



Ann Doucet

The focus of the community life standing committee over the past months has been the issue of human rights. The League was represented at the 18th Annual Foreign Affairs Canada

Human Rights Consultations held in Ottawa, February 7-8, 2006.

The League commended the federal government for ratifying the United Nations *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* on September 14, 2005. On November 25, 2005, Canada ratified the United Nations treaty, the *Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty*.

Bill C-49 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (trafficking in persons)* has passed through Parliament. The *Criminal Code* amendments create three new indictable offences that specifically address human trafficking.

A letter has been sent on behalf of the League to Amnesty International stating in part, that "The decision has been made to no longer support the Canadian section of Amnesty International until its position on abortion has been clarified and unequivocally revoked." Amnesty International is considering adopting abortion as a universal right in its plan to expand and develop its position on sexual and reproductive rights.

Following up on Resolution 2005.03 Protection of Farmers' Rights to Save Seed, a letter has been sent to the National Forum on Seed in response to a request for presentations to be considered at the July 2006 meeting of the Forum. This was a further opportunity to press for protection of farmers' rights to save seed.

Refugee families living in church sanctuary in Canada highlight the need to continue to press the federal government to establish the Refugee Appeal Division per Resolution 2005.05 Appeal Provision for Refused Refugee Claimants.

Contributions to the CCOOP National Voluntary Fund for the period July 1, 2005, to June 30, 2006, total \$77,468.71. CCOOP reports additional CWL gifts totaling \$13,833.72 for a grand total of \$91,302.43!

During this final year of CCOOP's three-year *Water: Life before profit!* campaign, Canadians signed 456,000 cards and declarations on water urging action by the federal government to support publicly controlled water services and provide access to clean drinking water.

The national executive continues to press the federal

a poster entitled *Saving Marriage: A Second Chance!* COLF encourages us first to pray for our MPs and then to contact them. Polls continue to show that a majority of Canadians oppose the current definition of marriage, so let our voices be heard!

Euthanasia and assisted suicide continues to be an important issue as well. There are many excellent resources available from both COLF and the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition (EPC). We can keep informed by subscribing to the EPC newsletter and reading its publications. The EPC recently published a paper *Elder Abuse, Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: Must We Consider the Link?* The more informed we are, the better qualified we will be to defend the right of all people to a natural death.

A focus over the past two years has been ministry to seniors. Sub-committee chairperson Joleene Kemp has provided information from the kit produced by Ontario Provincial Council, *Elder Care – A Gift to be Shared!* June 15, 2006, was the first World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. It is believed that 80% of abuse or neglect of older adults is hidden or goes undetected. This violence affects between 4 and 10% of older adults in Canada. It is estimated that between 168,000 and 421,000 seniors are experiencing or have experienced abuse or neglect. These statistics are alarming and show the need for more awareness of the issue of elder abuse and its consequences.

Two working draft documents have been prepared by national office to assist in the formation of Catholic girls groups. These were adapted from guidelines developed by Hamilton Diocesan Council. It is hoped that some councils will be willing to do a pilot project by forming girls councils in their parishes using these documents. After a year, they would be expected to provide feedback – what worked, what did not work, suggestions for improvement, etc. Using these suggestions and some already received, revised guidelines will be printed. In this way, uniform guidelines would be available to any council wishing to form a Catholic girls council. If your council is interested in participating in such a project, please contact national office.

The national executive has requested that one provincial resolution from Ontario Provincial Council be addressed. The provincial resolution requests the federal government to retain and uphold the current status and wording of Sections 222 and 241 of the *Criminal Code*, a repeat of the request made in Resolution 2005.11 Assisted Suicide – A Criminal Offence. Members are encouraged to contact the federal government on this issue.

May Our Lady of Good Counsel continue to guide us, and may we continue to be people of hope as we strive to promote and live Christian family life values.

It was voted that national council would divide the amount in the pro-life fund (\$10,335) equally between COLF and EPC.

government to live up to its promises of aid to developing countries. Canada currently has no legislation on foreign aid even though all parties agree that it is long overdue.

The XVI International AIDS Conference is being held this week in Toronto. The Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign is a small yet important contribution to ease the pain of HIV/AIDS on caregivers and guardians of AIDS orphans. It is a campaign to raise awareness and mobilize support in Canada for Africa's grandmothers, who have become the heart of the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

One provincial resolution was forwarded to this standing committee directly for action. Saskatchewan Provincial Council requested that national council urge the federal government to ban the use of terminator/genetic use restriction technology. The material provided will be added to the file for Resolution 2005.03 Protection of Farmers' Rights to Save Seed and this standing committee will continue to monitor new technologies in this area.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH



Velma Harasen

Just recently, the governing council of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research gave conditional approval for a controversial project to use "fresh" as well as frozen human embryos for stem cell research.

The project will use surplus embryos donated by people who have undergone fertility treatment.

The League, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and COLF made official submissions to Health Canada opposing pre-implantation genetic diagnosis. This controversial test analyzes a single cell to determine which embryos carry gene defects. It reveals the gender and may be able to pick out embryos destined to have high intelligence, blond hair and blue eyes. It was announced just last week that a U.S. embryonic bank has begun to create and sell embryos with specific genetic characteristics, matching to clients' preferences.

The League was represented at the Catholic Health Association of Canada National Convention 2006, as well as at the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute (CCBI) conference. Thanks to Life Member Carmel Rumleski who attended monthly sessions at CCBI where scholarly papers on current topics were presented and reviewed. The CCBI has developed an educational program entitled For People in the Pews: An Introduction to Current Issues in Bioethics

from a Roman Catholic Perspective. This four-part series is available by contacting CCBI.

A new oral contraceptive called Anya, developed to "... put women in control of when or if they want to menstruate," is expected to hit the Canadian market this year. Early findings report this drug is 98% effective in preventing pregnancy. A second prescription medication called Seasonale, already approved in the United States and under consideration in Canada, reduces annual periods. This drug saw millions of dollars in sales last year! No studies have been performed, and researchers worry about the long-term health effects these drugs may have, not to mention the moral and ethical issues. We must oppose the approval of such drugs, perhaps starting with a letter-writing campaign to the health minister.

Donations to the MaterCare National Voluntary Fund for the period July 1, 2005, to June 30, 2006, increased again to \$35,453.38. MaterCare continues to expand and we are pleased that Executive Director Dr. Robert Walley was with us to provide an update.

Donations to the Coady National Voluntary Fund increased to \$29,086.68, providing for four scholarships.

The deadline date for national bursary fund applications was changed to May 31st. By teleconference call in June, 25 applications were reviewed and 21 bursaries awarded for a total of \$6,800.

B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council requested that members discontinue use of polystyrene disposable ware in favour of biodegradable cardboard products, and that parish councils encourage their parishes to do the same. A second resolution from B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council requested that members educate themselves and their families about obstructive sleep apnea. A resolution from Ontario Provincial Council urged members to become aware of the use and abuse of plastic bags, encourage reduction of single-use bags and start using alternatives.

My thanks to all the chairpersons of education and health at all levels for your untiring efforts, and I thank my sub-committee chairpersons.

COMMUNICATIONS



Lucille Partington

I believe that the professionalism of national office staff and the quality of the work done by national executive members means that