

MINUTES

CANADIAN PRESIDENTS WORKSHOP SIXTH CANADIAN FRIENDSHIP FORCE CONFERENCE

**May 16, 2012, 8:30 a.m.
Quebec City, Manoir Victoria Hotel**

Attendance: see Addendum I.

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Bob Cole, chair of the meeting, declares the meeting open at 8:35 a.m. and welcomes all participants. He thanks FF Quebec City Region for hosting the conference and introduces conference chair Louis Lamothe.

After a few words of welcome, Louis Lamothe thanks the many individuals and clubs who have assisted FF Quebec City Region in organizing the event. He introduces members of the organizing committee and provides information of a general nature.

Bob Cole introduces FFI president George Brown and members of the team: Mary Mwambay, program services coordinator for Canada, Africa and Western Europe; Diane Roy, field representative for Eastern Canada; Barbara Maine, field representative for Western Canada; Cécile Latour, Canadian representative on the FFI board; Andrew Sterling, past Canadian representative on the FFI board. Mr. Cole asks the other participants to introduce themselves. An information package is distributed to the presidents.

Carol Liboiron, president of Niagara, the club that hosted the 5th Canadian Conference in 2010 presents a plaque to Louis Lamothe – a symbolic transfer of honour and responsibility.

Bob Cole invites board member Andrew Sterling to present a report on liability insurance for directors and officers for all Canadian clubs.

2. LIABILITY INSURANCE FOR DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS FOR ALL CANADIAN CLUBS

Andrew Sterling explains that two Canadian Clubs, Ottawa and Medicine Hat, have D&O Liability insurance whereas the other clubs do not. He presents the research he has done on the benefits of obtaining such coverage and the savings that could be achieved were all Canadian clubs to subscribe under a single nationwide policy (see Addendum II).

He stresses that the insurance policy is for events not covered by a policy held by a service provider or other party. He adds that while the coverage held by FFI may extend to Canada in some cases, the applicability is both uncertain and limited. He provides data as to how the total premium could be divided among the various clubs.

The participants make a number of points: that the insurance provider and broker should both be Canadian; that the policy should take into account differences in Quebec's legal code; that changes in the status of non-profit organizations, coming into effect in 2013, should be considered; that the coverage should apply to meetings and social events as well as to inbound and outbound exchanges; that keeping good records would be important for the coverage to extend to EDs and other responsible individuals; that the international nature of the risk is a key factor; that while waivers may be signed, they usually do not eliminate liability; that it would be important to know what is the minimum number of subscribers for the best rate and to establish the modalities of opting-out; that the division of the premium should take into account the number of activities as well as the number of members, keeping in mind the lower paying capacity of smaller clubs; that an alternative solution could be to deal only with service providers who are insured or, failing that, resort to single-event policies.

Bob Cole asks for a show of hands.

Motion

That the participants: 1) present the issue to their members and submit it to a vote; 2) should the vote be positive, propose a formula for dividing costs equitably.

Carried by the majority.

Andrew Sterling will continue to spearhead this project. He will send the required info to all clubs electronically. They are to get back to him by September 30, 2012.

On behalf of the other participants, Lynn Duigou thanks Andrew Sterling for the great work he has done.

3. QUESTIONS FOR GEORGE BROWN AND MARY MWAMBAY

What are FFI's objectives for this year?

George Brown presents the Global Expansion Plan 2012-2014 (see information package distributed to the presidents).

The five priorities for the coming year are: 1) the creation of 45 new FF clubs; 2) the expansion of themed exchanges in areas relevant to members such as lifelong learning, gardening and hiking, and the introduction of new programs; 3) the implementation of training programs for present and future FF leaders, drawing on local, regional, national and international resources; 4) the promotion of FF on the global scene, making use of the full array of technologies including Internet communications and social media; 5) the raising of \$275,000 to fund the expansion plan.

Mr. Brown reminds the participants that homestays are still the core activity, with “regular exchanges” representing about 75% of total income. He adds that FFI is always open to new ideas coming from the entire membership. Among them, language learning presents tremendous potential, as do partnerships with organizations such as Semester at Sea (“enrichment voyages” to Latin America in Winter 2012-2013 and to Europe and North Africa in Spring 2013). Mentorship, whereby an existing club mentors a new club, is another promising avenue successfully implemented in Japan, among others, with the participation of Andrew Sterling.

Mr. Brown explains that electronic means have made possible global exchanges such as the Haliburton Highlands 2012 winter exchange; smaller clubs, which may not have the critical mass, can now join other exchanges; exchanges can be completed with the participation of travellers from other parts of the world; lesser-known destinations can take the initiative of preparing original programs and inviting the world. He stresses that the global nature of FFI is a strength on which to build.

It is mentioned that FFI can assist in translating documents in languages such as Japanese or Portuguese; clubs can also call on cultural societies in their community.

What is the current status of the Trailblazer projects?

George Brown explains that some clubs have submitted projects aimed at building membership, training potential FF leaders and introducing new activities. Fewer projects than expected were submitted, however. Funds are still available for clubs who wish to launch such projects.

What are the current rules for Canadian Interclub exchanges?

George Brown reminds participants that there is no FFI fee for regional exchanges within Canada of 4 days or less and that a \$50 fee is applicable for cross-country exchanges (i.e., Quebec City-Vancouver); a 20\$ fee per night is applicable for stop-overs involving a homestay. He adds that there is tremendous interest in cross-border exchanges, especially in Europe. The concept is applicable in many parts of the world, including Canada; some would like domestic exchanges to include cross-border exchanges. In Europe, a \$50 fee is applicable to cross-border exchanges between two neighbouring countries within the E.U. The formula could possibly be extended to Canada and the Eastern Seaboard, American Midwest and Western US. The line has to be drawn somewhere, however, to avoid undermining the entire fee structure. Requests will be examined case-by-case, keeping in mind the concerns of FFI board members, the importance of respecting FFI Club and Exchange Policies and the need to be consistent. A cross-border homestay will be considered if it is an add-on to a regular exchange.

Is there a possibility of reducing the fees paid by Ambassadors?

George Brown explains that the \$125 a week fee needs to be viewed in perspective. It is a small part of the total cost of an exchange, smaller than the price of travel insurance; cutting it in half would not make much of a difference to the traveller.

Mr. Brown adds that it is capital for FF leaders to understand the fee structure and accept it as appropriate. He reminds participants that FFI is a self-supporting organization, with a small proportion of its revenues coming from donations and contracts. He stresses the importance of visiting FFI's website for information on its operations and range of services. He also suggests visiting the Atlanta headquarters for a better understanding of the scope of FFI activities.

Does FFI benchmark costs and management performance and, if so, which indicators are in line with similar non-profit organizations?

FFI's board of directors has 14 members from nine countries. The board is responsible for: setting policy and ensuring compliance; supervising the work of the CEO and the committees; solving problems; promoting the organization worldwide; planning for the future. FFI's yearly budget is under \$1.5 million, with approximately 75% generated by Ambassador fees, 10% membership fees, 6% donations, 4% grants and 5% other sources (see information package distributed to the presidents).

Staff remuneration represents approximately 65% of total expenses. Great efforts have been made to cut costs; they include Cloud computing and drawing to a greater extent on the work of volunteers. It is important to remember that small exchanges and cancelled exchanges are labour intensive while the contribution to the bottom line is minimal or nil.

FFI is recognized as being well managed and having good governance. The salary and performance of the CEO are in keeping with standards in similar organizations.

4. OTHER QUESTIONS

A participant would appreciate an update on the Legacy Fund. George Brown reminds participants that the fund is a "temporarily restricted fund" with a current balance of over \$50,000; it is used to fund new initiatives as decided by the board on a year-to-year basis. He explains that he will be sending out a statement encouraging donations to the fund.

Mr. Brown reminds participants that the Wayne Smith medal recognizes those who show exceptional leadership in promoting the Friendship Force mission. He adds that FFI has improved the background information it provides on the visionary founder of the organization (see information package distributed to the presidents). The medal is circulated among the participants.

Mr. Brown says that there is interest in holding the 2015 International FFI Conference in Canada, possibly Vancouver. There will be an opportunity to arrange homestays before or after the conference. Upcoming conferences will be held in Hiroshima, Japan (2012), New Orleans (2013) and New Zealand (2014).

5. INITIATIVES TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CLUBS IN CANADA

George Brown stresses that worldwide expansion plans include Canada. Efforts are currently being made to start a club in Victoria, under the mentorship of FF Edmonton and Area, from a core of former Edmontonians now living on Vancouver Island. Cécile Latour is hoping to foster the creation of one or more clubs in the Maritime Provinces; there is a possibility of teaming up with a hiking group for the organization of a themed exchange in Newfoundland and/or Cape Breton in Nova Scotia. Under consideration as well is the creation of a Toronto club, since 14 members of FF Greater Hamilton and Burlington actually live in the metropolis; initially, the new club would have satellite status so as not to weaken the mentoring organization.

To support the creation of new clubs, an e-mail message could be sent to the entire Canadian membership inviting people to put forward the names of potential founding members.

6. EXCHANGE DIRECTORS FEES

EDs occasionally receive financial compensation, usually because they couldn't or wouldn't participate otherwise. While most participants do not view this favourably, they recognize that it may be necessary in some cases. The decision is up to each club; exchange participants should be informed upfront. Diane Roy mentions that workshops for training EDs should be held in all clubs.

As an aside, George Brown explains that it is difficult for exchange participants from certain countries to obtain visas (about 10-12 clubs primarily from Africa, Eastern Europe and republics of the former Soviet Union). In such cases, FFI can reverse the usual process by organizing an exchange to the USA once the travellers secure their visa; this is done 2-3 times a year. Canadian clubs could do the same.

7. WINTER EXCHANGES

In Canada, global exchanges around winter activities have proven to be very popular. The emphasis is on the “experience” rather than the destination. Other clubs may wish to experiment with this formula.

8. FFI'S MOBILITY POLICY

George Brown stresses the importance of anticipating mobility and senility problems before the start of an exchange. To that end, FFI has developed a list of points that should be covered with potential travellers before finalizing plans (see information package distributed to the presidents). While assistance can be provided and adjustments made on a case-by-case basis, those who are unable to meet the challenges of an exchange should be excluded. FFI guidelines have been changed to reflect this viewpoint.

9. TRAVELLING TO JAPAN

Andrew Sterling, who has travelled to Japan many times in the past, and once this past year says that Japanese clubs are eager to receive visitors. Reconstruction is just about complete and radiation levels are inconsequential even in areas close to the disaster zone. Japanese clubs are important to FFI and should be encouraged.

10. CLUB AGING AND RENEWAL

Participants share some of the measures taken to ensure the long-term success of FFI:

- Updating policies and procedures as well as recruitment methods
- Effecting operational changes with the objective of retaining existing members and attracting newcomers
- Keeping current and doing things differently – i.e., holding unusual activities, inviting prospects to social activities free of charge, etc.
- Introducing activity-based exchanges and global exchanges
- Determining the profile of the “ideal member”, drawing lists of prospects, setting objectives and monitoring results
- Using the web for promotional purposes, being present at travel shows and linking up with universities, groups of retirees, alumni associations and other groups
- Disseminating the photograph and profile of new members
- Keeping older members involved by matching them with a host family.

11. CANFEXX WEBSITE

Bob Cole confirms that the yearly cost, \$107, is viewed as well worth the investment. Thank you Bill Harkness for looking after the website.

12. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Bob Cole says he will send out the results of the questionnaire. In the meantime, he touches on highlights:

- Some clubs use nametags, others do not; sources of supply and prices vary
- Annual fees range from \$25 to \$50 per person; some clubs have a special price for couples; the fees can include the nametag
- Some clubs hold fund-raising activities, others do not; they include auctions and the publication of a cookbook; the funds are used to subsidize inbound exchanges or an event such as the Christmas party
- Some clubs offer presents to the hosts on outbound exchanges; others prefer to make a donation to the Trans-Canada Trail or another organization.

13. PRESIDENTS WORKSHOP FUND

Bob Cole reminds participants that the fund was created to assist clubs organizing the Canadian presidents workshop. In the case of FF Quebec City Region, the organizers added \$50 to the registration fee to cover expenses; there was no need to draw from the fund since there was a tiny surplus. Bob Cole proposes to hold on to the money for the time being (about \$1,800) and to seek the approval of the presidents should there be an opportunity to withdraw from the fund. Possible uses include paying for insurance coverage or funding the participation of the president of a new club to a national meeting.

14. NEXT CANADIAN CONFERENCE

Bob Cole brings up the possibility of holding the next national conference in three years instead of two, to coincide with FFI's international conference likely to be held in Canada. The Canadian conference would be held over one day and the international conference over another. Based on general reaction, he asks for a show of hands.

Motion

That the frequency of the Canadian Friendship Force Conference be changed from every two years to every three years.

Carried by the majority.

George Brown says the dates and location of the international conference will be known in 2-3 months.

Bob Cole says that Lynne Duigou, from FF Edmonton and Area, has offered to host the next Canadian conference. Since there are no other offers, he asks for a show of hands.

Motion

That the Seventh Canadian Friendship Force Conference be held in Edmonton in 2015.

Carried by the majority.

Diane Roy mentions that a standing committee will be formed. It will include the two field representatives, along with volunteers from other Western clubs and someone from Eastern Canada who can take part in the proceedings conducted in English.

15. CANADIAN COUNCIL

George Brown says that FFI is presently looking for two Canadian field representatives since Barbara Main and Diane Roy have reached the end of their term. He stresses that these are support positions, not hierarchical. An individual can self-nominate or be nominated by his/her club (see descriptive sheet in the information package distributed to the presidents). The people chosen will be members of the Canadian Council. Diane Roy states that the field rep representing Eastern Canada should be fully bilingual.

Mr. Brown closes the meeting by thanking Bob Cole for chairing it and the attendees for their participation.