

## **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**(EN)**

**December 10, 2024, 6:25 PM, 6161 Cambie Street.**

### **Attendees:**

The quorum is set at 7% of the members (36 voters). A total of 38 voters are present, including 16 proxy votes, so the quorum is met. Three non-voting participants are also in attendance.

The Annual General Meeting is chaired by Bruno GERVES, President of the Association, and Damien HUBERT, Executive Director of the Alliance Française Vancouver (AFV), following the agenda below:

### **Agenda:**

Introduction: Welcome by the President, Bruno GERVES, and a brief reminder of the procedures for organizing the AGM.

#### **1. Approval of the 2023 AGM Minutes**

The minutes from the 2023 Annual General Meeting, which covered the 2022 fiscal year, were shared with all participants in advance via the official meeting notice, whether they were attending in person or voting by proxy. The first item on the agenda is the approval of these minutes.

A total of 26 attendees voted in person, and 16 votes were submitted by proxy.

IN FAVOUR: 38

AGAINST: 0

ABSTENTION: 0

**The minutes are approved.**

#### **2. Statements Financial statements, presentation and approbation**

Presentation of the 2023 financial results, with some updates regarding 2024 shared during both the presentation and the discussion that followed.

- Daniel WANG, Treasurer of AFV, begins:

He welcomes those in attendance and explains that the financial statements cover the year ending December 31, 2023. At that time, the organization had not yet moved into its new building.

- Comparison of 2022 and 2023 figures:

Overall figures have increased, mainly due to a rise in course registrations and memberships. Revenues grew across all activity areas, except for government grants and fundraising, over which the AFV has limited control.

Direct Costs:

These have also increased, due to interest payments on the bank loan and salaries for the teachers.

- Profits:

Despite the costs of renting the temporary building, profits totaled \$100,000.

Investment income rose to \$95,000, compared to \$66,000 in 2022.

Daniel WANG concluded the presentation by thanking Suzie and Richard, as well as Damien, for their support and assistance during his first year as Treasurer of the Alliance Française.

- Q&A:

Joel OGER asks Daniel WANG, as well as Damien HUBERT and Bruno GERVES, about the costs and the bank loan repayment plan, requesting a general overview of the total amount to be repaid.

Daniel WANG: States that the association currently has loans totaling 15 million dollars to repay.

Bruno GERVES: He explains that the income and expenses related to the building will be addressed later in the AGM. He adds that the 15 million loan was taken out progressively. At present, the association is only paying the interest. Repayment of both principal and interest will begin in June 2025. He emphasizes the need to expand activities in preparation for when principal repayments start.

Vote to approve the financial results and statements:

26 members and 16 proxies voted. The results are as follows:

FOR: 38

AGAINST: 0

ABSTENTIONS: 0

**The financial results and statements are approved.**

### **3. 2023 Activity Report by the Executive Director**

Damien HUBERT takes the floor.

**He starts by showing a recap video of the Alliance's 2023 activities to introduce the report.**

Damien HUBERT thanks the teams and volunteers for their outstanding work, noting that all the success rests on their shoulders. While only a few are present in the room, some are here, and the assembly applauds. He highlights the “incredible” staff team and emphasizes the vital role of members and volunteers.

- Overall Objective for 2023

The year 2023 was focused on preparation, monitoring, and management in anticipation of the move to the new building. The goal was to maintain quality in the temporary space, keeping it friendly, pleasant, and welcoming while encouraging student participation and developing partnerships. A key priority was engaging partners, especially in view of a fundraising strategy.

RESULTS: Objective achieved.

Year 2024: An exponential increase in key figures has been observed. This will be reviewed at the 2025 AGM covering the year 2024.

- Language School in 2023:

The objective for 2023 was to maintain enrollment numbers across both adult and children’s programs. While registration data does not fully reflect this, the school reached a significantly larger number of new learners, with a 5.3% increase.

A shift was observed in the student profile: historically, the majority were children, but in 2023 this trend reversed, with adults making up 55% of students and children 45%. This change is explained by the temporary building’s facilities being less suited for children’s programs. Nevertheless, the school successfully sustained its appeal to adult learners.

Financial performance was strong, driven in large part by government training agreements. The Alliance is accredited to provide language instruction to federal government employees, which led to a significant increase in teaching hours: from 7,546 corporate hours in 2022 to 42,324 in 2023

RESULTS :

- ➔ 112,904 teaching hours delivered: a 25% increase. 2024 is continuing to show exponential growth.
- ➔ Group and adult courses: 4,000 registrations in 2024, including over 1,000 in the new building.
- ➔ Certificates and diplomas: Test-related figures continue to fluctuate, largely due to Canada’s immigration policies. 2023 saw average results. In contrast, 2024 has experienced exponential growth: 1,500 certifications in 2024 compared to 602 in 2023.

- Cultural Activities in 2023:

The comeback of in-person events, with 105 events held in 2023 compared to 82 in 2022. Online events declined: from 73 in 2022 to just 19 in 2023.

Highlights in review: A strong comeback for in-person events, with significantly larger audiences of over 6,000 attendees in 2023, compared to 4,000 in 2022. (In 2024: more than 7,000 expected)

The distribution of events reflects the Association's three-part mission: 15% cinema, 44% literature and ideas, 13% performing arts, 15% visual arts, and 13% community gatherings.

Key annual events were maintained and remained successful, notably V-Unframed and La Fête de la Musique.

#### CONCLUSION :

In 2023, the focus was on preparing the organization for a major transition in line with its broader ambitions. The goal was to begin diversifying revenue streams, improve salaries, preserve jobs, and maintain a welcoming and supportive environment for users, members, and staff alike.

Thanks to the dedication of the entire team and all those involved, the outcome is positive and the objectives have been met. Thank you!

#### **4. New building activity report by the President**

Bruno GERVES speaks:

- 2023 Overview:

He begins by thanking the Association's teams. Working in the temporary premises presented many challenges for staff, with high activity levels and ongoing construction that demanded a great deal of space and energy.

Bruno notes that, as of January 2023, the new building consisted only of the ground floor and the two stairwells and the elevator shaft. January marked the start of the installation of wooden columns and floor slabs for the upper levels. The project experienced significant delays, including flooding on site after the wooden structure had already been installed, which led to increased construction costs.

At the same time, the Association was confronted with a major problem: the temporary premises no longer had an owner, which created uncertainty and instability about its future. Despite these conditions, the team showed remarkable commitment and patience. In conclusion, 2023 can be seen as a very successful year with a strong overall performance, achieved under difficult circumstances.

- Brief Summary of 2024:

It was necessary to push the builder to focus on securing the occupancy and moving permits, which had become urgent. The move took place in July, with the teams showing

impressive organization and energy to complete it over a single weekend. The staff was highly committed.

Seven months later, the Association moved into its new building, which was officially opened and inaugurated. It was necessary to push the builder to prioritize the occupancy and moving permits, which had become urgent. The move took place in July, with an impressive display of organization and energy from the teams over a single weekend. The team was strongly mobilized.

The inauguration followed in August, ahead of the first rentals.

“At the same time, 120 years is something to celebrate!” — reaching such an age is quite rare for an association in Vancouver. To mark the occasion, a gala was held on November 28. The AGM therefore took place after these events, but we are gathered here this evening for it.

The building still has some issues and imperfections, and progress isn’t as fast as desired, but everyone remains patient. Meanwhile, activities are taking off: more members, more classes, and more cultural events, with careful attention to not being overwhelmed by our own success.

Building Financing	k\$
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$23,899</b>
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Loans	\$15,000
Public grants	\$4,422
AFV	\$4,056
Donations + Theatre seats	\$317
Foundations + Corporate sponsors + Associations	\$103

- Costs :

k\$	Initial	Change Order	TOTAL
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<b>Total</b>	<b>\$19,030</b>	<b>\$4,869</b>	<b>\$23,899</b>	<b>26%</b>
Construction	\$15,945	\$4,661	\$20,607	29%
Architects/Consultants	\$1,848	\$207	\$2,056	11%
City	\$589	\$0	\$589	
Furniture+Equipement	\$646	\$0	\$646	

Close to 24 million dollars (23,899\$) representing a 26% overrun on the initial budget — a very common occurrence in construction projects in Vancouver.

By comparison :

- *Marpole Community Center* → 2.7 times more expensive per square meter than the Alliance Française Vancouver.
- *Steveston Community Center* → twice as expensive per square meter as the AFV.

- 2025 and 2026 Budget Projections:

The forecasted budgets, especially in terms of revenue, are reasonable. There's no cause for concern as long as we maintain our current efforts.

Congratulations on the building and on the activities. Bruno is proud of the project's completion and management, and now it's time to face the challenge of welcoming thousands of new residents moving to Oakridge.

- Q&A:

Ms. Carine McEwen: Is there growing enthusiasm for studying French, particularly among adults? How do you project future interest in learning French?

Damien HUBERT: The renewed interest in learning French is largely driven by a resurgence of bilingualism and the presence of French in Vancouver, thanks in part to new immigrants. Mastery of both official languages is important. One or even two languages are no longer enough—three languages have become essential in Canada. AI is already a consideration for the future, but for now, nothing replaces direct teaching methods. The decline in the number of children learners was mainly due to the temporary facilities. The drop among teenagers is likely linked to deeper social factors, including the impact of COVID-19.

In September 2024, student numbers increased by 25%, and by November, adult enrollment had risen by 46%. This is an unprecedented situation. Typically, peak enrollment periods are linked to the start of the school year in September and the new calendar year.

Ms. Carine McEwen: What is the difference in mandate between the Alliance Française and the Centre Culturel Francophone?

Damien HUBERT: The three pillars of Alliance Française Vancouver are EDUCATION, CULTURE, and COMMUNITY. Its reputation is synonymous with excellence. It is both a cultural center and a language school, with 3,500 students. UBC and the Centre Culturel Francophone French learning apps are based on different approaches. This is not about competition, but rather about a shared mission carried out through different means. At the Alliance Française, we believe nothing replaces a trained, qualified teacher and a group of twelve students learning together, engaging in conversation, and practicing as a group. That's what the Alliance Française Vancouver has specialized in for 120 years, and what the global Alliance Française network has done for 140 years. The quality of "Alliance Française" teaching truly makes the difference—many international students come specifically because of that reputation.

Ms. Carine McEwen: How do the Alliance's cultural activities differ from those offered by the Centre Culturel Francophone?

Damien HUBERT: Damien HUBERT: He thanked the local partners with whom Alliance Française Vancouver works hand in hand to promote Francophone cultures. French is a shared language across many countries. The Alliance works closely with Vision Oust Production to support both local and international Francophone cinema. There has also been significant growth in programming that features Quebecois and local artists. Theatre will thrive thanks to the strength and engagement of the local community.

Comment from Karim AIT IDIR, member of the AFV team: When he was new to Canada, he noticed a strong interest in the French language. The government clearly supports and encourages the promotion of French, which explains this growing enthusiasm. The Alliance Française benefits from a strong and well-established reputation.

Marta MAFTEI: She extended her congratulations for the immense work accomplished, which required a great deal of effort and a wide range of contributions to navigate many complex challenges. She emphasized that this success is not only the result of the Board's work but also of the entire team. She highlighted the openness of the Alliance Française Vancouver to anglophones, the spirit of collaboration, and the wide variety of cultural activities as seen on the website. According to her, the Alliance is a rich and diverse cultural hub.

Régis PAINCHAUD: He pointed out the two-fold potential of the Alliance Française Vancouver. French immersion in BC schools continues to involve around 60,000 students despite growing demand. A key barrier to expansion is the shortage of qualified French-speaking teachers. He stressed that the interest in learning French remains very strong.

Robert KHOURY: While acknowledging the cost overruns in the construction project, he also commended the Board and the AFV team for their accomplishments—particularly

for retaining ownership of the land, which ensures the Alliance Française Vancouver remains in control of its long-term real estate options.

Lorraine FORTIN: She offered her congratulations. In her view, it is a remarkable achievement to lead a team and a community in rallying around such a meaningful project. She felt privileged to witness the birth of a new Alliance Française in Vancouver and believes this new building to be a historic milestone for both Vancouver and British Columbia. She called on everyone to actively promote the AFV and make it known to others. For her, the concept of discoverability is essential to unleashing the full potential of the Alliance. She shared that Vision Ouest Production is committed to promoting the AFV and introducing it to other institutions and organizations. The Alliance, she said, should aim for national recognition — "a place where people should come, where they should be."

Bruno GERVES: He expressed his gratitude for these kind words and reminded the assembly that the French language courses are the primary source of financial support for the Association. He emphasized the importance of encouraging others to choose the Alliance Française Vancouver for French language learning. While cultural programming is essential to the mission, it presents financial challenges, as it does not generate the same level of revenue. He noted that the financial situation of the AFV is much stronger today than it was 15 years ago, thanks to years of careful planning and preparation—efforts that made the construction loan possible. Looking ahead, the budget includes provisions to build a financial reserve to ensure the long-term upkeep of the new building, which now stands as a central tool in promoting the French language. He concluded by saying that this shared mission is what has brought everyone together this evening.

## **5. Election of the New Board Members**

The following decisions and candidacies were submitted for a vote:

Board members who were elected in 2023 for a two-year term are not up for re-election.

Cosme FONDY and Sonia ROBERT have reached the end of their two consecutive two-year terms and are therefore not eligible for re-election. The Assembly extends its sincere thanks for their dedication and contributions.

Richard BROWN, Vice-President, has served on the Board for four years and played a key role in negotiations with financial institutions. He is seeking a third, one-year term to help ensure a smooth transition. The Board recommends the re-election of Richard BROWN for an additional one-year term.

Jean GIRARD and François LUCAS have put themselves forward to replace Cosme FONDY and Sonia ROBERT.

- Candidate Presentations:

Jean GIRARD: Jean is the Sales and Events Director at one of the Fairmont hotels. He has been in Canada for 30 years, working in the luxury hospitality industry. He has two children living in Montreal. His candidacy is motivated by two main reasons: (1) a desire to reconnect with his French heritage, from which he feels somewhat distanced after 30 years abroad, and (2) his professional expertise in event planning, which he believes could benefit the Association. This is his first time serving on a Board of Directors, and he is enthusiastic about the opportunity.

François LUCAS: Originally from the Paris region, François lived in France until the age of 20 before relocating to England, then Hong Kong, and eventually returning to France. He has lived in Vancouver since 2004. He is the founder of a company in the investment and finance sector. Initially trained as a telecommunications engineer, he is also an expert in high-tech and has professional experience in the construction industry. He expressed a desire to reconnect with his French roots and heritage. He has built an international, multicultural family and travels frequently.

Following the presentations, Bruno GERVES called for the vote.

➔ The vote was conducted to approve a one-year term for Richard Brown and two-year terms for François Lucas and Jean Girard:

A total of 42 votes were cast (26 in person, 16 proxies):

FOR: 38

AGAINST: 0

ABSTENTIONS: 0

**Richard Brown, Jean Girard, and François Lucas are officially elected to the Board of Directors of AFV.**

6. Q&A

Bruno GERVES invited questions. There were none. Thank you for your participation!

To conclude, Damien HUBERT invited everyone to join a friendly reception.