

Canada-China Friendship Society of Ottawa (CCFS-O) Annual General Meeting, November 20, 2014

PRESIDENTS' REPORT

This year the President's Report is actually a report by the Co-Presidents since the Executive decided to approve a proposal to share the presidency between Roy Atkinson and Gary Levy. This arrangement has worked well in large part because we were able to rely on the experience and guidance from the last two Presidents Lorraine Farkas and Lolan Merklinger. We also want to thank the other members of the Executive for their support and enthusiasm during the last year. We were assisted by a number of volunteers some of whom have indicated they are prepared to let their names stand for the new Executive.

The Society has continued to organize monthly public meetings on topics of interest to our members. We had the largest total turnout in 5 years for our events and average attendance was up 31% over last year. A complete list of CCFS-O events is included at the end of this report and on our web site but, we would like to mention several in particular.

In May we organized a session with Professor Paul Evans who had just published a new book on Engagement with China which provided a sweeping assessment of key elements of Canada's policy toward China since the early 1970s. The panel included former Prime Minister Joe Clark and former Ambassador Robert Wright. Not surprisingly it was one of our largest turnouts with over 140 in attendance. There was also a strong turnout for David Mulroney, Canada's previous Ambassador to China. His presentation, *China and the Challenge for Canadian Foreign Policy* provided fascinating insights into the future of Canada-China relations.

Usually we take the summer off without events but in July we took advantage of the presence in Canada of Benny Lewis, author of a best-selling book on learning languages, and he made a very interesting presentation to our members.

A major project during the year was the redesign of our website. Aside from improving the look and reorganizing the contents we added a number of new features including some video links to various resources and the ability to pay for memberships by credit card. We are grateful to Sam Gendreau and to Ryan O'Conner for helping us get up to speed on the website. Another member, Roxanne Hamel, has been tweeting some of our events and gradually increasing the number of followers we have on Twitter and Facebook. Lacey Sheng and Tracy Tian worked on the video links.

We have also done our best to continue to advertise events pertaining to China organized by other organizations, to advise our members of other opportunities to learn more about China and understand it better.

We are pleased to have had the continuing collaboration of the Embassy of China. The Ambassador hosted a reception for all our members in January, and this month they invited all our members to the opening of an Exhibition on Calligraphy held at Gatineau City Hall. Embassy staff have attended some of our events, provided information materials at events, and generously donated door prizes for our Chinese New Year's banquet.

During the last year we sent one delegation of four members (Tracy Tian – Head of Delegation, Nataly Azzi, Gloria Goodine, Bassam Azzi) to China as part of the Friendship Forum held every second year. It included two days in Shanghai hosted by the Shanghai Friendship Society and several days in Guizhou at the Forum and related cultural events. We also sent one student delegate, Coralie Ho Von, to the Shanghai International Summer Camp and she provided a very complete report which can be found on our web site.

Our China Book Club, established last year, has continued with its monthly meetings. Thanks to Marilyn Collette for her hard work in organizing this project.

Another highlight of the last year has been an increase in membership. We now have nearly 250 members, up from 190 at this time last year. The number of student and younger members has increased significantly which bodes well for the future of the Society.

The CCFS-O did face significant increases to our cost this year. The increases in rental and ancillary charges at Library and Archives Canada added considerably our costs, and forced us to search for new venues for our events. The overall impact has been to move us from a small but reliable surplus to breakeven. We are continuing to search for suitable and affordable venues for our meetings, and for revenue sources to supplement membership fees.

Our plans for the coming year are to continue providing monthly presentations on a variety of topics. We are always open to suggestions for specific topics or speakers. We are also planning to show a recent film about China. Discussions have begun with the Chinese Embassy about a film festival or film series to begin in October 2015 which would coincide with the 45th anniversary of Canada's Recognition of the Peoples' Republic of China.

As we envisage it, a film project would be designed to provide all of us with fresh insights into China. The logistics and financing of such a venture present a challenge equal to the speakers programme, and we are looking very carefully at all options to reduce costs and enhance revenues. We hope that the new Executive will also look into expanding educational and artistic exchanges with partners in China and Canada.

Finally we wish to thank all the members who have supported our events over the past year and to the various Speakers who have taken the time to address our meetings. Particularly we want to acknowledge one member who will no longer be on the Executive as she has moved to California. Tracy Tian was a stalwart for many years serving in various capacities and last year was Chair of the Banquet Committee. (It is not an exaggeration to say that one reason we are increasing the size of the Executive is to replace all the jobs that she did!) We wish her all the best in California.

With the continued support and help from everyone we look forward to another successful year in 2015.

Roy Atkinson

Co-Presidents, CCFS-Ottawa

Gary Levy

CCFS-Ottawa Events During Fiscal Year 2013-2014

October 2013, *Investment in Canada by China's State Owned Enterprises*, Hugh Stevens, Executive-in-Residence, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. Principal, TransPacific Connection, Craig Wilson, President OS Micro Trends

November 2013, *China and the Challenge for Canadian Foreign Policy*, David Mulroney Canadian Ambassador to China 2008-20012

January 2014, Reception for CCFS-O member host by the **Chinese Embassy at the Embassy**

February 2014, **CCFS-O's Year of the Horse New Year's Banquet**, a ten-course banquet for members, friends and distinguished guests.

February 2014, *Exploring Ancient Trade Routes in the Lands of China's Ethnic Minorities*, Jeff Fuchs, author of *The Ancient Tea Horse Road*

March 2014, *Urban Planning and the Challenge of Sustainable Cities in China*, Professor Benjamin Gianni, Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism, Carleton University

April 2014, *Ottawa and Beijing: Hands Across the Pacific*, Mayor Jim Watson, Ottawa

May 2014, *Engaging China*, Paul Evans, Professor of Political Science at the University of British Columbia, the Right Honorable Joe Clark and former Ambassador Robert Wright

July 2014, *Traveling in China and Learning Chinese: Benny the Irish Polygot*, Benny Lewis

September 2014, *India and China: Two Pathways to the Market*, Richard French, CN-Paul Tellier Chair on Business and Public Policy Graduate School of Public and International Affairs University of Ottawa