

From College to University: The Basilian Fathers and Assumption, 1950-1963

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“The University of Windsor is a False Assumption.” These words, emblazoned on a banner, greeted returning students to the University of Windsor in 1964. Perplexing to some, this sentiment held deep significance to the Basilian Fathers and their supporters as it bitterly expressed their failed effort to maintain a truly independent Catholic university. From 1950 to 1963, Assumption College and then Assumption University was in the midst of a monumental transformation. Assumption began this period as an affiliate of the University of Western Ontario, claimed autonomous status as a college with university powers, and finally achieved its much anticipated status as Assumption University of Windsor. The goal once achieved proved unsustainable. As one of its future presidents would remark, “partly by choice and partly by circumstance, a metamorphosis saw Assumption change from a self sufficient institution to a ‘Catholic College on Campus.’”¹

Assumption College was originally a Jesuit creation on the grounds of Assumption Church, the first Catholic mission in Upper Canada.² After opening its doors to students on 10 February 1857, the Jesuits decided in August of that year that they would be unable to continue staffing the college.³ On the advice of his counterpart in Toronto, Bishop Pierre-Adolph Pinsoneault of London turned to the Basilian Fathers, a French order strictly dedicated to pre-formation and scholastic instruction, for help.⁴ Beginning

¹ *The Windsor Star*, 3 January 1981. Interview with Dr. J.F. Leddy.

² Michael Power, *Assumption College, 1855-1870 – Years of Uncertainty* (Windsor, 1987), xxxv.

³ *Ibid.*, xxxv.

⁴ The Basilians took their name from the renowned fourth century educator, St. Basil. Bishop Charles D’Aviau of Vienne, France founded the order in 1798 when he began a school for young men considering the priesthood in the small village of St. Symphorie de Mahon. When the popularity of this college caused its move to Annonay a few years later, it was located in the parish of St. Basil. See Charles Roume, c.s.b., *A*

with the Superiorship of Fr. Denis O'Connor (the future Archbishop of Toronto) in 1870, the Basilians began to entrench and consolidate their purposes in Windsor. With increased demand for a Catholic college for lay students, the Basilian school expanded from a minor seminary, offering lay undergraduate instruction as an affiliate of Western University, later the University of Western Ontario. By a 1919 affiliation agreement, the college became a member of the larger university's Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and began to concentrate on molding "as many students as possible into integral human beings, oriented to God and to a right conception of society."⁵ Assumption College thrived in this environment, and enjoyed all of the benefits of connection with a larger and more established university.

The administrative years of Assumption College President Fr. J.H. O'Loane and his First Councilor, Dean and Vice President Fr. E.C. LeBel began a period of unrest for Assumption in its affiliation with Western, starting in 1946.⁶ Of particular concern to Fr. O'Loane were returning veterans to the Windsor area at this time, who were causing an intolerable lack of space at Assumption. Fr. LeBel was set the task of investigating the potential for new growth potential in the near future. His report, "Brief Facts of Civic Importance Pertaining to Assumption College,"⁷ outlined the realities that would face Assumption in the midst of a burgeoning Windsor. His estimates for 1947 foresaw an additional 1,200 men and women per year that would come to depend on Assumption for their educational needs, well beyond the capacity enrollment of 1,250. He considered these needs to have been "far too great, far too sudden and far too violent to be met gradually in the normal manner."⁸ LeBel began to make his case for at least an expanded version of the college to accommodate the expected post-war demand.

As Assumption entered the period of the late 1940s and early 1950s, it became evident that spatial problems were only the "tip of the iceberg" with regard to its difficulties. Fearful of the increasingly defensive position Western's affiliate colleges were forced into upon G. Edward Hall's presidency, the Basilians began to take stock of Assumption's long standing

History of the Congregation of St. Basil to 1864 (Toronto: The Basilian Press, 1975),

⁵"Assumption College Desiderata," RG 1, Box 11, File 40, Assumption University Archives, Windsor, Ontario. (Hereafter AUA)

⁶Robert J. Scollard c.s.b., *Dictionary of Basilian Biography* (Toronto: The Basilian Press, 1969), 116.

⁷"Brief Facts of Civic Importance Pertaining to Assumption College," 1946, RG 1, Box 9, File 2, AUA.

⁸Ibid.

affiliation with the larger university.⁹ Surely independence and autonomy in a university setting would be desired; Assumption had thrived as an independent institution under Basilian control for almost fifty years before affiliation with Western. In re-assessing their affiliation, Assumption would be looking to ensure that the courses it offered based on Western's curriculum were formulated so as to ensure an infusion of overall relevance in a Catholic perspective: "we need parallel courses in Literature, History, Philosophy and the sciences, compulsory for all students, constantly related to everyday experience and to one another so as to comment upon one another continually."¹⁰ The desire for independence, though initiated by demographic concerns, was rooted firmly in the Basilian's notion that to fulfill its mandate as a Catholic college meant having autonomy over its staff, students and curriculum. Western now posed a threat to that autonomy.

New academic constraints imposed by Western began to pose a problem to the moral latitude and freedom which the college felt it required. The setting of curricula and writing of standard examinations had been common practice through the tenure of the affiliation agreement.¹¹ Where Assumption was able to provide this Catholic element of instruction and guidance however, had been most clearly shown in its graduate program in philosophy. This program, begun by former Assumption President Fr. Vincent Kennedy in 1928, had received the approval of Western's Senate and allowed the Basilians to freely guide their graduate theses, mostly dealing in Catholic philosophy. Western's new policy, however, as this excerpt from Fr. LeBel's Quarterly Report to the Superior General of the Basilian Fathers indicates, began the process of squeezing Assumption out of affiliation by constraining this graduate program:

The University of Western Ontario supervised more carefully the Assumption College M.A. theses this year. After considerable discussion by letter and interview, three thesis subjects were changed after considerable work had been done on the subjects, one thesis was summarily rejected, one was accepted heartily, three were vigorously debated, being

⁹ Hall had replaced the more congenial Sherwood Fox, with whom Assumption had enjoyed an open and cordial relationship. Hall did not consult with the college regarding U.W.O.'s doubling of the traditional affiliation fee to \$25,000 in 1951. The Basilians began to reconsider affiliation forthwith, fearing the inhospitable relationship with Western that appeared to lay ahead under Hall's presidency. The author is indebted to Rev. Peter J.M. Swan, c.s.b., Registrar (1949-61), member of the Board of Governors (1953-61), and Vice President (Academic) (1958-61) of Assumption College/University, for this and other clarifications and suggestions.

¹⁰ "Minutes, Assumption College Staff Meetings, 1947-54," 13 May 1948, RG 1, Box 12, File 159, AUA.

¹¹ "Assumption College and Western University – Articles of Affiliation," RG 1, Box 2, File 41, AUA.

passed after a few changes, and one, after a long and heated debate, was not accepted.¹²

A vital part of Assumption's identity was now, for the first time in its affiliation with Western, being called into question. The matter of Catholic relevancy to subject work, especially in philosophy, was the College's safeguard to maintaining the spirit of the original school. Hence, Fr. LeBel addressed this new problem of secular interference, a problem that would loom still further ahead for Assumption at different levels as "a threat to the principle upon which affiliation was built."¹³

With the onset of the 1950s, further problems complicated the affiliation with Western. Assumption had been offering non-credit courses in Polish and Ukrainian since 1948,¹⁴ as well as one credit course in Russian. It would seek to offer these courses in 1951 on a credit basis. This proposal was voted down at a meeting of the Western Senate on June 2, 1951,¹⁵ with one senator (in a highly McCarthyistic overture) going so far as to accuse Fr. O'Loane and the Basilians of offering the courses for the sole purpose of promoting "subversive doctrines."¹⁶ The option of abandoning affiliation began to look more appealing with Western's announcement in 1951 of a doubling in the traditional "college fee" to \$25,000 (not to be taken out of tuition fees).¹⁷ Fortuitously, a review of the original 1919 affiliation agreement uncovered the fact that it had never been signed, and thus held no legality.¹⁸ Here was Assumption's opportunity to break off its ties with Western if it really desired to do so. A new University of Western Ontario

¹² "Correspondence, Superior General, 1947-51," June 1950, RG 1, Box 13, File 167, AUA.

¹³ "Correspondence, Superior General, 1947-51," RG 1, Box 13, File 167, AUA.

¹⁴ After a review of the course instruction in the Slavonic languages program, the matter of credit approval was forwarded by the Executive of the U.W.O. Senate to a joint committee of University College and Assumption College on 27 December 1950. A note to this effect can be found in President's Papers, Dr. G.E. Hall, "Affiliated Colleges," File P-8, University of Western Ontario Archives, London, Ontario. (Hereafter UWOA)

¹⁵ Western Senate Minutes, 2 June 1951, in Box "1952-1953," "Board of Governors – Advisory Committee, 1951-1957," UWOA, "Special Collections."

¹⁶ Ibid., Western Senate Minutes, in Box "1952-1953," "Board of Governors – Advisory Committee - 1951-57," UWOA, "Special Collections." The "cold war" here was in full swing in post-war North America.

¹⁷ Letter from U.W.O. Comptroller R.B. Willis to Dr. Hall, 24 September 1951, President's Papers, Dr. G.E. Hall, "Affiliated Colleges," File P-8, UWOA, "Special Collections."

¹⁸ Letter of Fr. O'Loane to Dr. Hall, 7 April 1951, President's Papers, Dr. G.E. Hall, File P-8, "Affiliated Colleges," UWOA, "Special Collections." This fact was discovered by James J. Talman, U.W.O. Librarian, while researching his *Western – 1878-1953* (London: The University of Western Ontario, 1953), and relayed to Dr. Hall.

Act (like the several stages the Assumption College Act would go through) was scheduled for submission to the government of Ontario for ratification in 1952.¹⁹ The Basilian Fathers agreed to abandon affiliation with Western in lieu of full university status for Assumption.²⁰ A public announcement to that effect was issued on 29 December 1952.²¹

The financial prospects for a university charter in Windsor were made precarious by virtue of Assumption's status as a denominational institution. At the first session of the Legislature of the new Province of Ontario in 1867, great attacks were made on the funding of denominational schools like Assumption or Queen's in Kingston, causing Premier Sandfield Macdonald to enact a provisional policy against the practice.²² Subsequent administrations maintained this policy, and contrary to Fr. O'Loane's wishful thinking, it would not be circumvented. Reacting to recent statements from the Premier of Ontario, Leslie Frost, and his desire to offer financial support to institutions of higher learning,²³ Fr. O'Loane mistakenly thought he saw a way around Ontario's policy: "We think that the government of Ontario would perhaps be anxious to do something for Catholics on the university level even if politically it is afraid to do anything at the Separate School level."²⁴ The faint hope of provincial funding imbued Fr. O'Loane with the confidence to present Assumption College to all concerned as fully capable of surviving on its own. The pitfalls of his faulty financial forecasting would await his successor, since O'Loane stepped down as president of Assumption at the end of his six year term in 1952.

Given a free hand in the administration of the College, Fr. Eugene Carlisle LeBel had been well groomed for his presidency. He understood that new status as a university for Assumption meant an amendment to its

¹⁹ Letter of Dr. Hall to Fr. O'Loane, 2 April 1951, President's Papers, Dr. G.E. Hall, File P-8, "Affiliated Colleges," UWOA, "Special Collections."

²⁰ "Minutes, Assumption College Staff Meetings, 1947-54," RG 1, Box 12, File 159, AUA.

²¹ Lawrence K. Shook c.s.b., *Catholic Post-Secondary Education in English Speaking Canada* (Toronto, 1971), 289.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

²³ Franklin A. Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Ontario*, (Toronto, 1985), 2:484-5. Letters to the Basilian Superior General from Fr. O'Loane indicate that his optimism at Assumption receiving provincial grants was furthered by the 1951 release of the "Massey Report." This federal report issued by future Governor General Vincent Massey suggested federal endowment of various Arts and education projects. Although possibly perceived by O'Loane as indicative of a future provincial trend, this report in no way reflected Premier Frost's policies on funding denominational post-secondary schools in Ontario.

²⁴ "Brief re: Charter on University Status Submitted by Assumption College to the Basilian General Council," 1952, RG 1, Box 9, File 23, p. 7, AUA.

original 1856 charter. The ensuing negotiations with the Conservative government of Leslie Frost would not be easy. In 1952, post-war university student growth was thought to be a flash in the pan, and with no future growth expected, Frost was not eager to see a new university in Windsor. He saw no reason why the new powers gained through an amendment to the act could not be held in abeyance.²⁵ The Basilians, however, remained undaunted in their desire to amend the original Assumption College Act. The model used for this change of status would be the Ottawa Association for the Advancement of Learning, which had undergone a similar incorporation in 1952.²⁶ This Act, later titled the Carleton College Act, empowered Carleton with university powers after it had itself been incorporated as an affiliate of the University of Ottawa in 1943. In keeping with the tenets of the Carleton plan, Assumption sought specifically: (1) Its own University Senate and (2) All of those considered to be “University powers,” namely: (a) The power to establish and maintain such faculties, schools, institutes, departments, chairs, and courses of instruction as may be deemed by its Board of Governors and (b) The power to confer University degrees and honorary degrees and awards in any and all branches of learning.²⁷ Little consideration was given at this time to the fact that the model was the “Carleton College” and not “Carleton University” Act, and the wheels of independence were thus put in motion. As it possessed no legal status in the province, the affiliation with the University of Western Ontario was quietly ended on 1 July 1953.²⁸ August examinations for summer courses taught at Assumption under Western’s auspices were administered by U.W.O. officials, as was the last convocation in the fall of 1953.

What the Basilians now desired was the creation of an independent university. Continued status as a college would work against their plans for independence and expansion. Premier Frost had informally suggested the potential for this status to Fr. LeBel in 1953 if Assumption’s name was changed to “The University of Windsor.”²⁹ At the time this matter was passed off by LeBel as a secular whim. When it became clear however, that the name “College” was to be in place until such time as Assumption began

²⁵ Letter of Leslie Frost to C.P. McTague, “Frost Administration, General Correspondence,” Record Group 3, Box 6, File 11G, Province of Ontario Archives, Toronto, Ontario. (Hereafter, POA)

²⁶ “Correspondence etc., Hamilton College, Charters etc., 1947-53,” RG 1, Box 11, File 83, AUA.

²⁷ “Act re: Ottawa Association for the Advancement of Learning, 1952,” p. 10, RG 1, Box 11, File 83, AUA.

²⁸ “An Act Respecting Assumption College,” 23 April 1953, AUA.

²⁹ “Brief, Data, etc., Mr. Frost, Essex College,” RG 1, Box 15, File 295, AUA.

to take on affiliate colleges,³⁰ the Basilians became concerned that their plan for an increased denominational presence might be usurped to create a public university. Here was proposed a new title, “Assumption of Windsor University” – a compromise between the original name they had hoped for, “Assumption University,” and that suggested by the province, as “the latter is apt to suggest to many a reality, which please God, will never eventuate; a non-sectarian thing.”³¹ Assumption saw itself as following in the footsteps of other Catholic universities that had gone before it in demanding the maintenance of its Catholic corporate title. The Catholic University of Washington, Loyola University of Chicago, as well as the Basilian St. Thomas University were all examples. The Basilians showed a great deal of concern that a non-denominational element was finding its way into their control over the institution.

For the time being there would be no further discussion of a “University of Windsor.” The full secular interests in such a plan had yet to define themselves, and all parties concerned, including Premier Frost, who would receive Assumption’s first Honourary Doctor of Laws degree in 1954, seemed more interested in getting the new and improved Assumption College off the ground.³² Indeed, though only for the time being, Windsor was home to a college with university powers, granting degrees under strong denominational auspices. A provision of the revised charter, the Board of Regents, came into existence as “a representative group of citizens, brought together to advise in the general direction of university effort, with particular reference to finance, public relations and integration of the University program.”³³ Newly invigorated, Assumption College and the Basilian Fathers began to establish partnerships designed to promote their viability.

Rhys Manly Sale was the president and director of the Ford Motor Company of Canada Ltd. and was targeted by the Basilians to head the Board of Regents. A man of Sale’s calibre was attractive to Assumption for a number of reasons. His prominence as a Windsor business man would lend credibility to the fund drive planned for Assumption's future expansion. His

³⁰ Although an affiliate of Assumption College since 1934 by a less formal agreement, Holy Names College could not change the titular status of Assumption College until it received provincial incorporation on 1956. See Mona L. Gleason, “A ‘Separate and ‘Different’ Education’: A History of Women at the University of Windsor, 1920 to the Present,” M.A. Major Paper, University of Windsor, 1991, chapter 1.

³¹ Crowley, Mulvihill, Ruth, Swan, “On Preserving the Name ‘Assumption’ in any Proposed Change of Title as a University,” 1953, AUA.

³² “Correspondence, Biographies etc., Honourary Degrees 1954,” RG 1, Box 11, File 92, AUA.

³³ James A. Fraser, *A School Becomes of Age, Assumption College – University of Windsor* (Windsor, 1971) Chapter V.

clout as a leader of Canadian industry would certainly help in future negotiations over funding. Finally however, his Anglican faith would be essential for the college's plans to portray itself as a religiously tolerant Catholic university. Once affiliated with the move to promote Windsor's university, Sale was consulted regularly about its financial future. In a private meeting during the summer of 1953,³⁴ LeBel and Sale forecasted the monetary needs for Assumption through 1965. In anticipation of consistent growth and the addition of new faculties, they agreed that \$26,510,000 would be required for capital expansion.³⁵ Without accounting for any serious changes in enrollment and the vague understanding of provincial funding, they concluded that \$5,610,000 would have to be raised in voluntary contributions in order to meet this goal. Sale agreed, through the Board of Regents, to negotiate with the province in the matter of funding.³⁶ His participation, and verbal assurance from Bishop John Cody of the London diocese of a gift of \$1,000,000 to the project made Assumption's economic position almost enviable.³⁷

In the desire to present the most convincing argument possible for funds, Assumption's staunch religious intonations were de-emphasized in the fall meetings with the Minister of Education, Dr. W.J. Dunlop. It was hoped that its brief period of independence would prove to the provincial government that Assumption was thriving under its own incorporation in the academic freedoms it had received, as well as in the student body it was assembling. The college went public in 1953-54 as the religious melting pot that it was: there were 243 Roman Catholics, 75 members of the United Church, 30 Presbyterians, 21 Hebrews, 8 "Protestants," 9 Greek Catholics, 61 Anglicans, 28 Orthodox, 15 Baptists, 15 Lutherans and 2 Mormons.³⁸ Further, 54% of the day, and 61% of the night school population were non-Catholic, proving to all concerned that "Assumption was open to all creeds and cultures."³⁹ On March 9, 1954, Rhys Sale extended the plea for funding to Premier Frost.⁴⁰ Although the tone of these talks was always cordial, the premier had the final word: no exception to the provincial policy would be made for Assumption as long as it remained essentially denominational in character.

³⁴ "Correspondence, Superior General, 1952-54," RG 1, Box 13, File 168, AUA.

³⁵ "Study, Recommendations, Public Relations and Development for Assumption University of Windsor, 1957," RG 1, Box 22, File 594, AUA.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Record Group 1, Box 22, File 594, AUA.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ "Correspondence, etc., City of Windsor, 1953-63," RG 1, Box 16, File 362, AUA.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Letter of Fr. LeBel to Rhys Sale, 11 March 1954, "Briefs, Financial, Mr. Sale and Mr. Whiteside, 1954," RG 1, Box 17, File 378, AUA.

Assumption College completed its first year of independence without provincial support and amidst burgeoning costs. Maintenance expenditures for the college had risen to \$450,000 in 1954.⁴¹ Further, it was apparent by the end of Assumption's first year that Sale and LeBel's financial forecasting was already obsolete. Certain construction had to be undertaken, such as a new library and student centre for this school that was bursting at its seams. LeBel returned to the Board of Regents and commissioned a non-denominational committee, consisting of prominent Windsorite Walker Whiteside and Rhys Sale to further lobby the province for funding. In the spring of 1954 this delegation too was refused funding, sparking a move that had not been anticipated by Fr. LeBel or the Basilians of Assumption College. At the June meeting of the Assumption Regents, Whiteside and Sale acknowledged their failure to attain funding through Assumption College, but reported that they had made application for the incorporation of a new body, Essex College, as a corporation without share capital under Part III of the Corporations Act.⁴² Such a body would be under public control, and thereby eligible for provincial funds. LeBel was dumbfounded as Sale went on to invite the struggling Assumption College, which he was still representing on its Board of Regents, to enter into affiliation with this proposed corporation.⁴³

Fr. LeBel now definitely had his back against the wall. Not only was Assumption struggling financially, but it was showing signs of disunity at a point in its history when an outward appearance of solidarity was necessary to its public image. Assumption had yet to gain admission to the National Conference of Canadian Universities, membership in which would give it the prominence and distinction of Canada's other great universities. LeBel then had little choice in this matter. As a non-denominational college Essex would serve as a conduit for funding Assumption. No opposition was initially put forth with regard to this affiliation, and Essex College was legally incorporated on 14 July 1954 with Walker Whiteside its first board

⁴¹ Ibid., Record Group 1, Box 17, File 378, AUA.

⁴² The creation of Essex College in 1954 was a seemingly spontaneous move on the part of individuals that would later form its Board of Directors. Although The Assumption College Board discussed the possibility of using the "McMaster Plan" at its December 1953 meeting, there is no documentary evidence to indicate that the delegation from Assumption's Board of Regents was sent to Toronto to do anything other than lobby Mr. Frost for provincial grants. Mr. Whiteside, in an interview with the author on 20 February 1991, and again on 30 April 1991, acknowledged the fact that Mr. Frost had indeed contacted him first in 1961 as to the governments plans for the creation of the University of Windsor, but that no such communication took place with regard to the creation of Essex College in 1954.

⁴³ Interview with Fr. N.J. Ruth, c.s.b., 14 January 1991.

chairman, Rhys Sale serving as vice president, and John Whiteside as treasurer.⁴⁴

Fr. LeBel, reconciled to the necessity of this affiliation that would bring in an initial grant of \$450,000 to the university, did not react favourably to Frost's suggestion through Sale for its terms, which above all would resurrect the corporate title "The University of Windsor" suggested in 1953.⁴⁵ The president was in a most precarious position. In the early summer of 1954 he was forced to give in to the non-denominational forces of Essex College and the Province of Ontario that would see the creation of a public university with a denominational affiliate in Assumption College. On 13 July 1954, the Board of Regents of Assumption College prepared a press release for its Chair, Rhys Sale, to declare the creation of Essex College as well as the change of title of the entire institution to the University of Windsor.⁴⁶ The new Essex College, according to this statement, would be set up with its own administration, and accept students beginning in the fall of 1954. This move was described by Sale as "the next logical step" in the chain of development at the college after the granting of the original charter, creation of Essex College, and the anticipated admission into the National Conference of Canadian Universities.⁴⁷

This secular takeover was a direct threat to the Basilian mandate. Bishop Cody too had indicated his disapproval of the proposed situation.⁴⁸ Cody was an ardent supporter of a Catholic university for the Windsor area, not a non-denominational college as proposed by the prospect of Essex College, or a public entity as in the case of the University of Windsor. His episcopal privilege and promise of one million dollars rendered his voice one to be reckoned with. The press release then was not immediately acted on, and there would be no students admitted to Essex College for the fall term in 1954. At a meeting with the Essex College Board on 14 September 1954,⁴⁹ a formal invitation was made to Fr. LeBel and what was left of his Board of Regents to join in affiliation with them under the auspices of a

⁴⁴ Minutes of the Board of Directors of Essex College, July 1954, "Minutes, Reports, Correspondence, 1954," William Arison Papers, RG II, Box 12, File 3, AUA.

⁴⁵ Letter of Fr. LeBel to Fr. Kennedy, 17 June 1954, "Correspondence, General, June 1954," RG I, Box 11, File 66, AUA.

⁴⁶ "Press Release, Essex College, Established July 14, 1954," RG I, Box 11, File 42, AUA.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Membership in the National Conference of Canadian Universities was facilitated for Assumption with the assistance of Dr. J.F. Leddy, future President of the University of Windsor and a member of the Council's investigation committee. The announcement of the Council's recommendation was made in the summer of 1954.

⁴⁸ See Ibid., "Correspondence, London Diocese, Bishop Cody, 1954-57," for several letters from Bishop Cody, outlining his skepticism on the planned affiliation.

⁴⁹ "LeBel, General Correspondence, October 1954," RG I, Box 1, File 70, AUA.

larger University of Windsor. Newly invigorated, Fr. LeBel showed none of his previous tentativeness: “We replied with a firm ‘no’ since we did not wish to give away control of an institution which we had worked nearly a hundred years to establish.”⁵⁰ He now went on the offensive in making a counter proposal on behalf of Assumption College. The Basilians were prepared to cite precedents achieved in the matter of circumventing the provincial funding policy. The University of Ottawa, founded by the Oblate Fathers in 1848, had managed to gain limited grants in the late 1940s through its School of Medicine and Faculty of Pure and Applied Science.⁵¹ More relevant to Windsor’s case was the matter of funds received in 1953 by McMaster University in Hamilton. McMaster, under Baptist control, established a non-denominational affiliate, Hamilton College, in order to gain the provincial funds necessary for maintenance and expansion costs. According to this original “McMaster Plan,” Hamilton College took over all science programs at the university. As a result, the Province of Ontario awarded maintenance grants to Hamilton College that, spent at the discretion of the university’s Board of Governors, would indirectly help maintain McMaster University.⁵²

The use of the “McMaster Plan” by Assumption College had been considered and dismissed a year earlier in the hopes of obtaining the funds through a more conventional approach.⁵³ After recovering from the original shock of Essex College’s first offer for Assumption to affiliate, LeBel decided that this newly incorporated college could be used to Assumption’s ultimate advantage. Another press release was prepared, regarding Assumption’s use of this “McMaster Plan” with Essex College serving as the conduit for funds. Thus began an administrative stalemate between both Assumption and Essex College that would last for nearly a year and a half.

The key to Assumption’s future success lay in the funding that would hopefully be forthcoming through Essex College, and so negotiations began. At this time the Assumption representatives outlined their terms for affiliation following the unadulterated “McMaster Plan.” The Essex representatives proposed their alternative to the “McMaster Plan” at the 14 September meeting. This was to be known as the “University of Windsor Plan,” as suggested by Premier Frost months before. Accordingly, both Assumption and Essex would exist in affiliation with a central, non-

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ “Minutes, Reports, etc., 1955,” William Arison Papers, RG II, Box 12, File 5, AUA.

⁵² Charles M. Johnston, *McMaster University, Volume II, The Early Years in Hamilton*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 174.

⁵³ “Briefs, Correspondence, etc., Leading to Affiliation With Essex College, 1953-56,” RG I, Box 17, File 403, AUA.

denominational University of Windsor. This concept then followed the centrist-affiliation lead already established by the University of Toronto. This university would have a top Board of Governors consisting of equal representation from both of the affiliates. Such a loss of control of all that had been gained thus far was unacceptable to Fr. LeBel and the Basilians, and hence the September meetings abruptly ended.

As far as the Basilians were concerned, the matter of the creation of a “University of Windsor” was quietly put to rest. On 10 February 1955, Assumption’s lawyer Charles McTague delivered a cheque from the Provincial Treasury, refunding the application fee for the status name change of Assumption College to the “University of Windsor.”⁵⁴ Although negotiations with the Essex College Board were to be ongoing, Assumption would remain, for the time being at least, a denominational university.

It would be well into 1955 before negotiations with Essex College resumed. Fr. LeBel saw the “McMaster Plan” as being the maximum concession to public interests. He was determined that the ensuing shape the university was to take would not just include, but would be dominated by Catholic interests:

As a result (of the “University of Windsor Plan”) a thoroughly Catholic view would be impossible of presentation, and true principles are compromised. Under the proposed College plan, this unhappy situation would continue in the Arts subjects and worsen in the Sciences. There, almost complete practical control of the courses would necessarily be handed over to the authorities of Essex College.⁵⁵

During a meeting at the Head offices of Hiram Walker and Sons in nearby Riverdale on 6 December 1955, Fr. LeBel broke the stalemate. He proposed Essex College take over degree instruction in business administration, nursing, and the natural sciences. Assumption would play a dual role, running a “University College” and administrating the entire university with concern for the interests of both of its affiliate colleges. Essex College’s fears of a Basilian-dominated senate that would have control over all academic matters were put to rest by LeBel’s promise to enact a by-law at its next meeting to ensure its non-sectarian status. LeBel’s new understanding of Assumption University saw the non-denominational element not as something to be feared, but rather as a public partner in the running of a broader denominational school.

Finally an arrangement had been conceived that was palatable to all concerned. Formal signing of the Articles of Affiliation took place on 24

⁵⁴“Correspondence, General, February, 1955,” RG 1, Box 11, File 73, AUA.

⁵⁵“Reports, etc., Reasons for Essex College, 1954,” R G 1, Box 17, File 398, AUA.

January 1956, based for the most part on the general agreements coming out of the 6 December meeting. This union would serve as an exception to all other examples of university incorporation. Assumption was a Catholic university with a public affiliate college as opposed to other examples of university-college affiliations in the country.

Assumption was now established as a civic-minded university under denominational auspices. The agreement would allow for a share of provincial grants received by Essex to be used in the maintenance of Assumption. The new school would be based on a new spirit of cooperation between public and denominational interests. Although a bitter pill to swallow at first, the strain of this new organizational structure would soon be overshadowed by the strong economic viability offered by Essex College. On 6 February 1956, the “Assumption University Act” received first reading in the Ontario Legislature.⁵⁶ This maintained all of the powers and privileges obtained through the 1953 Act, with certain amendments.⁵⁷ Two purposes were served by this legislation: formally acknowledgment was given to the Essex College affiliation and in so doing, the title of “Assumption University of Windsor” was granted in keeping with the province’s stipulation. The affiliation bore fruit for Assumption in 1957 with the receipt of an initial provincial grant of \$100,000.

The disappointment felt by Fr. LeBel and the Basilian community in 1953 at not being able to achieve the “university” title along with its commensurate status was strong. Before there had been any mention of Essex College, it was hoped that another Catholic affiliate could be added to the informal agreement with the women’s college, Holy Names, to attain the title of “Assumption University.” The very summer that Assumption received its charter, representatives of an order desiring to affiliate another Catholic college approached the Basilians. The Redemptorist Fathers were an order well known for their preaching and missionary activity. Founded in 1732 by St. Alphonsus Ligouri in Scala, Italy,⁵⁸ their Canadian mission included the “Toronto Province,” which administered all Redemptorist activity for Eastern Canada. Since 1930 the college-seminary for the

⁵⁶“Assumption University of Windsor Act, 1956,” 6 February 1956, RG 1, Box 14, File 247, AUA.

⁵⁷ For example, section 15, subsection 1, had read : “there shall be a chancellor of the College who shall be the Bishop of the Roman Catholic diocese in which the principle establishment of the College is situated.” This was changed in order to better suit Assumption’s new non-denominational element. Now the chancellor would be chosen by the university senate for a renewable four-year term.

⁵⁸ Karl J. Schindler CSsR, *To Serve God’s People: A Hundred Years of the Redemptorists at St. Patrick’s, the Cradle of the Toronto Province, 1881-1981*, (Toronto, 1981), 2.

“Toronto Province” was located in Woodstock, Ontario, approximately 130 miles from Windsor. On 25 August 1953, Bishop Cody approved the plan of the Redemptorist Provincial, Fr. Arthur Ryan, to move the Woodstock college to Windsor.⁵⁹ Here, through affiliation with the newly empowered Assumption College, a Redemptorist college would allow seminarians to pursue both undergraduate degrees and theological studies. Holy Redeemer College became the second college to join Assumption University of Windsor with the signing of Articles of Affiliation on 8 February 1956.⁶⁰ Degrees would be conferred on the students of Holy Redeemer College by Assumption University of Windsor, and the principal of Holy Redeemer would be an ex-officio member of the Assumption Senate.

This air of stability at Assumption was to be short-lived. A new crisis loomed on the horizon. Dr. E.F. Sheffield, director of the educational division of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics revealed some startling predictions when he addressed the N.C.C.U. conference of 1956. He declared that the numbers of young people seeking admission to Canadian universities would double by 1965.⁶¹ Assumption’s expansion program could not be postponed; immediate action was necessary. A further dark cloud covered Assumption’s plans when McMaster University, the prototype upon which the long awaited affiliation with Essex College had been based, announced that it would be forced to succumb to various financial pressures and give up its denominational status. The Baptist Church in Hamilton could no longer meet the expenses of its own University College.⁶² Growth in Windsor itself was predicted as rising from 190,000 to 250,000 as a result of the city’s increased importance as a shipping centre with the completion of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Development was a necessity.

Conspicuous by his absence in the midst of this forecasting by Assumption University of Windsor was Bishop Cody. As Chancellor of Assumption College, Cody had always enjoyed friendly relations with the Basilians of Assumption. His installment as chancellor of Assumption University of Windsor, once the post was no longer the sole domain of the Bishop of London, was acknowledgment by the non-denominational senate of his importance to the university. By this time though the bishop had diversified his interests. Understanding that Assumption would draw large numbers of Catholics away from its student body, Western lobbied Cody to

⁵⁹ “1953 – Affiliation Plans,” File 5, Redemptorist Archives, Holy Redeemer College, Windsor, Ontario. (Hereafter, RA)

⁶⁰ “1953 – Affiliation Plans,” File 5, RA.

⁶¹ “Reports, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1956-62,” RG 1, Box 17, File 384, AUA.

⁶² “Act to Incorporate Assumption University of Windsor,” RG 1, Box 14, File 248, AUA.

establish a college for Catholic laymen in London.⁶³ Sensing a competition for diocesan funding, Fr. LeBel undertook to write to the chancellor with regard to the matter of the \$1,000,000 he had verbally committed to in 1954:

Your Excellency,

We are a bit discouraged these days. First, the Provincial government gave us no consideration in its 1954 budget in spite of our best efforts ... We had anticipated \$50,000 from Your Excellency during this academic year. We did not understand that it was conditioned by commencing to build. How can we commence to build without money? ... So you see Your Excellency, enthusiasm here is at a low ebb. Perhaps it is God's will that we should remain a small college, and forget our ambitions to be a wider service to Catholics and Protestants seeking higher education in the locality.⁶⁴

For the first time in their administrative relationship, the president of Assumption had incurred the wrath of its chancellor. On 19 January 1955, Cody issued a rather tersely written memorandum to LeBel, outlining definitively the financial relationship of the Diocese of London to Assumption College in an attempt to clear up all misunderstandings. Dealing with his own diocesan problems, Cody found it necessary to dilute his promise of \$1,000,000 to the college: "I did say on several occasions that I hoped to be able to contribute gradually from the annual Diocesan Campaign Fund the sum of one million dollars as a subsidy expressing some confidence that I might thus be in a position to pay at the rate of \$50,000.00/ann. under normal circumstances."⁶⁵ Such "normal circumstances" obviously did not avail themselves to the bishop, and so his donations, although welcomed, took a less structured form. A generous but inconsistent series of donations caused Cody to conclude that his bequest to Assumption in 1955 sat at \$211,022, well ahead of his \$50,000/year "commitment."⁶⁶ Most of this was based on land recently ceded to the college, a commodity not exactly at a premium for Assumption.⁶⁷ Cody's balk in the matter of funding for the

⁶³ Patrick Phelan, *Stadium et Hospitium – a History of King's College*, (London: King's College, 1979), 3. This would eventually be created as Christ the King College.

⁶⁴ Letter of Fr. LeBel to Bishop Cody, undated, December 1954, "Correspondence, London Diocese, Bishop Cody, 1954-57," RG 1, Box 18, File 446, AUA.

⁶⁵ Letter of Bishop Cody to Fr. LeBel, 19 January 1955, "Correspondence, etc., Financial Agreement, Bishop Cody," RG 1, Box 14, File 262, AUA.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Basilian land holdings on Patricia, Sunset, and University Ave., along with the University property made them already "land rich," although it was mostly being saved for purposes of future development. After paying only a small portion of his financial commitment, Cody notified the Basilian Fathers of Sandwich that by ceding to them the college lands (on a 499-year lease from the Diocese of London), worth a million dollars in his estimation, he had no further financial obligation to Assumption.

university at a period when it most needed it was a dismal disappointment. Ironically enough though it would spark another unprecedented shift in both the direction and the identity of Assumption University of Windsor.

Among the first consulted in Assumption's civic campaign in 1956 through the Windsor Council of Churches was George Luxton, Anglican Bishop for the Diocese of Huron. Given the more open approach to education that Assumption was clearly adopting, it was only reasonable that representatives of various denominations should be contacted to support this "equal opportunity" Catholic university. Luxton held a symposium, including Essex College chairman William Arison, to discuss the possibility of more extensive Anglican participation in Assumption University of Windsor. Arison approached the Board of Governors of Assumption University on behalf of Luxton in order to determine how it would feel about: a) the creation of an Anglican hostel on its campus or b) the creation, in fifteen to twenty years of an Anglican liberal arts college to be affiliated with Assumption.⁶⁸ Initial reaction to this proposition was not as negative as might have been expected. In a letter to Bishop Luxton, LeBel stated that he saw no reason why such a college could not get the approval of the Board of Governors as long as there was no course duplication.⁶⁹

The success of the Essex College affiliation had gone a long way to convince LeBel that taking on another non-Catholic affiliate would pose no threat to the denominational control of the university. Essex had proved to be an academic as well as a financial boon to Assumption. Extended courses leading to the degree of Bachelor of Engineering were offered in each of the academic years 1959-60 and 1960-61, and tentative plans were drawn up for the future creation of a \$5,000,000 Pure and Applied Science Building to house programs in chemical, civil, mechanical, and electrical engineering.⁷⁰ The religious knowledge, philosophy, and medieval history courses proposed to be taught by the Anglican college would be considered as university instruction in a particular specialty, like the nursing, business, and science instruction ongoing at Essex College. The long-range possibilities of such an undertaking too would be ground breaking. Never before had a Catholic university taken on an affiliate of another denomination.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Canterbury College Facts Sheet, undated, "Correspondence, etc., Canterbury College, 1956-61," RG 1, Box 16, File 355, AUA.

⁶⁹ Letter of Fr. LeBel to Bishop Luxton, 19 September 1956, "Correspondence, etc., Canterbury College, 1956-61," RG 1, Box 16, File 355, AUA.

⁷⁰ Annual Report of the Essex College Board, 1959-60, RG II, Box 14, File 14, William H. Arison Papers, AUA.

⁷¹ Betty Lee, "Change is Almost the Only Constant at Assumption," *The Globe Magazine*, 12 March 1960.

A second consideration in favour of the Anglican proposal was philanthropic. Given that Windsor's population base was by no means largely Catholic in origin, appeals to other denominations were necessary to the success of the larger university. An exact estimation of Catholic support of the building fund determined the Roman Catholic population as being 43% in the federal riding, and 41% in both the county and city areas.⁷² Further, Fr. LeBel discovered that non-Catholic contributions amounted to 75.44% of the total appeal. A non-Catholic denominational affiliate would bring funds into the drive from sectors of society not responsive to a "Catholic" drive, but who would be more likely to support a Protestant college within a Catholic university. Later that October Bishop Luxton wrote back to Fr. LeBel to indicate that interest and resources in his diocese would enhance the Anglican college proposal, enrolling students much sooner than was previously expected.⁷³ At the June Board of Governors meeting Bishop Cody, on behalf of the board, agreed to this proposal in principle, with an understanding to work out the terms of affiliation at a later date.

Catholic response to such a bold ecumenical venture in 1956 was predictable. A letter from Toronto lawyer J.A. Fullerton to *The Canadian Register* was forwarded to Fr. LeBel for his information, revealing the tone of dissatisfaction and confusion felt by certain Canadian Catholics:

We have been taught from infancy that Catholic education is unique, that it also has the truth, and that we have a serious obligation to provide such training for our children. Now one of our great teaching orders proposes to establish an heretical course of instruction, and strongly implies that such action is taken in pursuance of its responsibilities. It is submitted that no Catholic body has any mandate to establish an Anglican instruction course.⁷⁴

The Board of Governors of Assumption University, consisting of seven Basilian Fathers and the Superior General in Toronto, had no choice but to respond to such concerns. They issued the definitive "Statement Concerning Anglican College" which outlined the Basilian university at its academic and administrative peak.⁷⁵ This was a bold defense of all the "questionable" moves made at Assumption during the previous four years and of the one it was about to make: "Had Assumption not acted when and as it did, there could very well be a university under secular control in Windsor at this time.

⁷²"Correspondence, etc., Catholic Support to a University, 1955-58," RG 1, Box 16, File 349, AUA.

⁷³Letter of Bishop Luxton to Fr. LeBel, 26 October 1956, "Correspondence, etc., Canterbury College, 1956-61," RG 1, Box 16, File 355, AUA.

⁷⁴Letter of J.A. Fullerton to Fr. J. Hanley, 3 October 1957, "Correspondence, etc., Canterbury College, 1956-61," R 1, Box 16, File 355, AUA.

⁷⁵"Statement Concerning Anglican College," 21 January 1958, "Correspondence, etc., Canterbury College, 1956-61," RG 1, Box 16, File 355, AUA.

In actual fact however, Assumption is a Catholic university, but in view of the provincial charter, it must meet the needs of non-Catholics as well as Catholics.⁷⁶ As the year progressed, the Anglican college idea began to take a definite shape. A name was chosen, Canterbury College, and on 27 June it made an official petition to the Board of Governors of Assumption University for affiliation with the university.⁷⁷ This affiliation agreement was accepted in principle and Canterbury College would be ready to undertake academic work in the fall of 1958 with the establishment of one course in religious knowledge.

The solidification of the place of Holy Names College on the Assumption campus was the last hurdle to be cleared in order for the university to fulfil its collegial destiny. The addition of new, legally incorporated affiliates, foreseen in 1955, spurred the Holy Names Sisters into action. Since moving on campus, the college had experienced a state of affiliation not as legally explicit as that enjoyed by the newer affiliates.⁷⁸ When Assumption received its university charter in 1953, the Holy Names Sisters and Fr. LeBel had signed a one-page agreement with regards to the standing that the college was to enjoy within the new university. Here the student bodies of both institutions would be merged. Holy Names would supervise women's activities on the campus, and contribute personnel to the combined administration and instructional staff of the university. On 28 May 1956, Holy Names College petitioned the senate and Board of Governors of the new university for formal affiliation with the newly formed Faculty of Arts and Sciences as a liberal arts college for women. It sought "a more formal and permanent relationship with Assumption" in order to care for the academic and spiritual needs of the female students on campus.⁷⁹ These terms were approved by the Board of Governors in the spring of 1956, and the affiliation agreement was signed on 30 June 1956.⁸⁰

Assumption University of Windsor had now reached its administrative apex. From what had been a relatively small Catholic liberal arts college in affiliation with the University of Western Ontario, it had swelled as an independent university to include four affiliates that, for the time being, were able to appeal to Windsor's varied populace. The glue that had always bound

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Canterbury College Facts Sheet, undated, "Correspondence, etc., Canterbury College, 1956-61," RG 1, Box 16, File 355, AUA.

⁷⁸ Affiliation with Holy Names College took the form of a brief written agreement made with Assumption College in 1934, and amended with its move on campus in 1950. See "Correspondence, etc., Holy Names College, 1953," RG 1, Box 11, File 90, AUA.

⁷⁹ "Typescripts, Histories of Assumption, Interview with Fr. LeBel by CKLW Television, 1964, etc.," RG 1, Box 18, File 2, AUA.

⁸⁰ Ibid., RG 1, Box 18, File 432, AUA.

Assumption together though was the Basilian Fathers. Assumption's increasing diversification, coupled with its expanding student base would soon prove too much for the order and it would be forced to capitulate or risk diluting the educational philosophy and reputation that were paramount to its existence.

"Reasonable change has never frightened those who have guided the destinies of Assumption."⁸¹ With these words, Fr. LeBel ushered Assumption University of Windsor into the final stage in its evolution. This period would be marked by close economic interaction with Essex College. Through 1959, it had managed to operate at a moderate financial surplus.⁸² By 1961 however, it was evident that this situation was unlikely to continue into the future. In 1955 the corporation employed a rather meagre 17 people. That number had expanded to 149 by 1961, with a payroll in excess of \$865,000 yearly.⁸³ By the 1959-60 academic year, inadequate student fees coupled with these additional costs had created an operating deficit of \$125,000. In his report to the Finance Committee of the Board of Regents of the university, John Whiteside, the new chairman of the Essex College Board, anticipated further deficits of \$104,000 for 1961, and \$250,000 for 1962.⁸⁴ As a result of its expanded services into the field of engineering, Essex College ran a total deficit of \$479,000 from 1959-62. The deficits incurred thus far had been handled through the borrowing of capital funds granted by the provincial government. As this practice was unsanctioned, however, banks had refused further financial assistance to Essex College to complete construction of the new Applied Science Building in the spring of 1960.⁸⁵ Phase "1" of this structure, costing \$3,000,000, was financed without government support through short-term borrowing.⁸⁶

The Essex College administration made a convincing case to Fr. LeBel; the once equitable arrangement between the university and Essex College, whereby a substantial part of its provincial grant went to the university, was

⁸¹ *Report of the President, Assumption University of Windsor, 1962-63*, Record Group II, Box 19, File 75, William H. Arison Papers, AUA.

⁸² *Ibid.*, RG II, Box 19, File 75, William H. Arison Papers, AUA.

⁸³ "Financial Reports, 1961," RG II, Box 18, File 67, William H. Arison Papers, AUA.

⁸⁴ Report of Essex College Chairman John Whiteside to the Assumption University Board of Regents, 14 January 1961, "Financial Reports, 1961," RG II, Box 18, File 67, William H. Arison Papers, AUA.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* Here Mr. Whiteside described the practice begun in 1957 with the use of provincial funds for the creation of the new library, resulting in title to the building going to Essex College. Assumption University supplied all furnishings for the building.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

no longer equitable. The principal source of revenue for the public body had always been the provincial grant and if it were to continue to contribute to the expansion of the university it would require an increase in this grant. Fr. LeBel had his own financial turmoil in running the larger university. He was not going to further jeopardize Assumption's financial situation by releasing its share of the Essex College grant. Assumption's student population had doubled between 1950 and 1960,⁸⁷ and University College announced an operating deficit of its own totaling \$109,784 for the year 1960-61.⁸⁸ Declining religious manpower at this time particularly affected University College, as the hiring of more lay staff meant that fewer Basilian salaries would be able to be channeled back into the running of the school. A new situation would arise however before a proper strategy with Essex could be arranged.

When Fr. LeBel left with representatives from Essex College on 29 January 1962 for the annual meetings of the Provincial Committee on University Affairs in Toronto,⁸⁹ it had been ten years since Assumption had entertained abandoning affiliation with the University of Western Ontario. Now in the midst of further economic turmoil, LeBel was going to defend a rather large budget submission for the 1962-63 academic year. Much had changed in the structure of the provincial government in that time. In 1961, John Robarts had assumed leadership of the Conservative Party, with Frost relegating himself to his duties as an M.P.P. and occasional committee work. In 1962-63, Frost, a proven university arbiter, was the vice-chair of the University Affairs Committee. In the absence of chairman Dana Porter he accepted the Essex College submission on behalf of Assumption University of Windsor for \$3,846,433 in capital and \$830,000 in operational grants.⁹⁰ Still interested in the existence of a public university in Windsor, Frost made overtures to LeBel with regard to expanding the sphere of influence of Essex College to allow for less of an economic burden on Assumption. The writing was on the wall and Fr. LeBel's reaction to this offer showed little of the resentment that he had earlier displayed to any suggestion of a heightened non-denominational presence in the administration of the university.

While the Basilians contemplated the future of Assumption, the Ontario government was preparing plans of its own. On 21 March 1962, this same University Affairs Committee met with the Presidents of the Ontario

⁸⁷ "Reports on reorganization, 1961-62, Fr. LeBel," RG 1, Box 14, File 247, AUA.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Minutes, meeting of the Board of Directors of Essex College, 10 July 1962, RG II, Box 19, File 72, William H. Arison Papers, AUA.

⁹⁰ "Essex College Operating Budget, 1962-63," Record Group II, Box 19, File 73, William H. Arison Papers, AUA.

Universities at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto.⁹¹ The primary purpose of this meeting was to study reports and offer suggestions pertaining to the latest projections of Dr. R.U.B. Johnson of the Ontario College of Education with regard to increased enrollment in Ontario universities. Johnson foresaw that an additional 95,000 – 112,000 would seek entrance to Ontario universities by 1970.⁹² For Assumption, this translated into a university population upwards of 5,500 from 1,425 in 1962, and required tripling its staff within eight years.⁹³ Staff salaries, which had themselves doubled in the past five years, showed the potential for doing so again by 1970.⁹⁴ With already over-taxed resources, Assumption, whose facilities were suited to a student population of 2,000, would be asked to expand to three times its present capacity within eight years. During the course of these March meetings in Toronto, Frost had scheduled private meetings with the presidents of the two Catholic universities that had fallen upon hard times. To Fr. Henri Legaré, O.M.I., of the University of Ottawa and Fr. LeBel, Frost suggested an extension of the offer originally made to LeBel on 29 January. He wished to see at both universities a non-denominational top Board in order that provincial monies might be made available to them.⁹⁵

Clearly the Basilian Fathers had neither the resources nor the manpower to meet this projected growth. They knew that the task ahead would be virtually to dissolve the academic substance of Assumption University of Windsor. On 24 July 1962, a delegation lead by Fr. Norbert Ruth, the Dean of Arts and Science, presented the proposal “An Act to Incorporate the University of Windsor.”⁹⁶ This Act received tentative agreement in principle from the affiliated colleges, the Basilian Fathers, representatives of the university’s alumni association, and the Bishop of London.⁹⁷ Pending the final vote at Queen’s Park, John Whiteside detailed the negotiations to his fellow Essex College Board members:

The new University of Windsor would be incorporated by an Act of the Province of Ontario ... It would be headed by a Chancellor and governed by an inter-denominational Board of Governors ... Assumption University of Windsor would change its name to Assumption University ... become

⁹¹ Letter of Fr. LeBel to Fr. Wey, 3 March 1962, “Reports, Quarterly, correspondence, Basilian Superior General, 1960-64,” RG 1, Box 14, File 253, AUA.

⁹² Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of Essex College, 24 July 1962, RG II, Box 19, File 72, William H. Arison Papers, AUA.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ “Proposal – An Act to Incorporate the University of Windsor,” R II, Box 19, File 72, William H. Arison Papers, AUA.

⁹⁷ Letter of Fr. LeBel to Fr. Wey, 29 November 1962, “Reports, Quarterly, correspondence, Basilian Superior General, 1960-64,” RG 1, Box 14, File 253, AUA.

a federated college, enter federation agreements with the University of Windsor. It would have jurisdiction over the Faculty of Theology, and hold other degree granting power in abeyance.⁹⁸

The full realization of the University of Windsor would call for the dissolution of Essex College. From its initial capital grant of \$100,000 to its combined assets in 1963 of over \$8,000,000,⁹⁹ Essex College had been critical to the short-lived existence of Assumption University of Windsor.

The rest of the summer of 1962 was spent working out the specifics for the new University of Windsor Act. Unlike the summer of 1954, there would be no more last minute reprieves from Fr. LeBel. The desperate financial woes of the University had been compounded by new strains sealing its fate. The Bill would incorporate the new university under the direction of a public Board of Governors and an academic senate. On 27 September 1962, a formal announcement was made of the new University of Windsor, with which Assumption University would federate.¹⁰⁰ The official request for incorporation would be submitted to the Ontario Legislature during the fall session. Though this Act would not be passed for quite some time, Premier Robarts was confident that a non-denominational board could be invited to submit a five-year budget so that the provincial grants from 1963 to 1968 could be established.¹⁰¹ On 9 October this new interdenominational board set about preparing operational costs for a school of 5,000 by 1970.

For the time being, the activity of the new board would have to take a back seat to the affiliation negotiations between Assumption and the new University of Windsor. The Basilians were left no choice in the matter of the creation of the University of Windsor, but would have all of the latitude they would need to establish Assumption University within it.¹⁰² Of particular concern to the affiliated colleges, namely Holy Redeemer and Canterbury, was the freedom they would have to continue in their instruction of Catholic and Anglican doctrine respectively. The University of Windsor Act, passed

⁹⁸ Minutes of the meeting of the Essex College Board of Directors, July 24, 1962, RG II, Box 19, File 72, William H. Arison Papers, AUA.

⁹⁹ Minutes of the meeting of the Essex College Board of Directors, 26 June 1963, RG II, Box 19, File 75, William H. Arison Papers, AUA.

¹⁰⁰ "Reports on Re-Organization, 1961-62," RG I, Box 14, File 247, AUA.

¹⁰¹ Robarts gave this Board until 15 November 1962 to submit this budget. See "Minutes of the October 9, 1962 meeting of the provisional Board of Governors," RG I, Box 26, File 18, Fr. N.J. Ruth Papers, AUA.

¹⁰² The "Proposed Financial Agreement Between the Basilian Fathers and the University of Windsor" indicates the free hand Frs. Ruth and LeBel had in establishing financial arrangements with the new university after they had been squeezed into its creation. See "Basilian Contracts with the University of Windsor," RG I, Box 13, File 201, AUA.

in December of 1962,¹⁰³ would allow both colleges to continue in their affiliation to what would become Assumption University, or engage in affiliation discussions directly with the new university. For the Redemptorist and Basilian Fathers, this meant the beginning of a most unique relationship. In keeping with Assumption's retained ability to grant degrees in Theology, Holy Redeemer College solidified its place on the campus of the University of Windsor on 24 May 1963, by signing a separate affiliation agreement with the Basilian school. The Anglican community in general was enthused by the religious freedoms that were being secured by the new arrangement and Bishop Luxton signed an affiliation agreement with the University of Windsor on 6 December 1963.¹⁰⁴ Canterbury would no longer offer independent courses and its teaching staff would be absorbed into the larger academic community of the University of Windsor.

The Board of Governors of the University of Windsor, which, amongst new members, included the representatives of the old colleges, unanimously elected Fr. LeBel to stay on as the first president of the university, a fitting tribute to the man who had been responsible for guiding the destiny of Assumption for the past ten years.¹⁰⁵ Bishop Cody too was chosen as the first chancellor. For Fr. LeBel this would be a one-year appointment. The Board of Governors would select John Francis Leddy as the first Roman Catholic lay president of a non-denominational English-speaking university to succeed him on 24 May 1964.¹⁰⁶

The final stage in these developments came with the signing of the Federation agreement between Assumption University and the University of Windsor on 26 November 1963. The event was marked by a spread in *The*

¹⁰³ Although enacted in December 1962, the Act would be called the "University of Windsor Act, 1962-63" due to the fact that it would not come into effect until 1 July 1963. This gave the new Board six months to set up the new corporate structure from the remains of Assumption University of Windsor. See the letter of Fr. LeBel to Fr. Wey, 29 November 1962, "Reports, Quarterly, correspondence, Basilian Superior General, 1960-64," RG 1, Box 14, File 253, AUA.

¹⁰⁴ *The Windsor Star*, 18 December 1963.

¹⁰⁵ Anticipating this honour to be bestowed upon Fr. LeBel, Fr. Wey, on 1 November 1962 wrote him in order to "suggest" that he refuse the position if it was offered him. Fr. Wey felt that a more fitting retirement awaited LeBel elsewhere, and suggests that Fr. John Murphy would be a more fitting replacement as the first President of the University of Windsor. Although this may have played a factor in the decision to limit his term to only one year, Fr. LeBel persevered through this "suggestion" of his Superior General to take the posting he so richly deserved. See letter of Fr. Wey to Fr. LeBel, 1 November 1962, "Assumption University of Windsor – Documents" C.3135 1870 (01), General Archives of the Basilian Fathers, Kelly Library, St. Michael's College, Toronto, Ontario.

¹⁰⁶ Biographical Sketch, J. Francis Leddy, "Correspondence, etc., Assumption University Board of Governors, 1962-64," RG 1, Box 14, File 267, AUA.

Tablet and an article outlining, on the eve of Assumption's new status on the campus of a non-denominational university, "What is a Catholic University?":

What is a Catholic University? Is it Catholic if a large number of students are non-Catholic?... Is it Catholic if many of the Professors are non-Catholic? Is it Catholic if the very administration is divided in religion? In other words, can a university be Catholic if it is part of a larger federation in which there are component parts that are non-Catholic? ... The really vital point is that the Catholic spirit will be felt more strongly in one or several of the component parts of a federation, but if it is the genuine Catholic spirit it will radiate throughout the whole structure. Time also will tell.¹⁰⁷

Time, however would not wait for Fr. LeBel. On 13 March 1964, as was the custom of the Basilian Fathers, he received a small card in the mail from his Superior General, indicating he had been transferred to St. Mark's College in Vancouver as Superior and Principal effective 2 July 1964.¹⁰⁸ With his characteristic humility and optimistic spirit, Fr. LeBel quietly left the institution he had toiled in for 22 years and brought to world acclaim.

With Fr. LeBel's departure, this period in the history of Assumption College and University truly came to a close. Addressing the first convocation of the new Assumption University, the new bishop of the London diocese, Emmet Carter, remarked: "This is not an end, but a beginning; not the death of Assumption, but its flowering: not a time to look back with sadness, but forward with joy."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Dennis O'Brien, *The Tablet*, 29 June 1964.

¹⁰⁸ Actual notice, "Reports, Quarterly, correspondence, Basilian Superior General, 1960-64," RG 1, Box 14, File 253, AUA.

¹⁰⁹ Bishop Emmett Carter, address at the first convocation of Assumption University, *The Windsor Star*.