

CHC 40th Annual General Meeting Sunday, 27 November 2022 ~President's Report~

I am pleased to welcome all delegates to this year's annual Convention of the Canadian Hellenic Congress. It has once again been a busy year for the CHC and our continued efforts to advance and promote its *raison-d'être*; to lobby for issues of concern to Canadians of Hellenic descent.

Although the restrictions imposed on us over the last couple of years, due to the worldwide pandemic, were somewhat lifted this past year, the bulk of our work and efforts were through letter writing, virtual meetings, emails, as well as, social media postings. Once again, however, our efforts were made possible through great team work and I thank the National Council members, especially the members of the Executive, for their hard work and dedication.

A large part of our communications was with our Canadian government. In each case, we ensured that our communications were cc'd to appropriate parties.

My report will be presented in sections, according to the issues we have addressed since our last General Meeting of November 2021. Last year's annual convention concluded with a well-received lecture entitled: "*New agreements, new geopolitical dynamics, new Mediterranean*", with keynote speaker Professor Ioannis Mazis.

I will be presenting my report in English. However, if anyone wishes for me to stop and translate into Greek, I will be more than happy to do so.

1) Recognition in Canada of the Genocide of the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire

- On May 15th 2022, we held our annual tribute to May 19th, Day of Remembrance of the Genocide of the Hellenes of Pontos, online via ZOOM. The event – entitled "The Genocide of the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire" – included a lecture by our keynote speaker Dr. Vlasis Agtzidis, professor of Modern History and mathematician at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the screening of the documentary "Events in Phocaea 1914" by Agnes Sklavou & Stelios Tatakis, presented in Greek with English subtitles and concluded with a Question and Answer Period/Discussion with Professor Agtzidis. The documentary we screened, "Events in Phocaea 1914", has been in numerous film festivals, including the 17th edition of the Thessaloniki documentary film festival and the Halkida Film Festival, both in 2015. A copy of the promotional poster we created for this event will be included with my report.

- On May 16th we issued our Statement on the occasion of the May 19th Remembrance Day of the Pontian Greek Genocide. The Armenian National Committee of Canada also made a statement on its social media on the occasion of May 19th, showing its solidarity to the Canadian Hellenic Congress and the entire Greek-Canadian community, urging Canada and the rest of the international community to demand that Turkey stop its shameless denial of its criminal past and to recognise this crime as genocide.
- As well, the CHC and the HCCO were invited to the memorial and remembrance events by the Montreal and the Toronto Pontian organisations and, respectively, took part in the events.
- In early June a background paper on the CHC's policy for the recognition of the Genocide of all Greeks of the Ottoman Empire, as a whole, was circulated to the CHC National Council. The paper reiterated the CHC's policy, provided a chronology of events and the rationale for a holistic approach for the recognition of the genocide, to include all regions of the Ottoman Empire, namely Eastern Thrace, Asia Minor and Pontos, from 1908 to 1924, keeping in mind the respective commemorative dates of April 6th, September 14th and May 19th.
- On June 27, the CHC held a National Consultation on the Genocide of the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire, via ZOOM. Invitees to this community-wide consultation included the Archdiocese, provincial congresses, communities, associations and individuals. The participants of the meeting concluded that the revised strategy on the recognition process be adopted and moving forward the direction should be as presented in the CHC's background paper, that is, the Recognition of the Greek Genocide in Eastern Thrace, Asia Minor and Pontos, from 1908 to 1924, with remembrance dates as mentioned earlier.
- On September 5th, we issued a message, through our social media, honouring the memory of the victims of the Constantinople Pogrom of September 6 and 7, 1955, known as "TA SEPTEMVRIANA".
- As well, we issued a President's message marking the 100 years since the catastrophic Burning of Smyrna; one of the darkest moments in the history of Hellenism. The message included urging the International Community to stand with the Greek and Armenian people to demand of Turkey to acknowledge and reconcile with its past and to cease its constant violations of human rights and international law.

2) Greece, Turkey, Regions of the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean

- On June 9th the CHC sent a letter to PM Trudeau requesting that action be taken following the hijacking – through armed force – of two Greek oil tankers by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard. The letter was cc'd to Foreign Affairs Minister Joly, all opposition-party leaders, Senator Housakos and MPs of Greek descent. The response we received from the PMO indicated the matter had been referred to Foreign Affairs Minister Joly.

- On June 21st we sent another letter to PM Trudeau regarding Turkey's escalating threats to Greece's sovereignty and NATO's position. The letter cited the recent comments by the Turkish President threatening to "bury" Greece, alluding to the last century's Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) and was also cc'd to Foreign Affairs Minister Joly, all opposition-party leaders, Senator Housakos and MPs of Greek descent. The response we received from the PMO – in July – thanked the CHC for the correspondence, stated that our comments have been given careful and appropriate consideration, and that the government would continue to monitor the situation in the region closely.

- On October 6th we again wrote to PM Trudeau with regard to Turkey's recent threats to Greece's sovereignty and Canada's position. Our letter specifically cited our profound concerns regarding:
 - the deterioration of relations between Greece and Turkey;
 - threats of war by Erdogan, and
 - his comments at the September 20th UN General Assembly – amongst others – that "*Greece is turning the Aegean into a graveyard for refugees*".

- In our letter, we stated that:
 - Erdogan's war mongering and threats against another member of NATO must be condemned by the Government of Canada;
 - Canada and other NATO countries have, for years, turned a blind eye on Turkey;
 - Turkey's behaviour towards Greece clearly demonstrates a failed ally of Canada and NATO;
 - should Turkey fail to cease and desist its provocative, threatening and war-mongering behaviour against Greece, Canada, the US and the EU must impose sanctions on Turkey;
 - it is not sufficient for Canada to call on "both sides" to reduce tensions as this creates a false parity; and,
 - if Canada and NATO do not contain Turkey and Erdogan, this will create a second occupation of an EU country – just like Cyprus is still to this day – and we do not want a "second Ukraine".

- In closing, we urged the PM to take the lead on this matter, by strongly condemning Erdogan's threats and imposing sanctions on Turkey. We received a standard response from the PMO, thanking us for our comments and indicating that the matter had been referred to Minister Joly for her information and consideration.
- Based on this response and, in view of further developments since our last letter to the PM, we are currently working on a follow-up with Minister Joly.

3) Cyprus

- On April 1st, the CHC issued a Statement on the occasion of Cyprus' National Day – also known as EOKA Day.
- Again this year, we received invitations from the Association of Cypriots and Friends of Cyprus in Canada, in collaboration with the Cyprus High Commissioner to Canada and Honorary Consul of the Republic of Cyprus in Montreal, to attend the memorial service in Montreal, commemorating April 1st 1955, EOKA Day, and remembering those who sacrificed their lives during the struggle for the independence of Cyprus from Britain and from the Cypriot Federation of Canada to attend the memorial service in Toronto.
- On July 20th we published the CHC's Message on the occasion of the 48th-year sombre Anniversary of the Turkish Invasion of Cyprus.
- As well in July, the CHC and the HCCO were invited to, and attended, the memorial events in Montreal and Toronto respectively, commemorating all those who lost their lives during the coup d'état and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in July 1974.

4) Ukraine

- On January 25th we issued a statement pledging our support to Ukraine and its people, to Canadian-Greek media, as well as, uploaded on our Fb page and Website. Our statement expressed our deep concern about the situation at the Ukraine-Russia border and the rising tensions in the region, urging all parties to stand down and engage in open and diplomatic dialogue. As well, it included a quote stating that "we hope for a speedy resolution to the conflict and for peace and stability for Ukraine" and we urged Canada to continue to work closely with its allies and partners to support a strong and independent Ukraine.
- On February 23rd we issued a statement regarding Russia's violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, also sent to Canadian-Greek media and uploaded on our social media. The closing paragraph of the statement, read as follows: "*Finally, the CHC believes the Putin*

regime's behaviour towards Ukraine should be a wake-up call for the West, that autocratic or dictatorial regimes – who do not respect the rule of law, nor international treaties – cannot be treated with “kid gloves”. A case in point: in the past, Canada and its allies have tolerated such behaviours, treating events like the invasion of Cyprus – selectively – and taking little or no action to curtail the aggressor's military attacks. For close to 48 years, Cyprus has remained divided and occupied by Turkey, yet the West has tolerated this occupation and has not imposed severe sanctions on Turkey despite its violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a democratic and independent Cyprus. The West's selective treatment of gross violations of national sovereignty of countries like Cyprus has given rise to the Putin and other regimes that – without impunity and through brute force – impose their will on an independent country like Ukraine. The CHC is hopeful that the Ukrainian situation will be a lesson for the West, putting an end to the selective treatment of aggressors, since the next time, their own sovereignty may come into question by the “next-door” autocrat, resulting in humanity being in peril.”

- On February 24th we received an invitation to participate in the Rally in support of Ukraine, organised in Montreal, by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress on Sunday, February 27th. We promoted the rally on our Fb page, inviting our National Council members, members, family, friends and the community at large, to participate in the rally, in support of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, here in Canada and in the Diaspora. As well, I was asked to speak at the Rally, where approximately 300 people attended. The video clip of my speech was uploaded on our social media.
- On March 9th we issued another press release, calling upon Canadians of Hellenic descent to assist the people of Ukraine and our fellow Hellenes, with humanitarian and financial aid.

5) Macedonia

- On April 17th, we wrote a joint letter – with the Pan-Macedonian Federation of Canada – to Her Excellency, Ambassador Konstantina Athanassiadou, expressing our concerns about the use of the name Macedonia. Specifically, our letter made reference to the media-advertising campaign of the "TANEC" dance troupe from "Northern Macedonia", during its North American 8-major-city tour. The media campaign included statements such as: “The Soul of Macedonia” and a “magical journey of 2000 years of history and culture” (whereas the country of FYROM is only 31 years old!). Our letter also stated that the mere use of these advertising slogans were in violation of the Prespes Agreement and urged the Greek Ambassador to take up the issue with Canada's Foreign Affairs Office. Our letter was read on air during the Greek radio programme of MIKE FM in Montreal, where

the host agreed with our position and indicated that they too would be waiting for a response/comments from the Ambassador's office.

6) Relations with the Armenian Community:

- On April 24th we issued a statement on the occasion of the 107th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, pledging – once again – the CHC's allegiance to our Armenian brothers and sisters against the Government of Turkey's ongoing denial of this crime

- On September 16th we issued a Press Release condemning the Azerbaijani aggression in Armenia, while pledging our unequivocal support for Armenia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and urging our Canadian government to work with its international allies, including NATO and the European Union, to demand de-escalation, full respect of the ceasefire and the return to meaningful dialogue. Our release concluded by stating that Canada MUST return to its core values and speak against the aggressors who have violated human rights and religious freedoms, and – through military action – have usurped the freedom and independence of the people of Armenia and that Turkish-backed Azerbaijan MUST be held accountable!

- Our release – which was uploaded to the CHC's Fb page – was shared 30 times, by organisations and individuals, including:
 - The Israel-Armenia Friendship Connection
 - The Armenia-Cyprus Friendship Association
 - The Armenia-Greece Friendship Association
 - The Armenian National Committee of Canada
 - The Armenian National Committee of Québec
 - etc...

7) CHC National Advisory Board

- During the course of the year, the following members were appointed to the existing CHC National Advisory Board:
 - Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos, former Ambassador of Greece
 - Leonidas Koumakis, author
 - Eleni Savvaki, academic and research scientist

8) Various communications:

- On January 27th we issued our statement on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day

- On February 9th, the CHC issued a statement on the occasion of International Greek Language Day, which coincides with the Commemoration Day of Dionysios Solomos, Greece's national poet, whose lyrics are featured in the Greek National Anthem.

- On March 25th, we issued a message from the CHC President and the National Council on the occasion of Greece's 201st Independence Anniversary, which was published in both Montreal Greek newspapers, as well as, recorded for the CFMB 1280 AM Greek radio programme.
- On March 29th, we organised – here in Quebec – a wreath-laying ceremony at the Place du Canada, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, in Downtown Montreal. The ceremony was well-attended by several politicians and elected officials, individuals from our member-organisations and from the community at large. A total of 12 wreaths were laid, on behalf of the Government of Canada, the cities of Montreal and Laval, the Veterans and from our member-organisations: the 300 Spartans of Quebec, the Attiki Association, the Athletic Association Hellas, the Kastorian Society of Montreal “Omonia”, the Messinian Brotherhood of Canada, and the CHC. The event was covered by Dimitri Papadopoulos, editor of the Montreal Greek Times, who uploaded the coverage on his Website and the Greek Times Fb page.
- On April 21st the CHC issued its Easter message, which was uploaded on our social media.
- On May 3rd we issued a Press Release (in Greek) regarding a Tribute to Me Demetrius Manolakos that was organised in Montreal by the Hellenic Congress of Quebec. Me Manolakos was the first – of Greek descent – notary in Montreal, as well as, the first Deputy Mayor of the City. Amongst his numerous achievements is the historic integration – during his presidency – of the day schools of the Greek Community of Montreal into Quebec's French-speaking educational system. He is also a past president of the Canadian Hellenic Congress and the Hellenic Community of Montreal, Archon Notarius of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and honorary president of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal. Our Press Release stated that – while the CHC undoubtedly believes Me Manolakos to be deserving and worthy of an honour – it could not, in good conscience, contribute financially to the coffers of the Hellenic Congress of Quebec, who took the CHC to court. Instead of purchasing tickets to the event, we encouraged the community at large to pay tribute to his selfless and tireless contribution to society by means of a donation to the HCGM schools in his name.
- On June 20th we sent a congratulatory letter to the newly-elected President, Dr. George Tsoukas, and the Board of

Directors of the HCGM, wishing them success in their mandate to provide educational, religious, social and cultural services to the HCGM members and to future generations, as well as, iterating that the CHC looks forward to collaborating with them to promote our national issues.

- On July 1st the CHC issued the President's Canada Day message on behalf of the National Council.
- On September 1st we paid tribute to the late John Coonas – well-know Greek-Canadian journalist and television producer of “Edo Montreal” on Odyssey TV – who passed away on August 31st 2022. We posted a tribute on our social media and I was asked to participate on a live radio tribute along with many community leaders and prominent Hellenes. We also attended his funeral in Montreal.
- On September 13th the CHC sent a congratulatory letter to the Honourable Pierre Poilievre for his election as leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, to which we received a thank you letter in return from the Office of the Official Opposition Leader.
- On September 26th we uploaded a posting on our social media extending our thoughts and prayers to all the people affected by the devastation and damage caused by Hurricane Fiona in Eastern Canada and urging our fellow Canadians of Hellenic descent, and all Canadians, to assist our fellow Canadians in Eastern Canada through the Canadian Red Cross.
- On October 26th, we issued a message on the occasion of the October 26th 1912, the Liberation of Thessaloniki, and October 28th 1940, “OXI” day anniversaries, which was sent to media and uploaded on our FB page and our Website.
- On October 29th, we organised – here in Quebec – a wreath-laying ceremony at the Laval City-Hall cenotaph to commemorate the anniversaries of October 26th and October 28th. This year's ceremony was co-organised with the 300 Spartans of Quebec organisation and was well-attended by several politicians and elected officials, individuals from our member-organisations and from the community at large. A total of 8 wreaths were laid, on behalf of the Senate and Government of Canada, the cities of Montreal and Laval, the Veterans, the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal, the 300 Spartans of Quebec and, of course, the CHC. The event received month-long, front-page coverage by the Montreal Greek Times Newspaper “TA XRONIKA” in its November 2022 edition,

as well as, on the television show “Edo Montreal” which airs on the Odyssey TV channel and was also uploaded to the show’s YouTube channel.

As I conclude my President’s Report for the period of November 2021 to November 2022, I wish to – once again – thank all the members of the CHC’s National Council for their constant support and assistance. As well, a big thank you to all the delegates in attendance today!

Please join us this afternoon at 2:00 pm for our lecture by Professor Ioannis Bougas.