

Backgrounder #10: Finances

Introduction

This document contains detailed modelling to support the recommendations of the Comprehensive Review Task Group and should be read in conjunction with the task group's report, "United in God's Work."

All financial modelling depends on assumptions. Assumptions are the best estimate of future revenues and expenditures based on past experience and information about the future. If the assumptions change, the calculations may change as well. In this instance, we have estimated the rate of closure of congregations, the resulting impact on givings to the Mission and Service Fund, and assessment revenue.

The financial exhibits in this backgrounder use 2006 as a base year to compare actual statistics to 2013, as well as projections for 2015 and 2018.

Context

Since 2006, the General Council Office has reduced costs by approximately \$11 million, or 22.8 percent (not adjusted for inflation). Almost 95 percent of these reductions have been taken from denominational grant programs and through staff reductions, including

- a 33 percent reduction in the number of General Council Office staff
- a 19 percent reduction in money spent on General Council staffing (reflecting impact of inflation and restructuring)
- a 42 percent reduction in global grants and overseas missions
- a 33 percent reduction in grants to Canadian mission support
- a 20 percent reduction in grants to theological education
- a 13 percent reduction in grants to Conferences

Over the same period, spending on Aboriginal ministries increased by 24 percent. This spending increase reflects that the Aboriginal Ministries Council and Aboriginal Ministries Circle were created during this period.

As we contemplate the need to cut at least \$11 million more, we need to look more broadly and strategically. Many of the most obvious operational cost savings at the General Council level have already been implemented, so we now need to consider more fundamental restructuring.

While the Comprehensive Review has a mandate that extends far beyond the finances of the broader church, there is a financial imperative to reduce annual costs by at least \$11 million to live within our means. This level of cost reduction must be achieved by 2018 in any case. This means that regardless of the decisions the 42nd General Council may make or the remits required to implement them, major cost-reduction initiatives must begin in 2016.

The Recommendations

The recommendations of the Comprehensive Review Task Group contemplate fundamentally changing how the work of the broader church is funded, and cutting costs and processes in excess of the \$11 million target to allow reinvestment in Chasing the Spirit and a College of Ministers. The recommendations also contemplate a more accountable and transparent funding structure that would establish the Mission and Service Fund as a transparent funder of mission versus governance and support services. This proposed funding model is

consistent with the practices of other denominations and with what the United Church would almost certainly do if it were starting with a clean slate.

While denominational restructuring will not by itself reinvigorate or renew the church, we hope and pray this work has engaged the church at all levels and will provide a faithful and sustainable pathway forward. The alternative is to simply keep cutting costs and let each part of the church adapt or die.

The task group proposes that communities of faith be assessed to pay for the support services and governance activities of the regional councils and the denominational council. Literally dozens of different formulae are currently used to assess communities of faith, but we recommend an assessment based on the expenditures of communities of faith (column 40 in the National Statistics) because this approach is the easiest to understand and most widely used already. This model would entail increasing the current level of assessment paid by congregations, on average, by 25 percent. The financial model assumes the rate of assessment would be 4.75 percent of column 40, the cost to run a community of faith. The actual rate of assessment would be set by the denominational council for the following three years and should include a three-year averaging to smooth out significant variations in annual expenditures.

The biggest shift is the proposal to fund governance and support services (administration) through assessments of communities of faith, while focusing the Mission and Service Fund exclusively on ministry and mission. The delineation between governance and support services, and ministry and mission, could be as follows:

Mission and Ministry: Funded from Mission and Service Fund

1. Inspiration, articulation, and nurture of Christian faith through the office of Moderator
2. Evangelism and ministry transformation
3. Leadership development, with a focus on future leaders
4. Right relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples
5. Ecumenical/interfaith activities
6. Justice and social outreach in Canada
7. Justice and social outreach around the globe
8. Theological education
9. Fundraising and stewardship development (philanthropy)

Supporting Communities of Faith and Governance: Funded from Assessments

1. Office of the General Secretary, and staff (regionally deployed primarily, with some supports centrally located) providing support services to communities of faith in living out their covenants with regional councils (governance, property, human resources, etc.)
2. Supports related to human resources (ministry and employment services), including the establishment of a College of Ministers
3. Financial and information technology services
4. Costs for meetings, governance, and committees

The task group believes this proposed change in funding methodology would

- significantly improve transparency and accountability
- open up the possibility of establishing a sustainable structure by linking denominational support services to the well-being of communities of faith

- link the Mission and Service Fund to the compelling vision of mission we have as a church

The Recommendations from a Financial Perspective

1. The financial model contemplates cutting more deeply than is absolutely necessary to balance the budget of the wider church. Specifically, the task group recommends a financial model that includes cuts of \$13.8 million to have \$2.7 million in 2018 to reinvest as follows:
 - The church would establish a faith renewal project funded by 10 percent of annual revenues of the Mission and Service Fund. For 2018, this figure is currently projected at \$1.9 million. This funding would enable innovative ways of being church in the 21st century, and would support individual communities of faith, clusters of communities of faith, regional councils, and networks across the country.
 - A College of Ministers would be established by the denominational council to license, oversee, and discipline ministers. The college would implement policies set by the denomination for admission to ministry and the standards set by the denomination for ministers, and oversee and discipline paid ministers. The task group estimates the costs to establish and run a college would be \$750,000 per year and would be funded from the assessments that would be paid by communities of faith.
2. The General Council would strive to maintain Aboriginal ministry expenditures at current levels to the extent possible during the next triennium while conversations continue with the Aboriginal ministries that form the Aboriginal Ministries Council to build a relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples based on mutuality, respect, and equity. The task group recommends that thereafter a set percentage of annual givings to the Mission and Service Fund be dedicated to this ministry.
3. Our church would be governed by three councils that would have much less budget for governance activity.
4. The monies raised in the Mission and Service Fund would be used exclusively for ministry and mission activities at both the denominational and regional levels.
5. Support and services (administration) and governance at the denominational and regional councils would be funded by a national assessment on the expenditures of communities of faith. Each denominational council would set the assessment level for the following triennium.

The task group's recommendations would entail fundamental changes in how we fund the church. Many church leaders believe removing governance and core shared services from the Mission and Service Fund would make it much more attractive to donors. To achieve this, we would need agreement to increase assessments, assessment revenue would have to be redistributed, and all parts of the church would need to be reorganized accordingly.

Current System of Funding the Church

All councils of the church rely on congregational givings and other income to fund operations and programming. We have been living beyond our means and need to cut our costs dramatically whether structural changes are made or not. The task group recognizes the magnitude of the financial challenge ahead and recommends fundamental change in

how we fund the work of the broader church and, concurrently, recommends significant cost reduction.

Table 1					
CONGREGATION SNAPSHOT	2006	2013	2015	2018	2018 vs 2015
			estimated	estimated	
Communities of Faith	3,405	3,014	2,890	2,630	-9.0%
Members	553,650	450,886	425,000	390,000	-8.2%
Ministers Serving*	1,848	1,638	1,548	1,420	-8.3%
* roughly 25% of positions part-time and 10% of appointees retired, both trending upward					
Annual Congregational Finance	2006	2013	2015	2018	2018 vs 2015
(\$ millions)					
REVENUE					
Givings (including capital)	271.1	250.6	250.0	240.0	-4.0%
UCW	15.6	13.0	12.0	10.0	-16.7%
Other ***	109.4	125.3	122.0	120.0	-1.6%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 396.1	\$388.9	\$ 384.0	\$ 370.0	-3.6%
EXPENSE					
Paid to fund congregational activity	356.6	352.6	350.2	347.6	-0.7%
Assessment paid to fund presbyteries and conferences **	10.0	10.3	10.6	12.4	17.0%
Annual Mission & Service contributions (incl UCW)	29.5	26.0	23.2	20.3	-12.5%
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$ 396.1	\$388.9	\$ 384.0	\$ 380.3	-1.0%
Column 40 "cost to run charge"	\$ 262.7	\$266.5	\$ 264.0	\$ 261.1	-1.1%
* assessments estimated for 2006 as this information not tracked till 2012					
** while many report deficit budgets & drawing down reserves, we here show a balanced budget					
*** Other income includes bequests, investment income, rentals, special events & grants rec'd					

Moving to a New Model

Table 2 reflects target savings of \$5.7 million from regional restructuring. Note that more than half of this amount—\$3.7 million—will be realized by the elimination of Conference operating grants. Cuts on this scale will be needed whether or not the General Council approves the task group's recommendations. To the extent that regional resources have been underestimated or can be redeployed, it may be possible to increase revenue and therefore not cut as deeply. At least two Conferences and a few more local bodies have significant investments.

Table 2								
(\$ millions)				estimated	estimated			
Presbytery and Conference CORE Funding		2006	2013	2015	2018	2018	2018 vs 2015	
					Funded by assessment & other income	Funded by Mission & Service grants	Amount	%
REVENUE								
	Congregational Assessment	10.0	10.3	10.6	6.2	0.0	-4.4	-41.5%
	Grants from General Council	4.5	4.5	3.7	0.0	0.0	-3.7	-100.0%
	Investment Income & Other	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	0.0	0.0	0.0%
	Mission & Service New Granting					2.4	2.4	NEW
	TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 16.8	\$ 17.1	\$ 16.6	\$ 8.5	\$ 2.4	-5.7	-34.3%
EXPENSE								
	Core regional staffing	9.0	9.5	9.4	5.5	1.4	-2.5	-26.6%
	Regional office expense	0.9	1.3	1.0	0.5	0.0	-0.5	-50.0%
	Travel & Meetings	1.0	1.3	1.4	0.5	0.1	-0.8	-57.1%
	Programming and grants	5.9	5.0	4.8	2.0	0.9	-1.9	-39.6%
	TOTAL EXPENSE	\$ 16.8	\$ 17.1	\$ 16.6	\$ 8.5	\$ 2.4	-5.7	-34.3%
	Core Funded Net income/(loss)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
Core funding includes assessments, grants and conference investment income. But EXCLUDES other regional income								
Not all regional income or expense is known. To the extent that conferences or presbyteries have additional revenue sources, they may be able to cut less.								

Table 3								
(\$ millions)								
General Council Operations		2006	2013	2015	estimated		2018 vs 2015	
				Budget	2018	2018		
					Funded by assessmt & other income	Funded by Mission & Service grants	Amount	%
REVENUE								
	Congregational Assessment	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.2	0.0	6.20	NEW
	Congregational M & S	27.4	24.4	22.1	0.0	19.5	-2.60	
	UCW M & S	2.1	1.6	1.1	0.0	0.8	-0.30	
	Bequests M&S	2.0	4.3	1.9	0.0	1.0	-0.90	
	LESS allocation to regions	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-2.4	-2.40	NEW
	sub total M&S	31.5	30.3	25.1	0.0	18.9	-6.20	
	Retail Sales	2.7	1.3	1.1	0.8	0.0	-0.30	-27.3%
	Cost recoveries	3.1	3.0	3.7	3.7	0.0		
	Investment & Other income	6.3	4.2	1.8	2.3	0.0	0.50	
	TOTAL REVENUE	43.6	38.8	31.7	13.0	18.9	-6.00	0.6%
EXPENSE								
	NEW Initiatives - Chasing the Spirit	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9	1.90	NEW
	Global Grants & Overseas Personnel	6.4	4.3	3.7	0.0	3.2	-0.46	-12.4%
	Canadian Mission Support	5.6	4.4	3.7	0.0	3.2	-0.46	-12.4%
	Conference Operating Grants	4.3	4.5	3.7	0.0	0.5	-3.28	-87.5%
	Theological Schools & Ed. Centres	2.1	1.7	1.6	0.0	1.4	-0.24	-14.6%
	Other Grants	1.3	1.3	1.4	0.0	1.1	-0.26	-19.1%
	sub total grants	19.6	16.2	14.1		11.4	-2.80	-19.8%
	General Council Office staffing	14.0	11.4	11.4	4.1	5.3	-2.02	-17.7%
	College of Ministers	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8		0.75	NEW
	Externally Funded costs	1.5	3.2	2.3	2.6		0.28	12.1%
	Resource Production	2.8	1.9	2.0	1.4		-0.56	-28.6%
	Travel & meetings	3.2	2.1	2.7	1.0	0.8	-0.90	-33.3%
	Office expenses	2.6	2.6	2.8	2.8		0.00	0.0%
	Other & Contingency	4.6	1.5	1.9	0.4	1.4	-0.12	-6.3%
	sub total other expense	28.7	22.7	23.1	13.0	7.6	-2.57	-11.1%
	TOTAL EXPENSE	48.3	38.9	37.3	13.0	18.9	-5.37	-14.4%
	NET SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	-4.7	-0.1	-5.6	0.0	0.0		
<p>2018 GCO projected budget cut by \$8 million (22%) from 2015 levels, with net new investment of \$2.65 million for a net reduction of \$5.37 million or 14.4%</p> <p>Spending on Aboriginal ministry (Table 4) is INCLUDED in the overall numbers above.</p> <p>Conference operating grant in 2018 is for All Native Circle and may be spent differently.</p>								

Included in these totals is the goal of maintaining Aboriginal ministry spending at current levels to the extent possible during the next triennium while discussions continue with Aboriginal ministries. Thereafter, Aboriginal ministries would be funded by dedicating a set percentage of the annual revenue of the Mission and Service Fund to this ministry.

Tables 1 and 3 illustrate the extent to which congregations fund the broader church. Since 2006, congregations have funded more than 60 percent of the work of the wider church

through assessments and gifts to the Mission and Service Fund. That proportion will be 76 percent in 2018 and will continue to grow.

Table 4	(\$ thousands)		Budget	Goal for		
	2006	2013	2015	2018	2018 vs 2015	2018 vs 2006
Aboriginal Ministries						
ANCC mission support grant	1,299	1,253	1,137	1,137	0	-12%
Other conferences mission support	491	505	512	512	0	4%
Total funding for ministry positions	1,790	1,758	1,649	1,649	0	-8%
ANCC CONFERENCE OP GRANT	362	526	467	467	0	29%
Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre	320	293	315	315	0	-2%
student aid grants	136	145	120	120	0	-12%
Healing Fund	388	300	300	300	0	-23%
Aboriginal Ministries Circle/Council	0	772	875	875	0	
TOTAL Direct Aboriginal Ministry expenditure	2,996	3,794	3,726	3,726	0	24%
The goal is to hold aboriginal ministry expenditure level if possible. Currently this would 17.5% of projected M&S revenue in 2018						
The costs shown in this table are already included in Table 3.						

The more detailed allocation by activity is for illustration purposes only. Aboriginal ministries could well choose to allocate resources differently.

Is the Proposed Three-Council Model Financially Feasible?

The church needs to reset its costs and processes in such a way that there is room in future for it to grow and evolve.

To live within our means, we must cut at least \$11 million more from the system by 2018 to offset deficits and inflation. But the task group's financial model contemplates cutting more deeply than is absolutely necessary just to balance the budget of the wider church. Specifically, the task group is recommending a financial model that includes cuts of \$13.8 million in 2018 to reinvest 10 percent of annual givings to the Mission and Service Fund in Chasing the Spirit and \$750,000 in a College of Ministers.

Since such a high proportion of expenditures above the congregational level are staffing costs, this will mean deep staff reductions. Table 5 sets out a staffing model that is consistent with the expected revenues. The equivalent of 60 ministry and other professional staff would work in the regions providing operational advice and support. These positions would be funded through the pooled assessments directed to the regions. This would result, on average, in one staff person located in the regions for every 44 communities of faith. If a region has additional resources over and above the pooled assessments, that region could choose to hire additional staff and/or share with other regions.

STAFFING OVERVIEW	2006	2013	2015	2018		Total 2018	2018 vs 2015	2018 vs 2006
				Funded by assessmt & other income*	Funded by Mission & Service grants**			
Conference & Presbytery staff*	115 *	123 *	120 *	60	15	75	-37.5%	-34.8%
Regionally deployed GCO staff	11	11	12	0	12	12	0.0%	9.1%
sub total Regionally based	126	134	132	60	27	87	-34.1%	-31.0%
General Council Office staff	185	120	120	46	55	101	-15.8%	-45.4%
NEW College staff	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	0	5	New	
sub total National office	185	120	120	51	55	106	-11.7%	-42.7%
TOTAL STAFFING	311	254	252	111	82	193	-23.4%	-37.9%
* Not all these staff are funded by grants to Conferences and assessments of communities of faith. Some Conferences and presbyteries have significant investment income which is used to fund additional staff.								
Some regions will choose to fund additional staff paid for out of these other revenue sources, and this could increase the number of 2018 staff working in the regions from what is shown here.								
** Mission-focused staff could be higher if Mission and Service Fund revenues allow.								
The General Council Office staff was reduced in 2007, 2010 and 2013. Both General Council Office and regional staff would be reduced in the next round.								

The task group worked with Erik Mathiesen, General Council Chief Financial Officer, and consulted the Permanent Committee on Finance to create financial models based on the following assumptions:

- Givings from congregations and the United Church Women to the Mission and Service Fund declined from \$29.5 million in 2006 to \$26 million in 2013. We have assumed that givings to the Mission and Service Fund will continue to decline with church closures and local financial pressures, givings might be \$20.3 million in 2018, and it will cost \$1.5 million to raise this money.
- In 2006, there were 3,405 congregations. In 2013, that number had dropped to 3,016. We have assumed that in 2018 there might be 2,630 communities of faith, a further decline of 9 percent.
- The model assumes communities of faith would be assessed at a rate that, on average, would be 25 percent more than is being assessed today.
 - This financial model assumes the rate of assessment would be 4.75 percent of column 40, the cost to run a community of faith.
 - For an individual community of faith, the increase would be a relatively small percentage of the total annual budget.
 - The actual rate of assessment would be set by the denominational council for the following three years.
 - The formula should include a three-year averaging to smooth out significant variations in annual expenditures.

If the rate of assessment increased by 25 percent and if the assessments were shared equally between the regional councils and the denominational council, it would result in \$6.2 million for regional councils and \$6.2 million for the denominational council to fund governance and support services. While it can be misleading to use averages, the average assessment for a congregation in 2013 was \$3,448. A 25 percent increase would mean this becomes \$4,310, which would be, on average, a 1 percent increase in the cost to run a congregation (column 40).

From what the task group has learned from other denominations, The United Church of Canada assesses far less than other denominations. Note, however, that structures and responsibilities may vary. For example:

- The Presbyterian Church in Canada assesses based on 10 percent of adjusted congregational revenue. This is a suggested contribution and is based on congregational revenue less repayment of principal and interest in year, less contributions to Presbyterians Sharing and mission outreach.
- The Anglican Diocese of Toronto assesses at a rate of approximately 22 percent of adjusted congregation revenues, and payment is mandatory.
- The congregational assessment for Roman Catholic churches is 15 percent of adjusted revenues, and payment is mandatory. Rates may vary slightly across the country.

In each instance, if other denominations receive as much of their revenues from bequests, rentals, and other sources of income as the United Church does, the assessments charged by other denominations would be at least triple the assessments being proposed for the United Church.

The task group has concluded this model is indeed feasible, although it would entail aggressively seeking out cost savings and reducing duplication. More important, it offers the best hope for a sustainable way forward. There is no scenario in which we can afford our existing structure.

Regions

- Most of the current Conferences would not be sustainable without a Conference grant if they were forced to rely on their own assessments and current ways of operating. The Conference operating grant represents from 30 percent to 50 percent of revenue for many Conferences
- If we choose to have middle councils then we would need to rationalize the services the church provides into more efficient regions.
- For the purpose of this analysis, we have assumed that
 - decisions about the future of the All Native Circle Conference would be part of ongoing discussions around Aboriginal ministries, would be considered ministry and mission, and therefore would be funded from the Mission and Service Fund.
 - Conferences would meet over the next two years and rationalize their structures and staffing either by amalgamating two or more courts or by sharing staff across separate courts. This activity would need to happen whether the task group's recommendations are accepted or not and must be completed by 2017.
- Regions would vary in their assessment bases, the numbers of communities of faith to be serviced, the number of members, their investment income, and geographic distances.
- The distribution of the pooled assessments among the regions would depend on servicing needs in the region, including the number of communities of faith, the number of members, and the geographic distances.
- We propose that the methodology for assessing communities of faith be developed.
- The denominational council would establish the budget for the following triennium and the rate of assessment to fund the support services and governance of the church.

Table 6 FUTURE MODEL SUMMARY COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW	(\$ millions)						
	estimated	estimated					
	2015	2018	2018			CHANGE 2018 VS 2015	
		region	GCO	Total	Amount	% CHG	
WIDER CHURCH REVENUES							
Congregational assessment	10.6	6.2	6.2	12.4	1.8	17.0%	
Conference Operating grants	3.7			0.0	-3.7	-100.0%	
Other regional revenue	2.3	2.3		2.3	0.0	0.0%	
Mission & Service fund - all	25.1	2.4	18.9	21.3	-3.8	-15.1%	
Retail sales	1.1		0.8	0.8	-0.3	-27.3%	
cost recoveries	3.7		3.7	3.7	0.0	0.0%	
National investment & other	1.8		2.3	2.3	0.5	27.8%	
REVENUES	48.3	10.9	31.9	42.8	-5.5	-11.4%	
WIDER CHURCH EXPENSES							
region staffing - admin	8.7	5.5		5.5	-3.2	-36.8%	
region staffing - mission	0.7	1.4		1.4	0.7	100.0%	
region governance & programming	7.2	4.0		4.0	-3.2	-44.4%	
SUB regional TOTAL	16.6	10.9		10.9	-5.7	-34.3%	
CHASING THE SPIRIT	0.0		1.9	1.9	NEW		
Global grants & overseas personnel	3.7		3.2	3.2	-0.5	-12.7%	
Canadian Mission Support	3.7		3.2	3.2	-0.5	-12.7%	
Theological Education	1.6		1.4	1.4	-0.2	-14.6%	
Conference operating grant	3.7		0.5	0.5	-3.3	-87.5%	
Other grants	1.4		1.1	1.1	-0.3	-19.1%	
SUBTOTAL national GRANTS	14.2		11.4	11.4	-2.8	-19.9%	
College of Ministers externally funded	0.0		0.8	0.8	NEW		
Staff costs (excl college)	2.3		2.6	2.6	0.3	12.2%	
Resources	11.4		9.4	9.4	-2.0	-17.7%	
Travel & meetings	2.0		1.4	1.4	-0.6	-28.6%	
Office expenses	2.7		1.8	1.8	-0.9	-33.1%	
Other & contingency	2.8		2.8	2.8	0.0	-0.7%	
SUBTOTAL other national	1.9		1.8	1.8	-0.1	-4.8%	
SUB National TOTAL EXPENSE	37.3	10.9	31.9	42.8		14.9%	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE BEYOND CONGREGATIONS	53.9			42.8	-11.1	-20.5%	
Total expenditure beyond congregations reduced \$11 million or 20.5% and aligned with congregational capacity to fund and future of Mission & Service donor support.							
* Some regions will choose to fund additional staff paid for out of their investment and other income, and this would increase the number of staff working in the Regions.							
** Mission focused staffing could be higher if M&S receipts allow.							
*** Philanthropy costs shown coming from M&S because fundraising costs would be subtracted out first.							

Table 6 summarizes earlier expense tables. Overall, denominational spending will have been reduced by over \$11 million from 2006 through to 2015, with a further \$11.1 million reduction modelled for 2018. Since there is considerable potential variability in our estimates of Mission and Service Fund and other revenue (both pro and con), this modelling provides for contingencies.

Table 7		(\$ millions)					
SUMMARY OF CHANGES				\$ mill	gov/adm	mission	total
Expense reduction regions	5.7						
expense reduction GCO funded	8.0	(3.7 of which is conf. grant)		GCO	13.0	18.9	31.9
CHASING THE SPIRIT	- 1.9			regions	8.5	2.4	10.9
College of Ministers	- 0.8				\$ 21.5	\$ 21.3	\$ 42.8
	11.1						

Table 7 provides a summary of the proposed changes from 2015 to 2018 if the 42nd General Council approves the Comprehensive Review Task Group's recommendations. There may be adjustments as to how certain work is categorized as ministry and mission as opposed to support services and governance. The overall model projects a resulting cost reduction of \$11.1 million by 2018. Half of the money would be spent on ministry and mission activities and the other half on governance and support services.