and establishing a Rapid Response Force.

The ACC has been pleased to host these important information sessions and to use its channels of distribution to ensure that the message of NATO’s ongoing importance for the security of its members and partners is better understood in this country. It is our hope that these sessions and other roundtables described more fully elsewhere in this Annual Report will lead many more Canadians to engage in informed discussion on the contributions Canada can make to international security.

The ACC also enabled a number of members, business leaders and academics to become better informed about these issues through first-hand briefings by top people at NATO Headquarters, at

other international organizations, and at major conferences. Executive Director, Goran Pesic and I travelled to Brussels in April where I attended the ATA Council Meeting and NATO briefing session, Goran worked with other Young Atlantic Treaty Association (YATA) executive members to plan a NATO sponsored Youth Seminar for September, and we both attended an education seminar hosted at NATO Headquarters by the Public Diplomacy Division of NATO to discuss ways in which national organizations can reach out and inform young people in their countries about NATO and international security issues. As a follow-up to this education seminar, NATO in partnership with Casa NATO of Romania hosted a seminar for educators in Bucharest in July, which Vice-President, Education, Dr. Frances Adam, attended. Col. John McKenna again led a very successful NATO briefing tour in the fall, and a delegation of ACC members attended the ATA Assembly in Edinburgh in November.

We also made particular efforts to strengthen our relationship with government officials both here and in Brussels. As your President, I met with then Ambassador David Wright in Brussels in May, and with other members of the Canadian delegation, as well as with Jean-Pierre Ollivier, Executive Director, Public Diplomacy Division, NATO, who is also the Canadian liaison officer at NATO HQ. Mr. Ollivier has been extremely helpful to the ACC in providing timely advice and assisting us to access funding for various projects including our conferences.

I also met on several occasions with officials in Ottawa at both the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Department of National Defence. Our improved relations with both DFAIT and DND stood us in good stead to help us weather some of the difficulties we experienced in 2003 in finalizing and delivering the Fall Conference programme, and DND provided us with increased funding.

At the Council briefing in Brussels in April, NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson emphasized the importance of reaching out to youth, the “successor generation”. There is a real need to get the message out to a generation that has no memory of the Cold War and little even of the early 1990s that NATO is as important as ever.

The efforts of the ACC in this area have not gone unnoticed in Brussels or in Ottawa. Record numbers of secondary school students attended at both our conferences in 2003. The second Model NATO Conference for post secondary students at Carleton University in February was extremely successful. The ACC intern made an important contribution to its success. Dr. Frances Adam and her committee also mounted a very successful Model NATO conference for secondary schools in Cambridge. Both of these conferences will be repeated in 2004. For the secondary school project, the plan is to develop a package of materials that will be made available to teachers who wish to mount such a simulation anywhere in Canada.

Our major youth project in 2003 was once again the internship program. 21 interns finished their placements early in 2003, and a considerable number of them received employment offers or decided to embark on graduate studies as a direct result of their internship experience. As successful and rewarding as this program was in 2003, it was also one of the areas that made 2003 a challenging year for the ACC. In spite of the great success that the ACC has had in finding good placements for interns, we were cut back to 15 positions for the 2003-04 year. This made a significant difference to our financial position. The picture for 2004 is even bleaker as

we have been cut back to 13 positions, with our office intern being one of the positions that has been eliminated. It is extremely disappointing to experience such setbacks while we see at the same time so many opportunities to broaden our efforts to carry out our mandate.

It is indeed fortunate that we had the foresight to plan a corporate membership program in 2003 in order to diversify our funding base. The efforts of Vice-President, Corporate Development, Barry Davenport, and his committee, raised enough funds to almost make up the shortfall caused by the reduction of interns. We are extremely grateful to our corporate members, RBC Financial Group, Scotiabank, Jackman Foundation, Bombardier, Primelite Communications and Adesso Media Solutions for the financial and in-kind contributions that enabled us to continue our work and develop some of our new projects.

We held two successful corporate receptions and plan to hold two more in 2004. One of the benefits we can offer to our corporate members is the opportunity to network nationally and internationally. An exciting new project we are working on is an annual spring briefing tour to Washington and NATO Transformation in Norfolk, VA, to complement the fall briefing tour to Brussels and other points in Europe. The Washington-Norfolk tour should be of great benefit to our corporate members.

The quality of our communications and reporting received a tremendous boost in 2003 from the work of Richard Foltys, one of our members and active volunteers. Richard's talented professional photography was a hit at ATA Assembly in Edinburgh. He was the official photographer for the Assembly and the only person allowed to take photographs at the reception of HRH the Princess Royal at the Palace of Holyrood House. Thanks to Richard, we have an excellent photographic record of our events in 2003. Many of these photographs appear on our web site and were included in the reports to the funders of our various projects to illustrate the effectiveness of the projects.

One of the major initiatives to be launched in 2004 was planned and started in 2003. It was decided early in the year to restart a print newsletter. In recent years, almost all our communication has been electronic. This has been very successful, but many people felt a need for a print-based communication as well. Initially the intention was to produce a short newsletter on a regular basis, but a combination of the research and writing talents of our office intern, Huma Haider, and the availability of Richard Foltys' excellent photographs led to a more ambitious project to produce a professional quarterly magazine which will be much more than an in-house communication organ. It will become a key part of our communication outreach starting in 2004.

We also started a major overhaul of our web site in 2003. Under the direction of Stacey Douglas, a previous intern at the ACC, this web site had served us well for a number of years, but it was time to upgrade it. It is expected that the new site will be in operation by the time of the Annual General Meeting in 2004.

There has been tremendous excitement and synergy among the Executive Committee, the volunteers and the office staff of the ACC as more and more projects to advance the mandate of the ACC suggested themselves. It has also been disappointing to have that enthusiasm dampened

from time to time by the realities of financial constraint. But we must not let those disappointments hold us back.

We have an extremely important message to send to the people of Canada. NATO and the transatlantic relationship are more important than ever in the new security environment. The Atlantic Council of Canada has **relevance** today. Let us all redouble our efforts to raise the funds and do the work that will help this **revitalized, repositioned** and **relevant** organization to fulfill its mandate to inform Canadians about the value of the transatlantic relationship and its common interest in collective security which has been manifest for over fifty years in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.