

# 22nd Meeting of Business People and Professionals in Windsor:

## Polonia youth highly visible in the proceedings



On November 24, 2017, Windsor became for the twenty-second time the focus of attention of city administrators, members of the Federal and Ontario Parliaments, and the Polish community. The economy of this city of key importance, with the busiest border crossing between Canada and the USA and the planned construction of a new bridge in 2018, is in its next stage of development. Current statistics show that our region has one of the lowest levels of unemployment in Canada. Furthermore, some local companies are seeking appropriately qualified workers from outside of Canada, notably in the nations of the European Union. The owners of Polish-Canadian firms are eager to hire electricians, machine operators and even bakers and pastry-cooks. Why pastry-cooks? We are convinced that this is because Windsor is the capital of Canada for Polish doughnuts (*pączki*)!

By tradition, before the start of the Annual Business Dinner, there is a meeting with the VIPs. This provided an opportunity to get acquainted with current federal Members of Parliament, representatives of the provincial and city governments, business owners of Polish heritage, and a large group of young professionals and students. Also present was this year's Miss International Canada, Magda Stepień, a charming young Polish woman from Windsor. Representatives of the Polish American Congress from Detroit, the leaders of some local ethnic organizations, and young members of the Head Council of the Canadian Polish Congress also were at the gathering.

Jerzy Barycki, the President of the Polish Canadian Business and Professional Association of Windsor, greeted the more than one hundred participants. He emphasized that this year, we are celebrating a number of important anniversaries, namely the Seven-Hundredth Anniversary of our twin city of Lublin, the One-Hundred-and-Fiftieth Anniversary of Canada, the One-Hundred-and-Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Windsor and also the One-Hundredth Anniversary of our Polish Holy Trinity Parish. He noted that in collaboration with the University of Windsor and its Leddy Library and other partners, the Association had prepared CANADA 150, an enormous collection of nine displays. He also mentioned that this year, Canada had signed an agreement with the European Union (CETA), which opens up exciting new possibilities of cooperation in commerce, including with Poland. The President also introduced a group of around twenty representatives of the younger generation. The promotion and sponsorship of the young leaders of Polonia is for many years one of the most important activities of our Association.



Next, he introduced the Master of Ceremonies of the gathering, Jakub Rybaczuk, a young professional from Windsor, who is a member of the Board of Directors of our Association. Jakub began by informing the participants about the collection of displays making up Canada 150, which consists of three thematic groups. The first of these deals with Canadians of Polish heritage, namely Gzowski, Kierzkowski and Members of the Canadian Parliament of Polish heritage. The second one is about some reasons for Polish gratitude to Canada: the Wawel treasures, held in safekeeping by Canada from 1939 to 1961; the training camp for the Polish Army at Niagara-on-the-Lake from 1917 to 1919; and the recruiting station for the Polish Army in Windsor from 1941 to 1942. The third group concerns Poles with worldwide fame: Pope John Paul II, Maria Curie-Skłodowska and Fryderyk Chopin. He emphasized that it had been possible to involve young people in the creation of parts of the displays shown that evening, for example, Julie Zalewska for the Canadian Members of Parliament and Peter Sawicki for the Windsor Recruiting Station, both of them students at the University of Windsor. This demonstrates that the youth of Polonia is interested in the legacy of its ancestors.

Before the dinner, the guests presented their greetings, beginning with Ms. Natalia Iwaszko, the Vice Consul for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Poland. She congratulated the Association for its level of activities. In her presentation, she encouraged cooperation with Poland in the context of the CETA agreement, which had removed 98 percent of the border tariffs between Canada and the European Union. She believes that the European Union is a good global partner for Canada – including the involvement of Poland -- with an enormous market of 500 million. The Vice Consul is able to set up contacts for participants interested in cooperation with Poland. Tracey Ramsey, the Federal Representative for the Riding of Essex, emphasized that the presentation on the activities of our organization by Ania Barycka (a 2017 graduate in law) before the Standing Committee on International Trade of the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa had turned out very well. At the same time, it had been a major distinction for our Association. Ms. Ramsey also is the Vice Chair of the Standing Committee and a member of the Canada-Poland Parliamentary Friendship Group. She sees a great future for cooperation between Canada and Poland in the framework of the CETA agreement. The provincial representative for Windsor-West, Lisa Gretzky – her husband is a close cousin of Wayne Gretzky -- is interested in collaboration with the Windsor Polonia. Her presentation to the Ontario Parliament on the opening in April of this year of the CANADA 150 Exhibition at the University of Windsor was shown on a large screen. Polonia certainly needs promotion of this kind. Ms. Barbara Lemecha from Detroit, Executive Vice President of the Polish American Congress, Michigan Division, read congratulations from the President, Ann Bankowski, with words of recognition for the work of our organization, also emphasizing that we provide a good example for the American Polonia to follow. During the dinner, while eating the tasty Polish dishes, the participants in the gathering were able to view promotional films about Lublin and a report from Polish Studio TV in Toronto about the Association's Twenty-First Annual Dinner. While coffee was being served, special guests were presented, namely the presidents of Polonia organizations and honorary members of our Association.



Our Keynote Speaker, the Mayor of Windsor, Drew Dilkens – he made official visits to Lublin in 2010 and 2015 – spoke of the successes of the city as well as its plans for the future. He made reference to the history of Canada and Polonia as well as the contribution of Polonia to the development of our city. He spoke of the anniversaries this year of Windsor, Lublin and Canada. He referred to the importance of the international events organized by the city and emphasized that last year's world swimming championship FINA in Windsor was not only a success in the promotion of our city, but also an economic triumph. We add as a reminder that the three-person Polish team won gold and bronze medals; the Dąbrowski Mazurek proudly rang out in Windsor to the great joy of the Polonia members present. The next speaker was Gerry Koski, President of the Polonia Centre (Windsor) Inc. The President summarized in a brief outline the activities of the organization since its creation in 1978. He announced that this year the total amount of donations to Polonia and the City of Windsor had exceeded the magical sum of \$1,035,000.00; this information was rewarded with a storm of applause. Not many Polonia organizations in Ontario or even in Canada can boast of such an accomplishment. It is necessary to add here that many of the projects of our organization were financed by the Polonia Centre and we greatly value this assistance. The next speaker was William Anderson, Director of the Cross-Border Institute (CBI) at the University of Windsor. He presented an outline of the activities of the Institute and the recently signed agreement with the State School of Higher Education in Chełm, Lublin Voivodeship, Poland. He claimed that he had not seen anywhere in the world engineering laboratory facilities as well equipped as those at the Chełm State School, including a school for pilots. He emphasized that CBI is interested in taking advantage of the CETA agreement in its future collaborations. The final speaker was Ania Barycka, Chair of the Organizing Committee of Quo Vadis – Young Polish Leaders Conference, Burlington, 2017. She led those present through the history of the origin of the Quo Vadis conferences in Canada, from 2009 in Ottawa to 2017 in Burlington. In recent times, Quo Vadis came under the patronage of the Youth Committee of the Head Council of the Canadian Polish Congress and became a great success. Already, there are plans for Quo Vadis 2018; this is an example of the planning of future activities by young Polonia.



In the next part of the programme, there was the presentation of awards by Dr. Frank Simpson, a member of the Board of Directors of the Association and Chair of the Awards Committee. In this special year of the One-Hundredth Anniversary of the Holy Trinity Parish in Windsor, the Parish Priest, the Reverend Father Zbigniew Sawicki, received the Centennial Gold Medal of the Polish Community in Windsor. Our Mayor, Drew Dilkens, received the Gold Award of Merit of the Canadian Polish Congress. This same award shortly afterwards would go to Brian Masse, our MP for Windsor-West, who works so hard for Polonia. Next, two young people, Julia Zalewska and Michelle Gajewski, were introduced as recently having joined our Association. The number of young members of the younger generation in our Association now is more than 25 percent and includes two people on the Board of Directors. It is very essential that the younger generation should join the activities of Polonia.



In summary, the Annual Business Dinner of the Polish Canadian Business and Professional Association of Windsor, judging by the number of congratulations and positive comments received, was one of the most successful of such events. Tickets were sold out long before the event. However, the greatest number of words of recognition received by the Association came for its support for and inclusion of the younger generation. As can be seen, our proactive work with youth over a period of many years is yielding good results. Jakub Rybaczuk, acting for the first time as the Master of Ceremonies of our gathering, was rewarded with well deserved applause. Jakub thanked the organization for its support of the younger generation. In conclusion, referring to the One-Hundred-and-Fiftieth Anniversary of Canada, he noted that we all should be grateful that we live in Canada, one of the best and safest places to live on the planet.





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The appearance of the Song and Dance Ensemble “Tatry”, young people in beautiful folk attire, singing and performing the Rzeszowski and Nowy Sącz Dances, brought the Twenty-Second Annual Business Dinner to an end. During the break between dances, two short films were shown: the first was on the celebration of the Seven-Hundredth Anniversary of Lublin and the second, titled “Help Us Tell Your Story”, a promotional film by M. Romaniuk, prepared for the Canadian Polish Congress. Both films generated a great deal of interest among the participants. In keeping with tradition, at the end, a group photograph was shot and will appear on the cover of the Programme for the Twenty-Third Annual Business Dinner in 2018. Our guests and the young people continued their conversations for a long time, exchanged business cards and agreed to meet in future. Perhaps the contacts made in this way will yield their own networks of common interests. In conclusion, it is worth noting that shortly after the gathering, we received the next requests for loans of our displays and films. There are also plans to show parts of the CANADA 150 Exhibition in Poland during 2018. There is particular interest in the training camp “Kościuszko” of the Polish Army at Niagara-on-the-Lake. This theme once more will be topical during the One-Hundredth Anniversary of “Our Independence” in 2018.

Jerry Barycki, Windsor, 02.12.2017

Translated by Frank Simpson, Windsor, 08.12.2017

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