



The English Speaking Catholic Council

Le conseil catholique d'expression anglaise

The English Speaking Catholic Council

Strategic Plan

2005-2006

to

2008-2009

Mission

Inspired by the contemporary Catholic understanding of the role of the laity in the modern world, the English Speaking Catholic Council identifies, analyses and assists in the promotion of the English-speaking Catholic community's values and advocates those values in the resolution of issues affecting this community in the Province of Québec and Canada in the social, cultural and political realms.

GOALS IN SUPPORT OF THE MISSION

- *To develop a sense of community identity;*
- *To develop policy positions consonant with the community's values and priorities;*
- *To implement an effective communications strategy;*
- *To develop leadership in the community and to encourage new generation involvement and commitment;*
- *To coordinate community resources towards effective action;*
- *To play an active role in public service nominations;*
- *To establish a cooperative mechanism with other organizations sharing common objectives;*
- *To make representations before government bodies, various boards, committees and councils;*
- *To initiate a dialogue with other linguistic, cultural and religious communities.*

Historical Perspective

The western cultural revolution that began in 1960 was called the Quiet Revolution in Quebec. The socio-political dimension of life in Quebec was destabilized and renewed in the establishment of a *Culture Quebecoise*. Many challenges were faced by all Quebecers. For the English-speaking community, respect for its history and for its rightful place in the building of a new Quebec were paramount. By the late 1970's, the English-speaking Catholic community sensed a growing need to establish its place given this newly defined socio-political reality and the special vocation of the laity in the Church, as articulated by the Second Vatican Council.

In December 1980, the English Speaking Catholic Council (ESCC) was established as a lay council, free of institutional censures, to express a supportive and critical response to all of the challenges confronting the community. Today, the ESCC is respected as a credible and effective voice of the English-speaking Catholic laity articulating the needs and concerns of its constituency within both the Archdiocese and the community of Greater Montreal and the Province of Quebec.

A strategic plan is a living document always under review. Today's pace of cultural change warrants a great deal of attention to determine the changing priorities of any community. This is especially true of the English Speaking Catholic Community that is a double minority within the majority francophone community.

The Board of Directors and the Advisory Committee of the English Speaking Catholic Council came together in early 2004 to develop a framework for a five-year plan and the present document reflects the most recent adaptation of that plan.

Strategic Issues

The Strategic Plan addresses eight inter-connecting issues that together reflect the current context in which the ESCC operates.

Issue 1: The changing role of the laity

The changing and ambiguous role of the laity continues to generate considerable discussion and debate. *Is the role of the laity expanding or diminishing?* Arguments may be made for both sides. The Board of Directors and other stakeholders need to engage in continued reflection and dialogue to examine how the changing role should be interpreted and how it might impact the role and activities of the organization.

Issue 2: The socio-political climate

The ongoing critical analysis of the socio-political order to determine the balance of power, the abuse of power and the use of legitimate authority is a major strength of the ESCC. There is an ongoing need for the organization to critique legislation, such as the move away from social democracy that threatens education and health and social service programs now in place.

Issue 3: A double minority community

The ESCC faces the challenge of speaking on behalf of an English-speaking minority community - *a double minority community* - within the Francophone majority. This community is under-represented at decision-making tables, notably within government and key institutions. There is a concern that the community's voice is neither heard nor understood. There is a need to strengthen identity – to better express how the community lives its faith.

Issue 4: Visibility and image

The ESCC, despite its provincial and national activity, continues to operate under a low profile among the community it serves. This is a common challenge for advocacy groups as these organizations typically operate with limited communication resources. Consequently, the ESCC's role (as a lay organization), in relation to the Church is not always well understood. Visibility has been enhanced by continued exposure in The Catholic Times, with a circulation of 10,000, and through the website. Further outreach is required to reach the Parishes (who face their own resource challenges) and the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

Issue 5: Participation of youth

Recently, the ESCC has been successful in bringing several younger representatives to the Board of Directors. This is an important step towards greater outreach to the younger population who remain at arms length from the organization.

Issue 6: Provincial mandate

There is a need to address the implications of the recent expansion of the ESCC to encompass the whole Anglophone Roman Catholic community of the Province of Quebec. The ESCC will need to reach the communities outside the Greater Montreal area and to establish effective mechanisms whereby all English-speaking Roman Catholics, regardless of where they reside, are consulted and informed as to the positions taken on issues by the ESCC.

Issue 7: Diverse and evolving population

The ESCC continues to face the challenge of representing an increasingly diverse society given the mosaic of cultures and languages of the English-speaking Catholic Community in Quebec. The ESCC must question, on an ongoing basis, its effectiveness in operating within a pluralistic society. To this end, there is a need for outreach to the cultural communities and for greater Board representation of these constituents. There is also a growing need to serve the elderly given the ageing of the general population.

Issue 8: Internal resources and capacity

The dedication and expertise of the staff, Board of Directors and Advisory Committee contribute to the continued success of the ESCC. However, these resources represent a lean group of people who require greater support.

Strategic Objectives

The following five strategic objectives will guide the focus of the English-speaking Catholic Council over the next three years: 2005-2008.

- **Promote dialogue and encounter within the English-speaking Catholic community throughout the Province.**
- **Strengthen our identity to better express how we live our faith.**
- **Provide leadership for today and for tomorrow.**
- **Provide a critical response to issues that impact the English-speaking Catholic Community and ultimately society as a whole.**
- **Build a stronger, more representative organization.**
- **Develop and implement a communications program to support all of the above.**

Supporting Activities

Initiatives to support the strategic objectives, as identified by the Board and the Advisory Committee, are presented in the following pages. These activities will be monitored on a regular basis and adjusted as required.

➤ **Promote dialogue and encounter within the English-speaking Catholic community throughout the Province.**

Within the ESCC:

- Engage in ongoing discussions at the Board level on the changing role of the laity and its impact on the role of the ESCC.

With community organizations:

- Pursue efforts to bring together the various organizations that serve the English-speaking Catholic community (including groups representing the cultural communities) in order to better identify the challenges facing the community, to determine possible assistance that the ESCC could render in meeting those challenges, and to foster lay involvement in those organizations.
- Expand the concept of the Rally (which brings organizations together every two years to showcase services and programs) by organizing periodic meetings around particular themes. The first meeting might address “ *What is our role in the community? How can we play a more coordinated role?* ”

With the Parishes:

- Continue efforts to disseminate information to the Parishes through established channels such as The Catholic Times and the Office of English Pastoral Services.
- Continue to initiate personal and informal follow up wherever possible.
- Identify and pursue new ways to reach the laity. Examine activities at the parish level. They are in different stages of development. What initiatives are working? Can the ESCC piggyback on these? Look for opportunities for cross-pollination.
- Organize periodic conferences to bring the Parish councils (and administration) together to discuss ways and means of working together.

With the Hierarchy:

- Continue to inform the hierarchy of the ESCC’s activities and role (Note that establishing more formal channels of communication is a longer-term objective.) Specific activities might include:

- Invite members of the local hierarchy to ESCC meetings. (i.e. Director of the Office for English Pastoral Services);
- Disseminate information on the ESCC's activities to English-speaking Roman Catholic priests, seminarians, permanent deacons, and parish secretaries;
- Distribute ESCC annual reports, briefs, op-ed articles and public statements to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Assemblée des Évêques du Québec.

➤ **Strengthen our identity to better express how we live our faith.**

- Address Catholic identity issues that may otherwise not be addressed for this minority community. Embrace and champion those causes that relate to the poor, the marginalized, the elderly and linguistic rights in health, social services and education. In addressing these issues, make optimal use of both electronic and print media and the website.
- Organize a public conference (AGM 2006) with the objective to present and examine diverse contemporary viewpoints within the Catholic Church on issues of concern to the laity. Attract a well-known keynote speaker to stimulate wider participation and catch the attention of the media. Engage the services of an able conference moderator to set the tone for a frank and open discussion. Consider the possibility of organizing the conference in conjunction with the Rally. Explore partnership opportunities with McGill or Concordia University (for the conference or for future seminar programs).
- Make continued use of the secular press and other mass media (op ed page of the Montreal Gazette as well as regional newspapers such as The Quebec Chronicle Telegraph and The Sherbrooke Record) to publicize and promote the ESCC and its actions.
- Recruit volunteers (Board or Advisory Committee) with a public relations background to develop a strategy for more effective use of the mass media.
- Improve and promote the website. Identify a new domain name. Improve visual presentation. Ensure links to Rally participants and other community partners (hyperlinks). Include key and recent ESCC statements including the Strategic Plan.

➤ **Provide leadership for today and for tomorrow.**

- As part of the ongoing expression of its own leadership role, the ESCC will encourage leadership development for the benefit of the greater community.
- Youth leadership: Create an ESCC scholarship program for promising youth with proven leadership capability and interest. The successful student would, for example, participate in board meetings, engage in ESCC activities, and act as a liaison between the ESCC and educational institutions. This initiative will also serve to build links with student councils, university chaplaincies, etc. (This activity, and its significance as a link to the future, deserves immediate attention.)
- Community leadership: Encourage, identify and promote candidates from the English-speaking Catholic Community to sit on various Boards and Committees of significance across the Province.

➤ **Provide a critical response to issues that impact the English-speaking Catholic community and ultimately society as a whole.**

- Continue to engage in advocacy through developing informed policy positions. To this end, engage outside research and public relations assistance as required.
- In developing these policy positions, be alert and react to particular opportunities to involve Youth who seek social justice and alternatives to the established political process.
- Ensure effective diffusion of policy statements through the coordinated use of the print and electronic media, as well as the website.
- Pursue active cooperation with other advocacy groups in Quebec and Canada sharing the values and concerns of the ESCC on particular issues.
- Widen the response to include issues of concern on a global basis. Express solidarity with those struggling to promote a more just international order for the peoples of the Third World.

➤ **Build a stronger, more representative organization.**

- Develop an ideal vision of the Board of Directors.
- Develop a succession plan for the Board based on this vision.
- Strengthen the committee structure. Encourage greater involvement and leadership of the Board of Directors and the Advisory Committee.
- Examine opportunities for working sub-committees (non-decision making, under volunteer leadership) that report to the committees and the Board.
- Use the Advisory Committee more effectively. Enlarge the Committee, invite members to Board meetings, provide minutes of Board meetings, etc.
- Seek greater Board representation of the cultural communities.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the ESCC through formal and informal discussions at the Rally and other events, which bring organizations and leaders together.
- Review the progress of the Strategic Plan on a regular basis.

➤ **Develop and implement a communications program to support all of the above.**

