

THE THIRTY-THIRD ANNUAL REPORT

Message from the President

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Board of Directors, to present the thirty-third annual report of the English Speaking Catholic Council.

As this report reveals, the Council has been quite active over the course of the year. While it has continued to engage in many aspects of community life, most notable this year has been its involvement in the communications project. The launch of Ville Marie Online (VMO) has been the culmination of over a year of work and the great dedication and commitment of a number of volunteers. VMO has the potential to be a gathering place for all members of the community, a place to learn what is going on, to share stories and reflect on the world around us – particularly as it affects the English Catholic community. The entire Communications Committee deserves a great deal of thanks for their work on this portfolio, but the efforts of Mr. Peter Stockland are deserving of particular commendation. Volunteering his time and expertise as editor for this fledgling project is what has made it possible and it has been a pleasure working with him. With this report, Mrs. Anna Farrow completes her first year as Executive Director of the ESCC. I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her tremendous work on behalf of the Council. Through her efforts, the Council has been able to continue its advocacy work on behalf of the more vulnerable and marginalized members of our community, particularly the poor and elderly. She has helped the Council to grow and mature as a hub for the many different organizations that constitute our community as well as establishing links to other groups that share our interest in Quebec society. While the proposed Charter of Values did not materialize, the brief created to oppose it and the meetings initiated with other religious groups have helped to establish the place of Religion in society.

It has been a privilege serving as President over the last two years. The people that make up our Board and those with whom we work are great signs of hope for the English Catholic community. Thank you to all.

Sincerely,



Paul Donovan
President
Montreal, June 11, 2014

ESCC COMMITTEES 2013 - 2014

Executive

PAUL DONOVAN
President

RAFIK GREISS
Treasurer

JOHN ZUCCHI
Vice-President

PAUL ALLEN
Secretary

MARY McDAID
Past-President

Communications

- Establishes media liaisons,
- Communicates via Social Media, electronic communications and ESCC website;
- Administers community website, Ville Marie Online (VMO).

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.

Seniors

- Advocates to improve the quality of life for Seniors.

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.

Young Adults

- Encourages young adults to participate actively within organizations;
- Creates opportunities for development of leadership skills;
- Explores resources available for training and employment.

Community Animation

- Participates in conferences and celebrations 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, Gail Campbell-Tucker, David Dussault, Margaret Lefebvre, Clifford Lincoln, Martin Murphy, Don Myles, Harold Thuringer, John Walker, Fr. John Walsh, Robert Wilkins.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The following priorities were identified by the English Speaking Catholic Council (ESCC) for 2013-2014:

1. Advocate to improve the quality of life for Seniors;
2. Advocate to support measures addressing Poverty (Bill 112);
3. Collaborate with networks to promote access to English-language health and social services (The Quebec Community Groups Network, the Greater Montreal Community Development Initiative and the Community Health and Social Services Network);
4. Support initiatives directed to encourage youth retention and educational/employment opportunities.
5. Develop an independent website for the English-speaking Catholic community of Montreal with an emphasis upon the need for archiving the history of the community, both printed and oral.
6. Develop key partnerships with leaders of other Christian denominations and non-Christian religious communities in order to collectively advocate for respect for religious freedom in the public sphere.

Communications

Launch of Ville Marie Online

On June 9, 2012, Bishop Thomas Dowd, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Montreal, convened a special assembly on the future of communications in the English-speaking sector of the Archdiocese of Montreal. At the close of the assembly, a vote was taken by the 50 participants to give a special mandate to the ESCC to develop a strategy which is alert to the needs expressed on the day. In response to that mandate, the ESCC struck an advisory committee comprised of ten delegates of the June 9th assembly and chaired by Paul Donovan, President of the Board of the Council. A sub-committee then drew up a plan for a multi-pronged communications strategy. That strategy was presented to the attendees of the April 4, 2013, ESCC hosted and Pillars Trust Fund sponsored, community gathering. The plan included the creation of a website which would fulfill the following needs:

1. **Community:** Just like a town square of old, our community requires an information hub: one place where individuals, parishes, and organizations can share events, successes, needs, and stories.
2. **Continuity:** Over the last number of years, as religious communities and parishes have been closed and as faithful parishioners and clergy have aged and passed away, many of

the crucial stories of our English Catholic community have been lost. Through a process of digitizing available print media and making oral histories available the website seeks to become a depository of this crucial narrative.

3. **Current Affairs:** English-speaking Catholics require a reliable source for news about the diocese, the city, the province, the country and the world: a news source that asks the questions that our community is asking.
4. **Conversation:** A safe place to have conversations about matters of faith, a place where those who are seeking can probe and question and the clergy and academics can respond.

Two community foundations, Pillars Trust Fund and the Father Dowd Foundation, provided the seed money to establish the website. After a soft launch in November 2013, Ville Marie Online (VMO) was officially launched in January 2014. Each month since January has seen an increase in traffic and interest in the website. In January 2014, there were 342 new visitors to the site. By April that number had jumped to 2392 with a total number of visits of 3699. Engagement with the site is high, with each visitor viewing an average number of 20 pages per visit. In a relatively short space of time, VMO has managed to create a website which contains interesting and relevant content. Members of the ESCC Board of Directors are currently working towards VMO's incorporation.

Catholic Times and Ville Marie Online

After a hiatus in publishing, and having undertaken a study of the viability of the *Catholic Times* as an independent newspaper, the CT Board decided to proceed with the publication of five issues beginning with an Easter edition, which was distributed in April 2014. Discussions are currently underway between the ESCC and Catholic Times as to the creation of joint advertising packages for VMO and the Times. There have also been consultations between those responsible for the editorial direction of VMO and the Times as to how to best to drive traffic back and forth between the two entities, whilst respecting the parameters of the two platforms. Ville Marie Online published a pdf of the April 2014 edition of the *Catholic Times*, and further collaboration is expected.

Education

- The past year has seen the topic of religious freedom dominate not only the Quebec headlines but the larger public consciousness. We may think most readily of the (commonly called) Charter of Values debate which raged from before its formal introduction in the fall of 2013 through to the provincial election campaign in the spring of 2014. However, the question of religious freedom and education has also been at the forefront this past year. On June 13, 2013 the Supreme Court of Canada granted Loyola High School leave to appeal the December 4, 2012 judgment of the Quebec Court of Appeal. That judgment followed one in favor of Loyola at the Superior Court of Quebec, in the case involving the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport regarding the Ethics and Religious Culture program. As an organization which has always been concerned with the ability of Catholic parents to choose for their children to be educated according to Catholic mores and pedagogy, as well as with the vitality of the English-speaking community in Quebec, the ESCC has followed the case

of Loyola vs. Courchesne closely. Professor Paul Allen from the Department of Theological Studies at Concordia University and a member of the Executive Committee of the ESCC, published an article in the Gazette (January 16, 2014) in support of Loyola High School's position entitled, "Loyola High School: How to defend religious freedom." In that article Allen notes:

Five years ago, the Ministry of Education - under the previous government - imposed its Ethics and Religious Culture ("ERC") curriculum on Quebec schools on the presupposition that it was "contributing to harmonious social relations in Québec society today." But, it also tried to impose its program on independent schools, including Loyola High School. Now, mindful of the rightful independence of English language institutions in Quebec, the English Speaking Catholic Council supports the defense of religious freedom. Yes, Bill 60 threatens that freedom. But, just as seriously, so does the Ministry of Education's stance toward Loyola.

On March 24, 2014, Loyola High School was heard by the Supreme Court of Canada. Loyola was supported during the hearing by lawyers for about a dozen intervener groups who supported the assertion of Loyola's right to teach from a Catholic perspective when teaching about Catholicism in the ERC course. As well, many of the interveners contended that, contrary to the ruling of the Quebec Court of Appeal, a corporation can possess freedom of religion. The ESCC awaits eagerly the ruling of the Supreme Court in this matter.

- In an encouraging development, the francophone organization, The Association of Catholic Parents of Quebec (l'Association des parents catholiques du Québec, APCQ) has voted to establish an Anglophone sector to their association. The APCQ is a 48 year old organization which seeks to both inform and form Catholic parents and to defend parental rights. The newly formed English-speaking division will have representation on the provincial board of the APCQ and will be given latitude to develop its own initiatives and projects in accord with the goals of the provincial body. The Council has been solicited by the APCQ to recommend interested Anglophone parents to the association.
- In October 2013, the Pluralism, Religion and Public Policy project of the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University sponsored a symposium on the topic of Religious Freedom in Education. The ESCC hosted a luncheon for the participants. Ville Marie Online (VMO) covered the event and the article, "Constitutional lawyer Eugene Meehan speaks at Loyola" may be found on the website (www.villemarieonline.com).

Social Issues - Poverty

The ESCC continues to collaborate with a number of different organizations in advocating to combat poverty, particularly as poverty affects the English-speaking community in Quebec. Thanks to data from the 2011 National Household Survey, analysis by dedicated researchers, in particular Jack Jedwab, Executive Vice-President of the Association for Canadian Studies, and the media coverage which followed attention has been brought to the fact that the myth of the wealthy Anglophone is just that: a myth. Jack Jedwab noted, "This data could represent a turning point in terms of thinking about the Anglophone community and its economic situation in Quebec, to thinking more in terms of a community where there are very vulnerable segments, as opposed to the idea that this is a prosperous, spoiled community." The Council will continue to be proactive in our efforts to influence public policy at both levels of government.

Social Issues - Bill 60, Charter affirming the values of State secularism and religious neutrality and of equality between women and men, and providing a framework for accommodation requests

Though the question surrounding "reasonable accommodation" has been a topic of public consideration for some time in Quebec (in 2007 the *Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences* was established by then Premier Jean Charest, and the Bouchard-Taylor Report on the findings of the commission were produced in 2008), this past year has seen the issue at the forefront of the political and cultural landscape. In the spring of 2013, a proposal for a Charter of Quebec Values was first announced by the Parti Québécois. The Charter was officially proposed on September 10, 2013 by Bernard Drainville, Minister responsible for Democratic Institutions and Active Citizenship. Like many organizations, the ESCC found most aspects of the proposed legislation deeply troubling.

The Council undertook a number of different initiatives to register concern with the provisions of the proposed legislation. The ESCC was responsible for organizing a number of discussions between various religious leaders and lay organizations. At these discussions leaders of the Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic communities had an opportunity to express how Bill 60 might impact their respective communities if enacted, and, in fact, how the controversy and coverage of the debate was already affecting those communities. A good part of the discussions were centered on the possibilities of a common response to Bill 60. Work was done by the Council in drafting a Declaration on Religious Freedom, from which the following is extracted:

We note that the State has a burden to protect and defend our religious freedom. This burden has been recognized over and over again under international covenants and laws, as indeed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The State, on the other hand, does not have the authority to define for everyone the character of religious belief and practice, or to decree what is essential or inessential to the same. Moreover, it has no right to limit the public expression of

religion so long as that expression does not contravene the necessities of the moral law or the true exigencies of public order in a free society.

We repudiate the notion that a free society requires protection from religion or religious expression. People of faith and religious communities should not be viewed, ipso facto, as a threat that needs to be cordoned off or as a blemish that needs to be hidden away from public view.

It is that last point that was of particular concern to the Council, and one that was underlined in the brief which the ESCC submitted to the Secretariat of the Committee on Institutions on December 19, 2013. The ESCC was one of 250 groups to submit a brief, and had an election not been called and all existing National Assembly business been terminated as a result, the ESCC fully expected to have presented their brief at the hearings.

The brief stressed that religion and religious expression do not need to be excluded from the public square to ensure the proper ordering of civic life. Another item of concern to the Council was that, like Bill 14, (*An Act to amend the Charter of the French language, the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and other legislative provisions*), Bill 60 also attempted to write “the primacy of the French language” into the Charter. The ESCC reiterated that while it recognizes the primacy of the French language in Quebec, the province is a multi-lingual, multi-cultural society which has “benefitted through history as a result of this rich confluence of languages and cultures.” To ignore the contributions of the English population would be harmful to the social fabric of our society.

Though the provincial election of April 7, 2014 brought an end to Bill 60, the current Liberal government has promised to bring forward legislation dealing with accommodation issues. The Council will remain vigilant in monitoring any proposed legislation.

Social Issues - Seniors

With the rapidly shifting demographic landscape in Quebec, which in 25 years will see a quarter of the provincial population consisting of senior citizens (Gazette, June 13, 2013), the Council remains committed to advocating for increased support and assistance for seniors.

Letter of support, New Horizons for Seniors funding

In September 2013 the Council wrote a letter of support for the QCGN for their project entitled, **Transforming Research into Action for Quebec’s English Speaking Seniors**. This undertaking would allow for the wider dissemination and discussion of the research findings currently being collected by the QCGN. The QCGN’s stated objectives for this project: to ensure a greater awareness of regional needs and priorities, and increased networking and cooperation among English-speaking seniors are, in the opinion of the ESCC, absolutely vital to the health and vitality of our community and are in alignment with the objectives of the ESCC.

Father Dowd Foundation and the communication needs of seniors

The Father Dowd Foundation has given financial support to the new communications project undertaken by the Council (see below). The beneficiaries of the FDF are organizations which serve the senior population of Montreal (<http://www.fatherdowdfoundation.com/>). Representatives of the FDF and the ESCC are currently exploring ways of establishing the communication needs of English-speaking seniors and how the newly created Ville Marie Online might fill a niche in that regard. There are obviously many possibilities, not just for seniors but for the organizations which serve them.

Seniors Action Quebec

Seniors Action Quebec, a new provincial network with which the ESCC collaborates, was launched on November 19, 2013. The Council's Executive Director, Anna Farrow as well as Board member, Anne Fitzpatrick attended the launch. At this event Commissioner of Official Languages Graham Fraser was on hand and presented his new study entitled: **Enjoying Your Senior Years in Your Own Languages, Culture and Community: Federal Support from Key Institutions and Portrait of English-Speaking Seniors in Quebec**. This study provides a data-based portrait of the situation of Quebec's English-Speaking seniors. Please see here: http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/html/stu_etu_112013_e.php

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

The ESCC is a non-profit organization incorporated under the Canada Corporations Act. In October 2011, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, came into force. The ESCC was required to transition (continue) to the new Act. The Council's by-laws were amended to conform to the new Act and were ratified by the Council's membership at its AGM held on June 5, 2013. The ESCC submitted its application for continuance to Corporations Canada on January 15, 2014, and received its Certificate of continuance on January 22, 2014.

The Council's audited financial statements for the period April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014 are presented in this Annual Report.

Advisory Committee

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

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For over thirty years the English Speaking Catholic Council has brought the expertise and dedication of a vibrant Board of Directors to bear upon the pressing issues which confront English-speaking Catholics in Quebec. I am deeply appreciative for the guidance and encouragement which has been given the Council this past year. I would like to thank the ESCC Board and Advisory, the Archdiocese of Montreal and the Office for English Pastoral Services, the Pillars Trust Fund, Father Dowd Foundation, the Montreal St. Patrick's Foundation and the Department of Canadian Heritage. In particular I would like to acknowledge the tremendous contributions of the Council's President, Paul Donovan. The Executive Assistant, Suzanne Brown, also deserves special mention for her continued dedication and professionalism.

Anna Farrow
Executive Director
Montreal, June 11, 2014