

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT

Message from the President

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2007-2008.

The ESCC continues to promote Catholic values in its advocacy efforts.

In the Fall of 2007, the ESCC presented its Brief at the Public Consultations on Seniors' Living Conditions in Montreal. We insisted that any effective effort to address the needs of English-speaking seniors must be built on a foundation of respect for a number of basic principles, viz.,

- The recognition of the value of the individual person and the protection of the dignity of each individual as he/she ages; this must also take into account spiritual identity and well-being;
- The recognition in policies and programs of the precious contribution of seniors to the health of families, communities and society in general;
- The recognition of the benefits of encouraging involvement of younger generations in caring for seniors thus creating an appreciation for the importance of volunteering and building meaningful links between generations.

We can only hope that the findings from the Consultation will lead to meaningful policies and actions on the part of the Quebec Government. We intend to follow these results with special attention.

In the Fall of 2007, the ESCC presented its Brief in Montreal on Reasonable Accommodation in Montreal. It addressed four major issues, namely,

- Pluralism, Religion and Quebec Society;
- Freedom of Religion: The Cornerstone of Tolerance and Human Rights;
- Religion in Education, Public Institutions and the Workplace;
- Religion, Social Capital, and Public Policy.

The subject is complex, politically charged and delicate. The ESCC considers itself privileged in that those involved in the preparation of the Brief had a deep understanding of the issues, nuances and impacts.

As these lines are being written, the Quebec Government has announced that it will present the Commission's report on May 23, 2008. We have heard that it is a voluminous report, which we intend to study with all the care it deserves.

Following the presentation of our brief, we felt it propitious to invite a leading Muslim cleric to address our Board, as a gesture of interfaith cooperation. Imam Salam Elmenyawawi spoke to us on November 26, 2007, and proposed further exchanges from time to time, to reflect on common social problems and possible solutions.

In January 2008, the ESCC was represented in Ottawa at a Research Symposium on Official Languages in Canada. Issues addressed were healthcare, education, immigration, economic development and culture. The ESCC also participated in consultations organized by the Minister of Canadian Heritage to assist Mr. Bernard Lord, Special Advisor to the Government of Canada who was developing a position on linguistic duality and official languages for the Federal Government.

The ESCC continues to collaborate in a Coalition advocating for sufficient funding to be provided to support measures identified in the Act to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion, specifically, the construction and renovation of quality accessible, affordable social housing to respond to established needs; the extension of free prescribed medication to include seniors on the partial guaranteed income supplement, enhanced job opportunities for people with handicaps facing major obstacles, immigrants and members of visible minorities and school support for students in underprivileged environments.

I would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Montreal St. Patrick's Foundation, the Father Dowd Foundation, Pillars Trust, the Department of Canadian Heritage, and the Catholic Times, without whose continuous cooperation the Council's mission and work could not be achieved.

In closing, I want to thank very specially my colleagues on the Board and Advisory Committee, whose interest and dedication are both real and sustained. As well, I would like to recognize the excellent work and dynamism of our Executive Director, Martin Murphy, ably supported by an ever-cooperative Suzanne Brown. The support they provide to our Board and Executive cannot be praised too highly.

Sincerely yours,

Clifford Lincoln
President

ESCC COMMITTEES 2007 - 2008

Executive

CLIFFORD LINCOLN
President

LYNN LONERGAN DOYLE
Vice-President and Secretary

ROBERT VAUPSHAS
Treasurer

COLIN COOLE
Past-President

Education

- Monitors policy & legislation;
- Facilitates communication among leaders;

Social Issues

- Monitors legislation in the areas of poverty, income security, housing and family policy;
- Prepares position papers consonant with Catholic values.

Communications

- Parishes, Media, AGM, Community Animation, Annual Report, E-Mail, and Web Page;
- Develops liaison with community leadership and its resources.

Health & Social Services

- Participates with other members of the Community Health & Social Services Network in promoting access to healthcare services in English for the English-speaking minority population, especially seniors, the vulnerable and those who have special needs.
- Ensures that Catholic values are promoted.

Community Animation

- Organizes a celebration to affirm the dynamic and positive aspects of our community.

Finance

- Reviews monthly financial statements;
- Prepares budget proposal;
- Monitors investments.

Advisory

- Provides continuity and enhances the strength of the Council;
- Recommends names of candidates for election to the board;
- Offers advice on issues affecting the community.

Chairperson: Patrick Rourke

Membership: Warren Allmand, Colin Coole, Gail Campbell-Tucker, David Dussault, Margaret Lefebvre, Don Myles, Neil McKenty, Daniel O'Brien, Claire Robinson, Harold Thuringer, John Walker, Fr. John Walsh, Robert Wilkins.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Education

- A new compulsory course in Ethics and Religious Culture will be introduced in all public and private elementary and secondary schools from grades 1 to 11, French and English, in September 2008. The recognition of others and the pursuit of the common good are the two main objectives of this program. It takes into account secular representations of the world and humanity and the fact that religions also have a moral dimension. The new course in a student's program of studies is the final step in the secularization of schooling in Quebec that began with a constitutional amendment in 1997 which led to replacing the province's denominational school boards with linguistic boards. Bill 95, assented to in June 2005, amended various legislative provisions of a confessional nature in education and in the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, including the elimination of parents' right to choose for their children a course in Catholic, Protestant, or Moral Instruction.

In September 2007, the ESCC was represented at a rally before the National Assembly building in Quebec City, organized by the Coalition for Freedom in Education and the Association of Catholic Parents of Quebec. It advocated for the right of parents to continue to have the free choice in religious education for their children in accordance with their religious convictions. It now appears unlikely that the Government will modify its timetable for the implementation of this new course which calls for significant changes in pedagogical, cultural and school and organizational practices. It remains for us in collaboration with other members of the Coalition to monitor the implementation of this program.

- The Department of Theological Studies at Concordia University offers a Certificate in Pastoral Ministries. It is designed to provide professional preparation enabling one to serve in a variety of pastoral activities. And, the Office for English Pastoral Services, under the direction of Msgr. Sean Harty, Episcopal Vicar and Deacon Robert Zankoski, Coordinator, offers a professional formation program in Pastoral Care Services. The ESCC encourages people in our community to give consideration to serving in this special vocation.
- The Advisory Board on English Education established by the Minister of Education in 1993, has a mandate to provide the Minister with advice of all matters affecting the educational services offered in English elementary and secondary schools. The ESCC is invited annually to propose names of candidates to serve on this Advisory Board. The Council is represented at semi-annual policy meetings convened by the Assistant Deputy Minister of Education for the English-speaking community. It has also assisted parents who wish to have a Certificate of Eligibility authorizing their children to attend an English school. The ESCC is a member of Canadian Parents for French which promotes immersion and bilingual programs.

- The ESCC was represented at the Faith Enrichment Conference in Montreal in early November 2007, organized by the Office for Faith Education of the Archdiocese of Montreal. The keynote address was given by Paul-André Durocher, Bishop of Alexandria-Cornwall.
- On February 20 and 21, 2008, the Quebec Ministry of Education held a forum to study the question of school board democracy and governance. The ESCC contributed to the preparation of the brief presented by the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) in February in Quebec City; in particular it encouraged greater participation in voting for English Boards; it recommended that the electoral list be corrected to modify the current practice whereby all graduates from English schools are automatically placed on the French school board list when they turn 18 years of age; it recommended that the English-speaking community participate in establishing priorities and long-term strategic goals for the Canada-Quebec Entente funding.

Health & Social Services

- The ESCC is a member of the Community Health & Social Services Network (CHSSN). John Walker, a Past-President of the ESCC, serves on its Board of Directors. It fosters projects through partnership and network-building to promote access to English-language health and social services for the English-speaking minority communities in Quebec. Between 2003 and 2008, the Federal Government in its five-year Action Plan provided the English-speaking communities in Quebec with a contribution of \$30.1 million for three specific measures. Please see table on page 15.
- An additional \$1.1 million grant from Health Canada for 2008-2009 has been approved to assist in the implementation of new access programs for the English-speaking minority communities in Quebec. These access plans submitted by the province's regional health and social services' agencies, after consultation in each of the sixteen administrative regions of the province, were approved by the Provincial Cabinet in December 2007 for the next three years.

Regrettably, barriers to access to services in English continue to persist in each region throughout Quebec. Significant variations exist with respect to access to primary level health and social services, Info-Santé, hospital emergency, and out-patient care, and access to information on services in English. Contrary to popular belief, access to health and social services in English is not universally available in the Greater Montreal region. A recent report by the Greater Montreal Community Development Initiative (GMCDI) confirms that there are many gaps in the availability of these services and consequently many English-speaking citizens are being deprived of the services to which they are entitled. This issue is being addressed by three Task Forces now being set up by the CHSSN in collaboration with the GMCDI (in which the ESCC is a participant.), which will bring together local community organizations and public health networks in Montreal, Laval and the South Shore. Strategies and action plans are being developed to enhance the delivery, quality and offer of services in English in these three areas, in the new context of organization and delivery of these services.

- The CHSSN has presented its plans for 2008-2013 to the Federal Minister of Health and Social Services for funding required to respond to established needs.
- The ESCC will participate in the current debate on the role of the public versus private sector in healthcare and on the recommendations in the Castonguay Report recently deposited with the Quebec Government.
- Visit www.chssn.org for more complete coverage of CHSSN activities and www.qcgn.ca/greatermontrealinitiative for GMCDI activities.

Social Issues

- Advocacy to improve the quality of life for seniors remains a high priority for the English Speaking Catholic Council. While much has been accomplished much remains to be done. We will continue to campaign to have free prescribed medication coverage for those 380,000 seniors who now receive the partial guaranteed income supplement. (Currently, seniors who receive the full supplement, those who receive more than 94% of the supplement and those on welfare, receive free prescribed medication).
- In the discourse on the 2006-2007 budget, the Minister of Finance announced important investments in the construction and renovation of affordable social housing and made explicit reference to the government's support of measures "that will take better care of its seniors and provide better assistance for parents and their children." The 2008-2009 budget provides for an investment of \$132 million for the construction of 2000 social housing units under the Accès Logie Quebec program. As of December 31, 2007, 13,000 social housing units had been delivered; 4,800 were under construction and 6,100 remain to be built for a total of 24,000 units. This is the fifth consecutive budget announcing investments in social housing construction. We are encouraged by the financial commitments targeted to expand the availability of quality accessible and affordable social housing, especially for seniors and families living below the poverty line. The Council will continue to support the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU), in its campaign to address the critical shortage of social housing units in Quebec.
- The ESCC received a special invitation from the Minister Responsible for Seniors, Marguerite Blais, to participate in the public consultations in the Fall of 2007 on Seniors' Living Conditions – A Social Issue that is the Responsibility of all Quebecers. The Council presented its brief to the Commission in Montreal in October 20, 2007. It also communicated with over one hundred organizations to encourage their participation at a special session convened by Minister Blais to hear views from individual seniors in Dorval on November 16, 2007. Over 200 people attended this event. The ESCC received good coverage in the Press. The Minister's Public Consultation report was made public on March 5, 2008. It is available in English: Visit www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca. The Quebec government has made the challenge of offering seniors the quality of life they are entitled to expect a top priority. The 2008 March Budget identified four major objectives for which measures and initiatives were defined, viz.:

- increase seniors' disposable income;
- foster conditions for them to remain at home as long as possible, since that is the best way to offer them the quality of life they want;
- adapt services and infrastructures to their needs;
- strengthen the place of the elderly in society.

For more information on the 2008-2009 Budget Plan, please visit www.budget.finances.gouv.qc.ca under Section E, Supporting the Family and the Wellbeing of Quebecers (pages 115 – 197), #2 Improving the Quality of Life of our seniors (E27-E56).

The ESCC will be proactive in 2008-2009 in advocating for implementation of measures recommended to respond to the challenges associated with our aging society.

- In early 2007, Quebec Premier Jean Charest announced the establishment of the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices related to Cultural Differences in response to public discontent concerning Reasonable Accommodation. While the general invitation did not guarantee that groups concerned would be able to participate because of scheduling and availability, the ESCC received an invitation to present its Brief in Montreal on December 13, 2007. It is expected that the Bouchard-Taylor Report will be the subject of close scrutiny and may well have some controversial observations and recommendations of great interest to the English-speaking minority community. We are told the ESCC made an important contribution to the debate.
- The ESCC was represented by its Executive Director at the Research Symposium on Official Languages in Canada held in Ottawa in January. And the ESCC Executive Director also attended the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, Josée Verner's wrap-up event for the Government of Canada's consultations on linguistic duality and official languages in Ottawa in January 2008. The ESCC worked closely with the QCGN in developing its position on this subject for presentation to Mr. Bernard Lord, the Special Advisor on this subject to the Government of Canada.
- This year, the ESCC Board approved a code of ethics entitled "Ethical Guidelines Handbook." It is posted on the ESCC website at www.catholiccentre.ca/esc.
- The ESCC contributed to the discussion on QCGN's Immigration Policy Brief for 2008-10, which was presented to the National Assembly Commission on Culture in October 2007.
- Community is created when we care for the vulnerable. Thus our commitment to work toward the alleviation of the scourge of poverty. Bill 112, An Act to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion, was adopted by the National Assembly in December 2002. Its objective is to guide the Government and Quebec Society as a whole towards a process of planning and implementing actions to combat poverty, prevent its causes, reduce its effects on individuals and families and counter social exclusion. In 2004, the Government launched its Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion. It comprises a series of measures designed to meet

the objectives in the Act. \$3 billion over a five-year period is being invested for these purposes. The ESCC has identified activities in this domain in its 2008-2009 program application to the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The ESCC has been in communication with Cabinet Ministers (Minister of Finance, Minister of Health & Social Services, Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity, Minister Responsible for Seniors) and other Members of the National Assembly, to register our concerns and urge the Government to ensure that special provisions are included in the annual budget for significant investments giving direction to the challenge of eradicating poverty in our society.

Cultural Issues

- The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) established in 1995 is composed of community organizations (including the ESCC), institutions and other community stakeholders. Members are committed to work together to promote the vitality of the English-speaking communities of Quebec by responding to their priority needs and expectations. The specific objectives of the QCGN are to generate knowledge; promote and support the community development initiatives of its members; assess and influence government policies that affect the development of English-speaking communities of Quebec; and enhance the organizational and professional competence and capacity of its member groups so that they can respond more effectively to their respective communities and client groups. The QCGN headquarters are located at 1255 University Street, Suite 1000, Montreal. Its website is www.qcgn.ca.

The Executive Director of the English Speaking Catholic Council was directly involved in the development of plans for the conference on Community Revitalization: Trends and Opportunities for the English-speaking Communities of Quebec in Montreal on February 29, March 1, and 2, 2008. This event was an important opportunity for the English-speaking communities of Quebec to increase awareness of issues facing them, to strengthen community vitality, to mobilize their leadership, and to develop courses of action together. Two hundred and fifty people attended this conference.

- The ESCC sponsored five members of our community to attend the Association of Canadian Studies and its partners' Symposium on Youth and Official Language Minorities in Canada at Concordia on February 28-29, 2008. The Council promotes active involvement in other initiatives focusing on Youth (employment and retention) by facilitating liaison with organized youth groups, e.g. Scout and Guide Leaders, summer camp coordinators, Youth in Action, C.O.R. Montreal, Camp Caritas, etc. As part of its ongoing expression of its own leadership role, the ESCC is encouraging leadership development for the benefit of the greater community by identifying, motivating and promoting candidates to sit on various Boards and Committees of significance to the minority community in Quebec.
- The ESCC is a member of the Coordinating Committee of the Greater Montreal Community Development Initiative (GMCDI). This initiative is intended to assist the English-speaking

community of the Greater Montreal area in identifying shared community development challenges and priorities and the most effective strategies to address them. Now in Phase III, ideas and challenges raised in previous phases have helped contribute to the renewed sense of awareness of the new realities we are experiencing in Montreal and indeed throughout the province. Leaders in the community are working together to find concrete solutions and shape policies that will directly impact on the lives of members of our community. To this end, this year three Task Forces have been established, namely, in Arts & Culture; 2) Education and Economic Development; 3) Health and Social Services.

Among many other activities listed in the GMCDI Strategic Plan covering 2007-2009, including monitoring leadership mobilization and an engagement strategy, reviewing progress and adapting the three-year action plan is the design of a proposal for a permanent coordinating capacity to ensure effective leadership in the Greater Montreal Region and support long-term funding of key community sectors.

Nomination /Succession

The ESCC's Nominations/Succession Committee's mandate exercised by the Advisory Committee is to ensure that the by-laws governing the membership of the Board of Directors are respected. The process includes the search for candidates, representative of the community, for election to the Board at each Annual General Meeting, keeping in mind the expertise and experience that will enable the Council to meet the challenges facing our community. It must also assure the succession of the Council's Executive Officers.

Finance

An annual budget and regular financial reports for the Board of Directors are prepared. It is expected that the ESCC should build a working capital reserve to correspond to one-half year's operating budget in order for the Council to continue to function without interruption from one fiscal year to the next. The Treasurer is in communication regularly with the Executive staff to review accounting and reporting procedures and to ensure that the financial resources of the ESCC are effectively managed.

The Council's audited financial statements for the period April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008 are presented in the next section of this report.

We wish to acknowledge with gratitude those organizations which have demonstrated confidence in the effectiveness and promise of the Council by financially supporting its activities, especially the Pillars Trust Fund, other community foundations and the Department of Canadian Heritage, thus permitting the Council to continue its work directed to the enrichment of a vibrant community.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee, established in 1994, fulfills a supportive role for the English Speaking Catholic Council by providing continuity and enhancing the strength of the Council. It serves as a link for access to senior business and government officials and provides input on issues affecting the community.

* * *

To a limited extent, as a non-profit charitable organization, the ESCC may engage in non-partisan activities to influence law, policy and public opinion on matters related to its mandate. In this respect, the Council believes it has a responsibility to take a stand on issues when they infringe on democracy, social justice and related Catholic values.

* * *

For the past twenty-seven years, the English Speaking Catholic Council has served the English-speaking Catholic community through the commitment of dedicated volunteers who have provided their time and expertise in the service of others. I am very appreciative of all the encouragement the ESCC receives from so many people in the community: The ESCC Board of Directors and Advisory Committee, Parish Priests, the Catholic Times, Catholic Community Services; Pillars Trust Fund, Montreal St. Patrick's Foundation; Father Dowd Foundation, the Department of Canadian Heritage; the Archdiocese of Montreal and the Office for English Pastoral Services. I am especially grateful to the Council's President, Clifford Lincoln, for his support and generosity. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the excellent work done by our Executive Secretary, Suzanne Brown.

Martin P. Murphy
Executive Director
June 4, 2008