

- Topic: Promoting the Common Good Together:  
Catholics and Ecumenical Lobbying in Canada
- Convener: Susan M. Brown, King's College, London, Ontario
- Presenters: Catherine Clifford, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto  
Eileen Scully, Canadian Council of Churches, Toronto  
Richard Haughian, Catholic Health Association of Canada, Ottawa

Most of the public-policy lobbying undertaken by Canadian Catholics involves not the threat of their "block voting" but rather collaboration with ecumenical and/or interfaith partners who discern and promote the common good together either because they have found this approach particularly effective or because they believe that their Christian faith demands such joint action. The three presenters treated various types of joint public-policy initiatives involving Canadian Catholics.

Catherine Clifford, a Roman Catholic member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Canada, pointed out the social and ecclesial context for, and the significance of, the 1998 A-RC joint statement "On the Way Together: A People Created for the Common Good." Prepared in an effort to receive into the Canadian context the 1994 ARCIC document *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*, the statement proposed as guides for participation in Canadian society ten principles rooted in the common heritage of Anglican and Roman Catholic social teaching—a heritage discerned through joint study of the relevant documents of the two churches. Designed in both language and length to be accessible to parishioners and available with a study guide, the statement offers a theological rationale for broad participation in the formation of public policy in Canada and elsewhere. Clifford suggested that the joint statement's linking of the notion of communion to the common good—the connection it makes between the ecclesial vocation of Christians and the calling of the whole human community—may well be its greatest contribution.

Richard Haughian's presentation outlined the evolution of the Catholic Health Association of Canada from its 1939 beginnings as a distinct Canadian agency focused primarily on the effective and faithful delivery of Catholic health care to its current configuration as an agency largely involved in external advocacy work, seeking to ensure the preservation of gospel values in Catholic institutions increasingly dependent upon government funding, lobbying in support of justice initiatives whose healthcare implications are becoming more apparent, and striving to make sure that the healthcare possibilities offered by scientific and technological advances are considered in a context that respects the dignity of human life in all its stages. The greater effectiveness of broad-based lobbying and the shared concerns of faith-based institutions have led to the CHAC's involvement in various ecumenical and interfaith coalitions which monitor specific issues as well as to the formation, on both national and provincial levels, of health associations which include ecumenical partners. The CHAC is also asked from time to time to

contribute its perspective to the work of various other collaborative groups, such as consultations sponsored by the Canadian Council of Churches. While pragmatic goals may have offered the immediate impulse for the ecumenical work of the CHAC, it is becoming increasingly aware that collaborative work both builds upon and nourishes ecumenical commitments which are rooted in a theological vision.

Eileen Scully, the Canadian Council of Churches' Associate Secretary for Faith and Witness, drew attention to the way in which the "forum" structure of the recently reorganized CCC encourages member churches to enter more fully into the process of discerning how to be a "voice in the wilderness"—of determining which important issues the Council will address, what should be said, and how public statements will be made. While some have suggested that the newly organized Council has a diminished capacity to act as prophet *to* the churches, the current mechanism for reaching consensus forces member churches to challenge themselves and to be challenged by other partners within the CCC. Using Psalm 137 as her framework, Scully described three types of situations in which the CCC is called to "sing the Lord's song in a strange land" and outlined the corresponding degrees of consensus characterizing the responses which the forum structure produces in each case. In general, the "forum" structure offers opportunity both for the churches to learn respectfully from one another and to give public witness together. Thus it affords member churches occasions both for practising communion and for bearing witness, through the complicated symphonic harmony of a common "song," to the Christian calling to live in communion with one another in Christ—to be "on the way together."

SUSAN MADER BROWN

*King's College  
London, Ontario*