

# THE THIRTY-FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT

## Message from the President

I am happy to report that the ESCC has been remarkably present in the life of the English-speaking Catholic community this past year. After a ten year hiatus, the Council sponsored the Catholic Community Rally at Le Nouvel Hotel and also organized a Christmas gathering at the Loyola High School Atrium. These were not only lively evenings but they also galvanized the community. It was heartening to see not only the usual crowd but also many new faces of young people and members of minority communities. Directors of the ESCC and also many members of the community commented on the significance of these two moments that both emphasized and also encouraged the vitality of English-speaking Catholic Montreal.

The ESCC proved to be present on issues affecting not only Catholics in Montreal but Canadians of any political stripe, religious (or non-religious) adherence or ethnic or racial origin. As you know our Council has monitored and intervened on end-of-life issues over the past few years, including the February decision of the Supreme Court of Canada on the Carter Case. The ESCC released a statement expressing its disappointment regarding the SCC decision and advocating for stringent laws and an ever-greater attention to the palliative care needs of Canadians. The statement was sent to key ministers and MPs.

It is also significant that our Past President and current President were both intimately involved in another case that went to the SCC regarding the right of Loyola High School to teach the Ethics and Religious Culture Program from its own religious perspective. Not only did the courts unanimously support that religious right but it also established important openings to the significance of religion to a person's identity and the religious right of a juridical person (religious associations), and even made a nod to the rights of parents in the religious education of their children. The ESCC has also made public statements on the Loyola case as it has wound its way through the judicial system over the past few years.

In the area of Social Services, the ESCC has cooperated closely with the Quebec Community Groups Network in monitoring and intervening in the public debate regarding Bill 10, and in particular in the struggle to obtain amendments to the Bill in order to protect English language access to health and social services. We did not achieve all our desired goals but the final results were a great improvement on the initial draft of Bill 10, and the work of the QCGN, in concert with other English speaking associations including the ESCC, was vital to the process. The ESCC has also cooperated with a number of organizations working with and for the English-speaking senior population in monitoring the great problem of the isolation of seniors in Anglophone Quebec, especially with the great outmigration of young Anglophones. This has involved our presence in meetings and conferences on the issue, as well as the coordination of series of workshops addressing this important issue. The first workshop organized by the ESCC took place in the spring 2015 and two more are planned for the fall 2015 and spring 2016.

I wish to thank all the Directors on the Board for their important input this year and for their dedication to the needs of English Speaking Catholic Montreal. Many of the Directors will be leaving the Board as they will have completed six years of service. I especially thank them and wish them well. It is sad to see them leave but it is also a consolation to know that we will have some new faces on the Board that will give it a new vitality.

All of the good news I have reported would not be possible were it not for the wonderful work done by Anna Farrow in her second year as Executive Director. Not only has she been diligent in monitoring community needs, building networks and organizing important events, she has also secured our key funding from Heritage Canada for the coming year. I would like to express my deep gratitude and that of all the Membership to Anna for this great work. I would also like to thank Suzanne Brown for her excellent help in supporting Anna's work in the office.

Sincerely,



John Zucchi  
President  
Montreal, June 10, 2015

## **SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES**

The following priorities were identified by the English Speaking Catholic Council (ESCC) for 2014-2015:

1. Provide research and plan activities to improve the quality of life for seniors.
  - Collaborate with organizations which serve the senior population to identify the communication needs of English-speaking seniors in Greater Montreal.
  - Address social isolationism amongst English-speaking seniors.
2. Collaborate with established networks to promote access to English-language health and social services.
3. Oversee the continued development of new media resources to serve the needs of the English-speaking Catholic community of Quebec.
4. Reach new consensus among community organizations on a common response to issues of accommodation and identity, specifically as they impact upon the minority-language communities.
5. Engage with community leaders and government representatives on life issues.

### **Community Animation**

#### **Catholic Community Rally**

The first Catholic Community Rally for the English-speaking Catholic community was held in 1983. The Rally was always intended as a means to gather together the many and varied groups and organizations serving and representing the needs of the English-speaking Catholics as well as to strengthen the bonds between individuals and groups. At its height, the Rally would attract upwards of 90 organizations and some 500 individuals. Between 1983 and 2004 the Council organized 16 rallies. In January of 2014, Bishop Thomas Dowd proposed that the Council revive the Catholic Community Rally, in the context of the Parish Vitality Conference which the Office of English Pastoral Services was planning for the autumn of 2014.

The staff of the Council worked in close collaboration with the staff of the OEPS, and on November 14, 2014, the ESCC hosted 42 movements and organizations which work and minister to English-speaking Catholics in Montreal. Some 250 people attended the Rally. In order to ensure the participation of as many conference attendees as possible, the Council chose to host

an evening meal at the Nouvel Hotel where both the Conference and the Rally took place. Archbishop Christian Lépine and Bishop Thomas Dowd were in attendance. There was consensus among the participants that, not only had the 2014 Rally been a success, but that it was a vital tool for community development and that a commitment to making the Rally a biennial event would be the ideal. The Council has already made a commitment to organize the next Rally to be held in the autumn of 2016.

### **Bishop Crowley Memorial Award**

Within the context of the Rally, the Council saw an excellent opportunity to revive another Council function, the awarding of the **Bishop Crowley Memorial Award**. The purpose of the award is to recognize distinguished service in the English-speaking Catholic community by an individual or organization. The criterion for nomination is twofold: that the person, group or organization has had a significant influence on, or has provided outstanding service and that this contribution rises above and beyond normal responsibilities. One of the important roles of the Council is to both nurture and highlight leadership in our community and the Bishop Crowley Memorial Award provides an important vehicle to do so.

This year the recipient was Paul Donovan, former principal and newly appointed President of Loyola High School. Donovan was honored for his leadership in Loyola High School's legal battle to teach the Ethics and Religious Culture course from a Catholic perspective which was settled by the unanimous decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in March 2015.

### **Christmas Reception**

Fast on the heels of the Rally, the ESCC hosted a Christmas reception on December 10, 2014. There has been much discussion of the loss of the annual Christmas reception which allowed so many of those involved in service and leadership in the English Catholic sector to get together for Christmas wishes and good cheer. Despite the close proximity in date to the Rally as well as a heavy dump of snow, some 100 people turned out and enjoyed the good food and company. The Council fully intends to host another Christmas reception in 2015.

### **Communications**

#### **Ville Marie Online**

The 2013-2014 Annual Report of the ESCC reported on the launch of Ville Marie Online, a website established in January 2014. VMO was created to answer the need of the English-speaking Catholic community of Montreal for an independent, online source for news and community animation. The report also made note of discussions held between Catholic Times and VMO which sought to establish not only a joint advertising platform but strong editorial links with the desired outcome of driving traffic between the two entities. Those discussions continued to the end of 2014, at which point publication of the Catholic Times was suspended. During 2014-2015, VMO sought to expand its readership. Utilizing social media, VMO has reached out to a new and diverse audience. The statistics between January and April 2015 indicate a total of 8,045 new visitors to the site with a total of 14, 227 visits.

VMO demonstrated an ability to be at the forefront of the news cycle with articles detailing the victory of Loyola High School at the Supreme Court of Canada, the death and funeral ceremonies of Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte, and local items, including the Way of the Cross and the Corpus Christi procession through the streets of Montreal.

## **Education**

### **Loyola High School at the Supreme Court of Canada**

In 2008-2009, the Quebec Ministry of Education required an Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) curriculum for all school instruction. Loyola High School sought an exemption based on equivalency; LHS already taught a similar course on world religions and ethics, with the ethics being taught from a Roman Catholic perspective. The Ministry declined to grant LHS an exemption. The high school opted to go to court and won at the lower court. That decision was overturned at the Quebec Court of Appeal and Loyola was granted leave to appeal that ruling at the Superior Court in June 2013. On March 24, 2014 Loyola High School was heard by the Supreme Court of Canada. Loyola was supported by about a dozen intervenor groups, many of whom were particularly concerned with the issue of the religious freedom of organizations. The Court's decision was handed down on March 19, 2015. The decision was unanimously in favor of the school, with a difference between the majority and minority as to reasons and remedies. A copy of the judgement may be found here: <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/14703/index.do>. The judgement is an important building block in the advancement of the jurisprudence regarding religious freedom in Canada.

The ESCC has been reliably engaged since inception with the issue of education and the rights of parents to have their children educated according to Catholic mores and pedagogy. The Council is therefore gratified to read in the judgement: “an essential ingredient of the vitality of a religious community is the ability of its members to pass on their beliefs to their children, whether through instruction in the home or participation in communal institutions.” The Council is deservedly proud that many of the key players in the Loyola case are also active on the Council: President, Past-President and a current Board Director, and the Council will continue to engage on these very important issues of education and religious freedom.

## **Health and Social Services**

### **Bill 10**

One issue with which all our partners have been concerned, and with which the ESCC has engaged, is that of Bill 10, the legislation tabled on September 25, 2014 (An Act to modify the organization and governance of the health and social services network, in particular by abolishing the regional agencies). On October 10<sup>th</sup>, the Executive Director of the ESCC was present at a meeting held between representatives of the office of the Minister of Health and Social Services and of various community organizations and social service providers. At the meeting, the Council was able to express a number of concerns, namely (1) the rupture which the implementation of the proposed legislation would create between the institutions and the

communities which they serve and (2) that expanding the role of the Minister of Health and Social Services to making both Board and staff appointments of regional institutions contravenes the principle of subsidiarity, and does not realistically acknowledge the vagaries of political life which would make communities subject to the good will, or otherwise, of the current minister. These same points were underlined in a letter of support which the ESCC wrote and the Quebec Community Groups Network appended to the brief it presented at the National Assembly's Committee on Health and Social Services on October 30, 2014.

The QCGN played an absolutely vital role in negotiating key amendments to Bill 10; amendments which served to protect the English-speaking community's access to health and social services. (Please see [http://www.qcgn.ca/news/?currentPage=2#.VWYUIEY6j\\_8](http://www.qcgn.ca/news/?currentPage=2#.VWYUIEY6j_8))

Some of the important amendments include the granting of bilingual status to two of the CISSS (Centre intégrés de santé et services sociaux) in the Montreal area; the guarantee of English representation on each of the CISSS/CIUSSS; and the establishment of an Access program in English for every Integrated Health and Social Services Centre. Unfortunately, the passage of Bill 10 has meant the dismantlement of the volunteer boards of hospitals and social service organizations; those are to be replaced by the boards of the 33 newly established CISSS/CIUSSS. Members of those boards will be appointed by the Health Minister. Organizations representing the English-speaking community in Quebec were encouraged to submit names of potential candidates for these boards, in order to fulfill the required English representation. In February 2015, the ESCC submitted the name of a current member of the ESCC Board to be considered as a Director of the CIUSSS de l'Ouest-de-l'île-de-Montréal. According to the latest reports, directors will be appointed in June and will take up their positions in September.

### **Carter v. Canada**

Over the years, the ESCC has endeavored to engage in a competent and meaningful way with policy makers and community organizations in the health and social services sector. In particular, the ESCC has sought to engage legislators on the very divisive issue of euthanasia and end-of-life issues. On June 28, 2010, the ESCC presented a brief before the Select Committee on Dying with Dignity and on December 17, 2010, the ESCC spoke before the Federal Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care. The ESCC, like many organizations and individuals, eagerly anticipated the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in *Carter v. Canada* (<https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/14637/index.do>) in which the prohibition of assisted suicide was challenged as being contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Supreme Court released its decision on February 6, 2015. The Court found that the current law prohibiting physician-assisted suicide deprived Canadians suffering from serious and incurable diseases their section 7 right to life, liberty and security. The ESCC responded promptly with a statement in which it was noted, "The ESCC is gravely concerned that the legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide in Canada will lead to a neglect of the very real needs of Canadians for competent and compassionate palliative care as well as blindness to the valid, conscientious objections of Canadian physicians to the practice of euthanasia." The statement went on to say:

Following upon today's decision of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Carter v. Canada*, the onus is upon elected officials to draft legislation that will prevent the situation we have seen develop in these countries. Such legislation must be stringent enough to disallow a broad and generous interpretation of "enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual in the circumstances of his or her condition." Also, in light of a 2013 poll by the Canadian Medical Association which suggested only 20 per cent of Canada's physicians would be willing to participate in euthanasia were it to become legal across the country, and 42 per cent would refuse outright, the legislation must absolutely respect and protect the conscientious objections of Canada's physicians to euthanasia, both in its practice and in referral to such a practice.

This statement was sent to Rona Ambrose, Federal Health Minister, Jason Kenney, then Federal Minister of Employment & Social Development, Peter MacKay, Federal Justice Minister, Rod Bruinooog, Chair of the Pro-life caucus, & Francis Scarpaleggia, Federal MP for the riding of Lac-Saint-Louis, as well as a founding member of the all-party Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care. The ESCC subsequently received communication from Mr. Scarpaleggia in which he stated that he would, "be pleased to receive further input from the ESCC on the matter in the lead up to the eventual tabling of legislation in response to the court's decision." The Council fully intends to communicate with Mr. Scarpaleggia as well as other legislators on this important matter.

## **Social Issues – Seniors**

Social isolation has been recognized as an emerging problem for senior citizens throughout the country. As just one example, The National Seniors Council targeted the reduction of social isolation among seniors as a top priority of 2013-2014. This problem is made especially acute for our minority language community for two reasons: (1) It has been demonstrated that seniors have a lower rate of bilingualism than younger Anglophones with only a 47% rate of bilingualism amongst Anglophones 65 years and older ([www.officiallanguages.gc.ca](http://www.officiallanguages.gc.ca)), and (2) because of the trend of out-migration of Anglophones, many seniors find themselves alone and/or isolated from family members who are attempting to manage care and services from out of the province. There is amongst Anglophone Quebec, a "missing middle" that is, "proportionally fewer middle-aged English-speakers than French-speakers," ([http://www.chssn.org/En/pdf/Working\\_Adult\\_Caregivers\\_of\\_Quebec\\_Report.pdf](http://www.chssn.org/En/pdf/Working_Adult_Caregivers_of_Quebec_Report.pdf)) which has obvious implications for senior family members living in Quebec. These complicating factors results in a social exclusion for these vulnerable seniors.

It is the sense of the Council that work should be done to identify measures specific to the distinctive situation of the English-speaking senior population in Quebec, but it is cognizant that many organizations have already begun important research and practical measures to confront this important issue. Consistent with the mission of the Council, "to act as a catalyst, convener and facilitator of community life and collective action" for the English-speaking community of Greater Montreal, the Council has undertaken the provision of three workshops addressing the issue of social isolation amongst the English-speaking seniors.

The first of those workshops was held on May 22, 2015 and was attended by representatives of organizations working with the senior population as well as interested individuals and researchers. The specific focus of the event was upon identification of isolated seniors amongst the English-speaking population of Montreal and consisted of a presentation by Mary Stark and Sherry Guppy of Contactivity Senior Centre in Westmount as well as a follow up discussion among participants. The workshop was very well received and the consensus was that more events like the one held on May 22<sup>nd</sup> are both welcome and necessary. The next workshop will be planned for the autumn.

## **Nomination /Succession**

The ESCC's Nominations/Succession Committee's mandate 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 Council's audited financial statements for the period April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015 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, John Zucchi. The Executive Assistant, Suzanne Brown, also deserves special mention for her continued dedication and professionalism.

Anna Farrow  
Executive Director  
Montreal, June 10, 2015