

# Living Our Legacy: Forging Our Future

## 2011 ONTARIO CATHOLIC EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM

The 2011 Ontario Catholic Education Symposium was the third conference for school board teams in the last eight years. The 2002 and 2006 symposia were held in Toronto and the participants were teams from the 29 English Catholic district school boards in Ontario. The 2011 symposium brought together the French and English Catholic school communities for the first time. The two communities planned separate conferences that overlapped on Sunday, May 15, when they joined in a bilingual celebration of the Eucharist. Archbishop Thomas Collins presided and gave the homily. After Mass the two communities celebrated Catholic education at a joint dinner, which was followed by a keynote address from Bishop Paul-André Durocher.

On May 16 the French community completed the business of their annual conference entitled, *Enfants de Dieu, citoyens du monde, toute une différence*. The English community engaged in its conference entitled, *Living Our Legacy: Forging Our Future*.

The English conference began with a panel reflection on the previous evening's keynote address. Participants were then invited to share their views with individuals from other school board teams. In the second morning session, Catholic historian Mark McGowan presented five vignettes of individuals who have offered their service for Catholic education. Professor McGowan's talk demonstrated recent contributions made on behalf of our school system.

Following lunch former MPP Sean Conway offered his views on the status of Catholic schools in the future. Mr. Conway was the minister of education in 1986 when Catholic secondary schools began to receive funding for grades 11 to 13. He is well known to Catholic education. Day 2 concluded with an invitation to school board teams to continue the conversations in their boards and communities by engaging in the tasks outlined in the following pages.

### Our Catholic Schools Report

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA) published two reports entitled, *Our Catholic Schools*. The first report was published in 1999. The second report in 2007 followed the 2006 Catholic Education Symposium: *Navigating in Turbulent Waters*. The second report is available through OCSTA or the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE). It contains a summary of the feedback from approximately 10,000 respondents who participated in follow up discussions at the board and community level. The feedback was categorized into six key areas:

1. The Distinctiveness of Catholic Schools
2. The Value of Catholic Schools
3. The Community's Hopes for Catholic Schools
4. The Major Issues Facing Catholic Schools Today
5. Strategies for Promoting and Protecting Catholic Education
6. What to Tell the School Boards and the Institute for Catholic Education

### Friends and Advocates of Catholic Education Project

In 2008 a special project was initiated to promote and protect Catholic education. The working title of the project is *Friends and Advocates of Catholic Education (FACE)*. One of the strategies of the FACE project is to engage the Catholic community in celebrating the success and benefits of the school system while engaging stakeholders in the never-ending need to be advocates for the system. The FACE project is internally focused within the Catholic community.

The goals of the FACE project were embedded in the program for the 2011 Symposium, *Living Our Legacy: Forging Our Future*. The strategies of the FACE project align with the feedback in the *Our Catholic Schools* report. The follow up tasks for school board teams are based on the action plans created by local FACE project committees.

## Call to Action

Each school board team and provincial organization is invited to complete the tasks below. These tasks arise from a series of questions that invite board teams and provincial organizations to discuss their current and future action plans.

The tasks may be led by the individuals who attended the 2011 Catholic Education Symposium, but other individuals should be invited to participate as well.

### TASK 1

What were the essential points made in Archbishop Collins' homily and the keynote address by Bishop Paul-André Durocher? *(This question was discussed by symposium participants in mixed groups with people from other school boards and organizations.)*

In what ways can you see evidence of these points in your community? What are the areas where you need to provide more attention and energy? How will you do this?

### TASK 2

Mark McGowan described the work of five individuals who have made contributions to Catholic education. What are some of the qualities of these individuals?

What historical figures in Catholic education can you identify in your community and what are their qualities? What qualities call you to leadership in your community? What can you do to develop similar qualities in others?

### TASK 3

Sean Conway has shared his views on the status of Catholic education in the future. What ideas caught your attention?

How do Sean Conway's views reflect the realities of your local community? Given the realities of your community, what actions need to be taken?

### TASK 4

The Catholic community is comprised of many groups in the school system, the parishes, the community and in various walks of life. The engagement of the Catholic community is at the heart of the strategy to promote and protect publicly-funded Catholic education in Ontario.

What have you done to invite **parents** into the activities to promote and protect Catholic education?

- How will you overcome challenges in working with parents?
- What opportunities will help you to work with parents?
- What steps do you need to take in the next six months?
- What is the long-term vision for involving parents?

School boards and organizations are requested to send their responses to the questions to the Institute for Catholic Education by December 31, 2011. The responses, as well as information on local projects, will be compiled and a report will be provided to all school boards and provincial organizations.

What have you done to invite **students** into the activities to promote and protect Catholic education?

- How will you overcome challenges in working with students?
- What opportunities will help you to work with students?
- What steps do you need to take in the next six months?
- What is the long-term vision for involving students?

What have you done to invite **all board employees** into the activities to promote and protect Catholic education?

- How will you overcome challenges in working with all board employees?
- What opportunities will help you to work with all board employees?
- What steps do you need to take in the next six months?
- What is the long-term vision for involving all board employees?

What have you done to invite the **clergy** into the activities to promote and protect Catholic education?

- How will you overcome challenges in working with the clergy?
- What opportunities will help you to work with the clergy?
- What steps do you need to take in the next six months?
- What is the long-term vision for involving the clergy?

What have you done to invite **parishioners** into the activities to promote and protect Catholic education?

- How will you overcome challenges in working with parishioners?
- What opportunities will help you to work with parishioners?
- What steps do you need to take in the next six months?
- What is the long-term vision for involving parishioners?

What have you done to invite the **broader Catholic community** into the activities to promote and protect Catholic education?

- How will you overcome challenges in working with the broader Catholic community?
- What opportunities will help you to work with the broader Catholic community?
- What steps do you need to take in the next six months?
- What is the long-term vision for involving the broader Catholic community?