

## Report of the Secretariat for Government Relations

The Secretariat exists to advise the Metropolitan, the House of Bishops, and the Provincial Synod on matters relating to the Ontario provincial government. It also keeps the Church informed of governmental matters and issues of emerging importance, advocates the policy positions taken by the Synod and the House, assists Provincial Synod agencies and representatives, and maintains both formal and informal contacts with the three political Parties to enable this to happen.

The Secretariat was established by Article Fourteen of the Constitution:

*There shall be attached directly to the office of the Metropolitan a Secretariat for Government Relations for the following purposes:*

- (II) *To make representations on behalf of the Provincial Synod to government*
- (II) *To keep the Provincial Synod informed about government action of concern to the Church in the Province*
- (III) *To liaise with the Diocese of Keewatin in relation to the above matters*
- (IV) *Taxation*

*Membership on the Secretariat shall be determined by the Executive Council in consultation with the Metropolitan.*

The Secretariat has members who act as liaison for each of the three political Parties at Queen's Park. These are Hugh MacKenzie (Progressive Conservative Party) and Murray MacAdam who maintains contact with the New Democratic Party while also acting as our Provincial Representative on Social Advocacy Matters with such groups as the Inter Faith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC). At the present moment there is a vacancy in the Liberal Party liaison position.

The Church in the Province pursues discussions with government, which is an intrinsic part of our mandate for social action and the betterment of the community, on two levels. The first is through partnerships with other denominations and non-governmental organizations such as ISARC.

The second level has been through the Secretariat, and this has involved less formal discussions with members of the government and the opposition caucuses and the Ministries involved with particular issues. This structure allows us a flexibility which we would not have if we were limited to one means or the other.

The traditional Anglican position in regard to relationships with civil government was set out by William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury:

*This is the function of the Church in relation to public life. Its main work now, as always must be the conversion and sanctification of individuals. On that everything depends; if that goes, all goes. But the Church must also have its direct impact upon the ordered life of the community - its politics, industry, its social life, thought and order, and all the rest.*

*It will not pretend to expert knowledge, or offer to settle technical disputes. But it will constantly affirm the spiritual principles which are involved in any department of public life, and it will try to bring together in mutual good will those who are in variance, that together they may find the solution to their problem.*

*Above all the Church will perpetually insist that no question touching human life is ever merely secular, merely economic, or merely material. All that touches human life is fundamentally spiritual, and can only be rightly settled under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.*

Essays in Christian Politics, 1927

The Secretariat has been involved, since our last Provincial Synod session, with a number of continuing matters including:

- The new Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act is scheduled to come into effect in the near future. This replaces the former Corporations Act and that Act's provisions applying to our incorporated diocesan Synods. A priority for us has been discussions with the government to ensure that the best interests of our dioceses are safeguarded in this and that their concerns are heard and understood.

We want to thank the Honourable John Gerretsen, then Minister Responsible for this matter and now Attorney-General, for his willingness to meet with us, the understanding he brought in listening to our concerns, and the careful and measured response he gave to them. A lead in this matter was taken by Roy Conacher, Chancellor of the diocese of Ontario, and we are very grateful to him for the care, attention, and many hours of work he gave to this.

- The College of Psychotherapists Act, though enacted, has not been completely implemented. A Transitional Council is still in place. We continue to be in discussion with this Transitional Council about what this new regulatory College will mean for our pastoral work in parishes, chaplaincies, and institutions such as hospitals, correctional facilities and long-term care units.

- The Heritage Act and the effect of revisions to it on our church buildings and other properties continues to be a priority in our government relations work. We monitor individual difficulties as they arise and try to provide as much support as possible to our dioceses and their parishes in dealing with the problems that emerge. We want to pursue our Church's interests in this assertively over the next three years.

- The Cemeteries Act (Revised) has been replaced by the new Funerals, Burials, and Cremation Services Act that came into effect on July 1, 2012. We continue to hold regular consultations with the Ontario Registrar of Cemeteries, Michael D'Mello, about the effect of the new Act and how we can work collaboratively with his staff to ensure that the public benefits intended in the new Act are fulfilled without imposing an undue administrative burden on those managing Anglican cemeteries in the Province.

The Registrar was very kind in taking the time to attend the spring 2012 Provincial Council meeting to discuss the implications of the new Act with us.

- The Ontario Clean Water Act and the effect on our rural parishes and buildings of improvement to its Regulations that we helped to bring about to. Responsibility for this Act is spread across two government Ministries and the local Public Health Units that do the actual work of inspection. In 2011 a number of situations arose in which local Health Units imposed what we viewed as onerous requirement on a number of rural congregations. We entered into extensive discussion with the government at the policy level that seem to have largely resolved this.

- The Ontario Human Rights commission is in the process of re-writing its Policy on Religious Freedom and Creed. We have taken part in a number of consultations with the Commission and its staff on this matter. The review will go forward over the next two years and this file will be handled for us by our Chancellor, Chris Riggs, and Executive Officer Susan DeGruchy.

Chief Commissioner Barbara Hall (former Toronto Mayor) and members of her senior staff attended our spring 2012 Provincial Council meeting to brief the Council members on this and discuss its implications with them.

Harry Huskins, Executive Officer