



EngageParlDiplo

Annual Report

2023 - 2024



Our Year In Review

Critical to our efforts to achieve our mission of inclusive democracy is the strategic planning and execution of a variety of events, each carefully crafted to foster connection, dialogue, and collaboration. From intimate roundtables to large-scale gatherings, these events have served as dynamic platforms for equal parts learning and celebration.

From the excitement of our annual Day for Diplomats to the sombre discussions of ongoing conflicts and crimes against humanity around the globe, each event represents a milestone in our journey to inspire positive change.

As we share the stories and accomplishments of the past year, we hope to demonstrate to you not only the breadth of our impact, but also the depth of our commitment to our values.

With your continued support we are confident in our ability to navigate the challenges ahead and realise our shared vision for a more inclusive and democratic world.

Thank you for being an essential part of our journey.



("Where are you?" exhibit regarding the 20,000 children stolen by Russia, Parliament Hill)



Our Commitment

EngageParlDiplo (EPD) is a trusted and unique program which connects parliamentarians, staffers and diplomats to facilitate an introduction to the Canadian legislative process, organize global dialogues and support major public policy issues.

Through carefully designed events, workshops and activities, EPD commits to strengthening democratic institutions both in Canada and globally through discussions and dialogue.

Moreover, our commitment to facilitating dialogue between decision makers extends beyond conversation; it embodies a dedication to producing environments where diverse perspectives converge, consensus is built, and solutions to pressing challenges emerge. EPD plays a pivotal role in enhancing transparency, accountability, and responsible government.



At Parliamentary Centre, we are guided as a team by an unwavering commitment to our values of initiative, inclusion, collaboration and integrity. We owe huge thanks to our sponsors, whose generous support enables us to fulfil this mission and make a meaningful difference in people's lives. Together, we build and create positive change that resonates far beyond the walls of our organisation.

Our Sponsors support a significant portion of the Centre's corporate operating costs; the executive, and financial management activities, that enable our project work around the world that strengthen and support democracy and are paid for directly by PC's funding partners.

So, we would like to express our deepest appreciation and gratitude to our sponsors, without whom our work would not be possible. We are humbled by their dedication to our mission and grateful for their partnership. We look forward to continued collaboration and success in the future.





Chair's Message

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on the past year, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment in our organisation's journey. It has been a year of progress, change and significant events, reinforcing our unwavering commitment to advancing democratic principles and dialogue. Our programmes have continued to inspire, educate and mobilise, making a tangible impact on the world around us.

A key highlight has been the appointment of our new CEO, Jaime Pitfield. This leadership transition marks a new chapter for us, bringing fresh perspectives and strategic direction that are already making an impact. Since joining us, Jaime has demonstrated exceptional leadership and a clear vision for our future. With a focus on being proactive to the needs of decision makers, he has reinvigorated our mission to advance democracy and uphold democratic principles. We are confident that under Jaime's stewardship, our organisation will continue to thrive and expand its reach.

Throughout the year, our events have played a crucial role in fostering dialogue and encouraging connection and discussion between participants. We have strengthened existing partnerships, and in events such as our "Luncheon Discussing Russian War Crimes", created platforms for meaningful action to take place.



These efforts have not only empowered individuals but also reinforced the importance of an inclusive democratic society.

On behalf of the Parliamentary Centre, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude for the amazing contributions to EPD from our sponsors. Your generous support has been instrumental in fostering dialogue, connection, and collaboration among decision-makers and diplomats,

Moving forward, I believe that for positive results to be achieved, bold action needs to take place. Let us build on the momentum and lessons of the past year, we will continue to tirelessly collaborate and champion the values that define our mission.

In closing, I would like to thank our dedicated staff for their tireless work and commitment to the company's values and mission, and who ensure continued success. And to all those who support our cause, thank you for your ongoing enthusiasm and confidence in our mission to strengthen democracy around the world.

Yaroslav Baran
Chair of the Board



President and CEO's Message

Dear Colleagues, Donors and Friends,

It is no secret that democracy is under threat.

With rising authoritarianism and democratic backsliding around the world, coupled with escalating and charged geopolitical tensions, we face growing distrust in our institutions and an increasingly polarised society.

As you will read in the report, I was privileged to hear from a wide range of political thinkers, humanitarians, politicians and activists about the current state of democracy. Every person repeated the same line: we need to be proactive rather than reactive, we collectively need to start taking the initiative.

At moments like this, there is no longer time to sit on the sidelines; leaders around the world must be prepared to answer the call and play a greater role in supporting and sustaining democracy at home and abroad.

As the leader of an organisation whose mandate is to promote democracy on a global level, I recognise the urgency of our mission and the seriousness of the task before us.

Despite the complexities of today's global landscape, we still firmly believe that democracy is worth fighting for. It is the foundation of freedom, equality and justice that creates a platform for voices to be heard, for ingenuity to flourish and for peace to thrive.



So looking ahead, our approach will be multi-faceted and decisive, meaning more advocacy, education and most of all, initiative.

We will work tirelessly to strengthen democratic processes, promote dialogue and uphold rights. We will continue to adapt and innovate to amplify the voices of marginalised groups and address emerging threats to democracy

However we cannot achieve this alone. So I must call on you to join us in this endeavour. Whether through financial support, advocacy or active participation, each of us has a role to play in safeguarding and advancing democracy.

Let us rise to the challenge together, united in our commitment to building a more inclusive, just and democratic world for all.

Jaime Pitfield
President and Chief Executive Officer



Our Impact on Democracy

To kick off our EPD program for the year, we, in partnership with the British High Commissioner Her Excellency Susannah Goshko, hosted the second annual “Do it for Democracy” on the historic Earncliffe grounds. Do it for Democracy 2023 brought together Ottawa's best and brightest in politics, academia and business to celebrate not only democracy, but also The Right Honourable Joe Clark, whose contributions include decades of outstanding involvement with human rights and democracy both nationally and internationally.

EPD staged this event as more than a celebration, it was also to impress upon attendees the importance of the continuity of democracy and its attached values. As we honoured The Rt. Hon. Joe Clark for his contributions, he underscored the ongoing commitment required from all sectors of society to uphold the fundamental principles of life, liberty and freedom for all.

Our Impact on Diplomacy

The 13th Annual Day for Diplomats’ proved to be a resounding success, attracting participation from diplomats representing a diverse range of nations. This year's event featured insightful presentations from distinguished speakers, including notable figures such as the Speaker of the House of Commons, members of parliament, renowned journalists and experienced public officials.

More than 8,000 diplomats are accredited to Canada, and the majority live in the nation's capital.

EPD strengthens diplomatic relations, promotes informed decision-making, and cultivates a more nuanced and robust understanding of Canadian perspectives among the global diplomatic community by hosting a dedicated ‘annual day’ for diplomats to engage with experts and receive updates on Canadian policy and public opinion, enhancing their understanding and effectiveness in diplomatic endeavours.



(Rt. Hon. Joe Clarke's Award Acceptance Speech)

Through engaging speakers and meaningful interactions, participants were reminded of their role in upholding and advancing democracy, not only in their own communities, but also on a global scale.



(The Hon. Greg Fergus at the 13th Annual Diplomat's Day)

Welcoming and orienting diplomats when they start working in Canada allows them to act earlier when hurdles arise, and establish or increase personal contact with Canadians.



Our Impact on Security

The pillars of democracy are not guaranteed rights for people around the world, as they are for Canadians. Rather, some depend on outside forces such as the collective security provided by NATO's protection to prevent bad actors from spreading hostile information or manipulating the population through foreign interference.

By ensuring that diplomats and lawmakers are equipped with the tools they need to do their jobs and understand the different processes associated with intergovernmental cooperation, we ensure that dialogue and cooperation are both effective and timely.

In order to effectively carry out this goal, we hosted a panel of past and present senior Canadian military officials and well regarded academics, moderated by former Minister of National Defence and current chair of NATO Canada, David Collonette, to discuss the current hurdles and challenges Canada faces in NATO, as well as the benefits we bring to the table. Consequently, attendees were thus able to learn from other's past mistakes and know what can be done to avoid setbacks.



*(Military Committee in Chiefs of Defence Format
in Support of Ukraine)*



(Operation Skyfall - Joint Training Exercise)

We also engaged with ambassadors who understand the continuing threat to democracy, to discuss the different paths available to nations seeking to become NATO members. This dialogue included exploring the steps necessary to meet NATO's criteria, the importance of democratic reforms, and strategies for fostering closer cooperation with other democratic nations.

In addition to this event, we routinely hold roundtable discussions that bring together a diverse array of groups, such as that of the NATO event. These gatherings provide a platform for subject matter experts to present briefs on relevant and timely events that impact current state, and future of democracy and the rules-based international order.

The collaborative environment encourages dialogue and the sharing of information, ultimately strengthening the collective ability to uphold democratic values and the principles of our mandate.

Through these ongoing engagements, we aim to build resilient and informed networks that can effectively respond to and mitigate emerging threats to global democracy.



Security Continued...

In support of the The Ukrainian Parliament's push to reform the governance of the security and defence sector, The Ukrainian Parliament's Verkhovna Rada Law Enforcement Committee, completed a highly successful visit to Ottawa to study Canada's military justice system, exemplifying strong Canadian democratic institutions.

The delegation of four MPs, three from the ruling party and one from the opposition, received comprehensive presentations from the Judge Advocate General, the Ombudsman of the Canadian Forces, the Military Police Complaints Commission and the Civil Review Complaints Commission. The MPs met with the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Minister of National Defence, the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group and the Standing Committee on National Defence.



(Networking Reception at the Ukrainian Embassy)



(The Ukrainian Parliament's Law Enforcement Committee Member Ms. Oleksandra Ustinova with Canadian Representatives)

In collaboration between the Ukrainian Embassy, the Parliamentary Centre, and EPD, a Networking Reception at the Ukrainian Embassy was held on April 16th. The event brought together 90 representatives from diplomatic missions, MPs, Senators, staffers, and the business community.

In direct relation to the goals of our organisation, it should be noted that as the first official visit of the Committee on Law Enforcement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to Canada, it allowed the establishment of inter-parliamentary relationships between the two nations, and has provided room for much needed dialogue and on-going partnerships.

This visit underscores our commitment to promoting democratic principles through the exchange of knowledge and best practices in military justice and oversight.



Our Impact on Justice

In keeping with the above noted rise of encroaching and current threats to democracy, we hosted two remarkable individuals, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Oleksandra Matviichuk and The Honourable Minister of Justice and Attorney General Arif Virani, for a fascinating luncheon on ongoing Russian war crimes against Ukraine, as the final event in our EngageParlDiplo programme series.

Ms. Matviichuk's insights shed light on the urgent need for accountability and justice in the face of atrocities like mass kidnappings and relocation of children, and crimes against civilians and non-combatants.

The lunch discussion marked a significant moment in our ongoing commitment to meaningful dialogue on critical issues, and we were reminded by both Mr. Virani, and Ms. Matviichuk about the need to continue our support for nations who are being oppressed by autocracy. Against a backdrop of escalating tensions, this event provided an important platform to deepen understanding and raise awareness.

"The West must not be afraid to cross Putin's 'red line'; Putin should be afraid to cross ours."
- Oleksandra Matviichuk

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors plays a critical role in guiding the strategic direction and governance of EPD. Comprising dedicated individuals with diverse backgrounds and expertise, our Board members bring invaluable insight and leadership to support our mission.

We are grateful for the dedication and expertise of our board members.



(Oleksandra Matviichuk receives a Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms translated into Ukrainian.)

As this event concluded our EngageParlDiplo programme series for 2023, we continue to demonstrate our unwavering commitment to creating spaces for dialogue and engagement on issues of paramount importance.

By convening these events, we strengthen our position as a trusted facilitator of discussions that highlight pressing challenges and advocate for positive change.

Yaroslav Baran - Chair of the Board
Marci Surkes - Vice Chair
Jennifer Brooy - Treasurer
Camille Therriault-Power - Secretary
Graham Fox
Lori Turnbull
Farhaan Ladhani
Phedely Ariste
Kerry Buck
Anne McGrath
Heather Bradley
Rebecca Murray
Peter Oberle
Jaime Pitfield - President & CEO

EngageParlDiplo
Annual Report
2023



Images courtesy of U.S. Air Force, Senior Airman Colville McFee, NATO, and Tetiana Dodonova Photography.