

# Twentieth Anniversary Business Dinner in Windsor

Last month, federal elections took place in Canada and in Poland and in both nations there were changes at the helm of government. Both societies elected the parties that had been in opposition and so there were changes to the government. Members of parliament were sworn in at the same time in both countries, on November 4. In the Canadian Parliament, we previously had two MPs of Polish heritage in the governing party. Now we have two newly elected MPs and only one of them belongs to the governing party.

The consequences of the diametrical changes in political choice for Poland depend on the model that was applied up to now. For those who briefly rode on the coattails of the governing party, it means a loss of contacts and possibly of influence too; for those who cooperated with all parties, the situation continues to be the status quo: the contacts previously cultivated still function. In Canada, we have about one million people of Polish origin. However, our representation in Parliament is by comparison very low. One can only envy the Indian ethnic group, which is

numerically close to us, but has as many as four ministers, without even taking MPs into account.

In Windsor, we suffered a great political loss with the retirement - after fifteen years of unusually fruitful cooperation - of one of the most influential and respected MPs in the Canadian Parliament, Joe Comartin, MP for Windsor-Tecumseh and Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons. Our Association always has cooperated and still cooperates with MPs of all political leanings in Canada and in Poland; for this reason, political changes do not put any limitations on our contacts.

On Friday, November 6, the Twentieth Annual Dinner of the Polish-Canadian Business and Professional Association took place in Windsor. More than 110 people participated and all of

the tickets had been purchased three weeks before the event. Among the guests were representatives of all political parties, business owners of Polish heritage (about 40% of the participants), lawyers, doctors and other professionals. We also hosted a two-person delegation from Windsor's twin city of Lublin, Poland. The delegation had a separate four-day program, organized by the City Administration. There also were representatives of Polonia from Detroit (7%) as well as participants from other ethnic organizations, namely Italian, Chinese, Indian and Iraqi. There were several members of the City of Windsor International Relations Committee and individuals from Polonia organizations. By tradition, a large group of young people (11%) participated and before the dinner they met with Patrick

Brown, MPP for Simcoe North and Leader of the PC Party, the official opposition in Ontario.

President Jerzy Barycki greeted the assembled guests for the twentieth time. In his presentation, he emphasized the twenty years of accomplishments of the Association, of which the main pillars are: the promotion of business people and professionals, support for the cooperation of the partner cities Windsor and Lublin, the promotion of Polish heritage, and support for the activities of Polonia youth. The Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Toronto, Grzegorz Morawski, while placing a high value on the activities of the Association, emphasized its numerous projects, such as the Polish Weeks in Windsor, the national exhibitions, and the support for the activities of young Polonia. Next, the Vice-Chair of the Council of the City of Lublin, Jarosław Pakula, read a letter from the Mayor of Lublin, Krzysztof Żuk, containing congratulations and thanks for the promotion of our partner cities. The federal MP for the Windsor riding of Windsor West, Brian Masse, was represented by his Assistant, Darlene Dunn Mahler, who underscored the active cooperation over many years with the Association, adding that the recently re-elected MP plans to join the Canada-Poland Parliamentary Friendship Group. This

information is particularly important to our community. The MPP for Windsor-Tecumseh, Percy Hatfield, sincere as always, spoke about the links of many years with the Windsor Polonia, when he was a councillor of the City of Windsor and then an MPP. The next speaker, the new Mayor of Windsor, Drew Dilkens, visited Lublin again during the summer of this year after a break of five years. He spoke about the great changes in investment during this time period now evidenced there. He noted that the fifteen-year relationship with Lublin and the work of our Association are highly regarded by the city administrators. The Vice President of the Polish American Congress in Michigan, Barbara Lemecha, from Detroit, remarked on the activation in recent years of our relations, which is so important to the neighboring Polish communities on both sides of the Detroit River. Finally, MPP Patrick Brown, the young and ambitious politician mentioned above, spoke about cooperation with the Polish ethnic group in Ontario as well as the recent meeting with Polonia in the Ontario Parliament in Toronto.

The guest speakers presented a number of specific topics. The first was "Lublin's Path to Success through Investments and Culture", presented by Michał Grabowiecki, Project Manager, Investor Relations, Department of Strategy and Investor

Assistance, in the City of Lublin. His presentation was preceded by an interesting film about Lublin. Afterwards, he spoke of the impressive investment accomplishments in Lublin.

The Association for many years cooperates with and supports the activities of the young leaders of Polonia in Windsor and in all of Canada.

For this reason, the next presentation, "Investing in Young Polonia- Investing in the Future", was given by well known leaders of the younger generation, Ania Barycka from Windsor and Natalia Kusendova from Toronto. Ania recalled the Conference for Young Leaders, Quo Vadis, emphasizing the financial support and involvement of the Association in the project. All of the conferences up to now had interesting programs of training and workshops for developing the abilities of the young Polonia leaders, but a very important element was the creation of other organizations of young professionals already operating in many cities across Canada. It is noteworthy that the Head of the Office of the current President of the Republic of Poland is Adam Kwańkowski, participant in the Conference of Young Leaders, Quo Vadis, in Connecticut, USA, in 2013. Accordingly, he knows the accomplishments as well as the problems of young Polonia and is a very suitable person to be responsible for contacts with Polonia. Natalia talked about a very important initiative of young Polonia, namely the meetings of young Polonia leaders in Ottawa in 2013 and 2015. They included training sessions and meetings

in the Parliament as well as at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland. Natalia emphasized the major contribution of Joe Comartin to the realization of them as well as the support in coordination by our Association. She also spoke about the important project ISKRA, aimed at high-school students to prepare them for university studies and also to draw them into the activities of Polonia.

The last speaker was the well known businessman Joe Ouellette. In his "Reflections on Lublin", he placed emphasis on the great cultural accomplishments of Lublin and then gave a moving account of "Barrier 2", heroes of Lublin, who with a handful of patriots fought even up to 1955 for a free Poland. All of them were murdered and a statue with a beautiful eagle today bears witness to the heroic struggle of these ill-fated soldiers. Mr. Ouellette helped to finance this statue and he presented the Association with a miniature version of it to be put on display at a suitable place in the future.

The anniversary year also provided a good occasion for

thanking certain meritorious individuals. The Centennial Gold Medal of the Polish Community in Windsor was presented to Grzegorz Morawski, MPP Percy Hatfield, a member of the Board of Directors of our Association, Beata Slusarczyk, and a representative of the younger generation, Natalia Kusendova. Honorary Membership of the Association was awarded to its founders, Jerzy Barycki, Anthony Blak, Artur Glab (posthumously), John Jedlinski and Zbigniew Fallenbuchl as well as to some particularly meritorious individuals, namely Drew Dilkens, Antoni Jedliński and Gerald Koski. Our long-term sponsors, supporting us for more than five years, received particular expressions of gratitude. Thanks to them, the Association is able to function and realize its various Polonia projects.

Also remembered were special sponsors, such as the Polonia Centre (Windsor), Inc., and the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Toronto, which gave support to our promotional projects. An example of this is the next

exhibition, planned for the year 2016 to mark the 200th Anniversary of the birthday of A.-E. Kierzkowski, the first MP of Polish heritage, in the first Canadian Parliament of 1867. Looking further into the future, in 2017 we will celebrate an interesting combination of events: the 100th Anniversary of the Holy Trinity Church in Windsor, the 125th Anniversary of the City of Windsor, the 700th Anniversary of Lublin, and of course the 150th Anniversary of Canada.

The artistic performances of the Windsor folk group "Tatry" were scheduled for 21:15 and began on time with the precision of a watchmaker. This was the contribution, as in every year, of Dr. Frank Simpson, of the University of Windsor, who for several years chairs our gatherings. Taking advantage of the break between performances by "Tatry", a video of the twenty years of activities of our organization was shown. The film showed the enormous scale of the work carried out by the Association during the past twenty years. Awards were presented to members of the Board of Directors of the

Association for their community work. Awards of Merit of the Canadian Polish Congress were presented to Ewa Barycka (Gold), Beata Slusarczyk (Silver), Zbigniew Pona (Silver), Frank Simpson (Silver), and Kamilla Wierciszewska (Bronze). MP Brian Masse and MPP Percy Hatfield gave certificates of recognition to members of the Board of Directors.

Superb dishes of Polish cuisine complemented with wine from the Polish winery of Mr. Gorski, that is, CREW in Colchester, clearly appealed to the tastes of the assembled guests. The program concluded with an impressive performance by the Song and Dance Ensemble "Tatry" in the form of a traditional mountaineers' dance, rewarded with thunderous applause. These young people, splendidly dancing and enthralled by Polish folklore, provided a beautiful end to the celebration of the Twentieth Anniversary of our Association. It was very pleasant to hear the words of recognition, congratulations and emotion from many of the participants in this evening of celebration. One may suppose that the Anniversary Annual Dinner will linger on in the memories of the participants, who packed the hall. At the end of the evening, past and present performers, media, multimedia, and organizers were thanked for their work in the realization of all of the business dinners. The traditional group photograph immortalized this anniversary evening on a page in the history of Polonia in Windsor.

Ewa Barycka  
Translated by Frank Simpson  
Photographs by John Liviero



Greetings from the VIPs (L-R): Morawski, Dunn Mahler, Hatfield, Pakula, Dilkens, Lemecha, Brown.



Patrick Brown with a group of young guests.



Speakers (L-R): Grabowiecki, Ania and Natalia, Ouellette presenting the miniature of the statue to Barycki.



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