
A THANK YOU TO PEACs!



Throughout the year it is my pleasure to thank many people and groups on behalf of the diocesan Church and in my own name. Today I want to express my gratitude in a special way to all those who serve on our parish economic affairs committees. There are close to two hundred of you, professionally and conscientiously looking after the goods and properties of our Church. You work mostly behind the scenes, so we run the risk of forgetting you and not expressing our thanks to you; we certainly owe you a great debt of gratitude.

WONDERFUL WORK

We have only to look at the churches throughout our diocese, to discover the creators of such beautiful and wonderfully-kept landmarks, and we are justly proud of them. And not only of the exterior, but also of the inside of these buildings. The Psalmist rightly prays, “How beautiful are yours works, O Lord!” and “One thing I ask of the Lord, and one thing only: to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life!” And if we were to visit our parish cemeteries we would notice the same care given to them, the same respect for sacred “things;” most headstones, decorated with flowers, show the respect we all have for our dear departed loved ones. If we checked our parishes’ financial statements, we would be surprised at how well the finances are administered. True, several parishes are in narrow straits, financially, because of the high cost of everything, especially insurance, but despite it all, we try to make ends meet! Who are those mainly responsible for the upkeep and maintenance in good order of our properties and grounds, and of the parish’s entire financial situation? For the most part it is the parish economic affairs committee, working in close relation with the parish pastoral team and all the baptised.

ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOP OF EDMUNDSTON

Following its erection by Pope Pius XII, December 16, 1944, the Diocese was granted civil incorporation April 7, 1956 (10 George VI, c. 79). All the goods and properties of parishes officially and legally became the property of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Edmundston, as with all other dioceses, anglophone and francophone, where all goods and property are officially owned and managed by the respective Catholic bishop of the diocese. However, Québec Province has a special legislation due to an age-old tradition imported from France, where the ownership and management of church goods and property are under the ownership and responsibility of a committee of stewards known as the “Fabrique”, composed of men and women known in French as “marguilliers”, who are elected to a three-year term at the parish general meeting. From the very inception of our diocese several parish priests ensured the setting up of a parish committee or council, or a finance committee, so that together they could administer the parish. However, it was only in January, 1996 that it became compulsory for every parish to have a parish economic affairs committee or a finance committee. The Edmundston Diocesan Synod (1987-1990) had strongly recommended that pastors be relieved as quickly as possible of administrative duties.

MAJOR REASONS

In promulgating the legislation I had listed some major reasons militating in favour of such a committee. The temporal goods of each parish community must be wisely and prudently managed. The bishop must ensure

the formation of the faithful to a sense of participation and collaboration, even regarding the temporal goods required for the Church to carry out its mission. Even if the diocese is organised as an episcopal corporation sole under the Roman Catholic Bishop of Edmundston, the Church's universal legislation requires that every bishop have a diocesan council for economic affairs. It is therefore the Roman Catholic bishop's duty to publish necessary guidelines pertaining to the management of temporal goods in all the parishes of the diocese. On November 10, 1995, I published the diocesan legislation; in the following months, a document on rules and statutes for PEACs was submitted for study throughout the diocese.

NATURE OF PEACS

It is important to realise the place of PEACs not only within the diocesan framework but also in the scheme of parish life. In the Edmundston diocese, each parish's temporal goods are administered by a parish committee for economic affairs (PEAC), under the authority of the moderator of the parish pastoral team, who coordinates the community's activities as a whole. Every year the PEAC submits a statement of revenue and expenditures to the parish pastoral council. It is also important that a member of the PEAC sit on the parish pastoral council, so that harmonious relationships exist within the community. The PEAC cannot spend more than fifteen thousand dollars without the bishop's prior approval. All extraordinary expenses with repercussions on the life of the community must be approved by both the PEAC and the PPC for the greater good of the community. To avoid excessive recourse to the community, the PEAC submits an annual budget estimate to the PPC, for acceptance. At the parish's annual meeting, the PEAC, like every other committee – religious education, liturgy, sacramental preparation, and others – reports on its administration.

MULTIPLE TASKS

Among the main tasks carried out by the PEAC is managing the parish's property, goods and buildings, monitoring parish expenses and revenue, hiring staff such as a sacristan, secretary, cook/housekeeper, etc. I also want to point out the importance of our sacred objects, the religious inheritance found in each church community, a priceless treasure not only for now but for years to come. We must take special care of all the paintings and works of art bequeathed to us by our ancestors, every building itself being part of this patrimony. We are privileged with having a cathedral which has been officially declared a provincial historical building; several of our other churches and chapels deserve the same continued respect, admiration, and care. May the Lord richly bless all those who take special care of all these goods of the Church, and special thanks to parish economic affairs committees. May their continued service be most productive to them and the community.

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