

LEGISLATION



Judy Lewis
Summerside,
Prince Edward Island

I would like to share a summary of comments from legislation chairpersons across Canada. Chairpersons of legislation reported their greatest accomplishments, their biggest challenges and their recommendations.

Their greatest accomplishments included explaining the importance of legislation, attending workshops on legislation, and encouraging and assisting councils to write letters and postcards in the knowledge that the League has the power to influence current legislation.

The biggest challenges facing chairpersons included filling this standing committee, creating interest and encouraging action by members, keeping up to date on current issues and the status of bills, understanding an issue in order to address it, and communicating with councils.

The chairpersons recommended encouraging commitment to legislation in every council by studying the resolutions adopted at the diocesan, provincial and national levels of the League and designating a council member to coordinate an action plan for each resolution. For councils without a legislation chairperson, it was suggested that a strategy be developed to keep members informed and active on relevant issues. It was encouraged that members continue to monitor government Web sites and local papers to take note of acts and issues of importance. All members are encouraged to vote in municipal, provincial and federal elections and write, telephone or e-mail with their concerns. All members are also encouraged to read the *Constitution & Bylaws*, use the *CWL Day of Peace and Hope Activities Kit*, the League Web site, *The Canadian League* and *Be League* as sources of information.

I see great **hope** for **peace** and **hope** in legislation and the actions taken by our members. For example, Bill C-384 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity)*, which would have legalized euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, did not receive enough support to proceed and was defeated April 21st in the House of Commons by a vote of 228 to 59. This goal was achieved due to members' hard work in bringing this important issue to the parish level.

Bill C-268 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum sentence for offences involving trafficking of persons under the age of eighteen years)* has received royal assent.

Bill C-300 *Corporate Accountability of Mining, Oil and Gas Corporations in Developing Countries* received second reading on March 3, 2010. This bill relates to Resolution 2007.02 Global Accountability for Canadian Registered Mining Companies. Keep talking. Keep writing. It pays off.

For many members who were concerned about Bill C-391 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act (repeal of long-gun registry)*, on June 9th the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security presented a report that Bill C-391 not be further proceeded with.

It is very important that each member, on her own behalf, keep up a letter writing campaign showing support for bills that we requested by our resolutions and expressing concern for the bills to which we are opposed. Please use the *Personal Letter Writing Guide* which includes directions to discuss only one issue per letter. Name the bill you are referring to and be polite and courteous. Be brief and to the point with your concerns and ask for a response. Please note that the House of Commons is adjourned until September 20, 2010. †

LAWS



Lorette Noble
Candiac, Quebec

Seventeen years ago it was with great trepidation that I stood here as Quebec provincial president and gave my first report. So much has happened in my League journey since then, but one thing remains constant. It is still with great trepidation that I stand here to give my final oral report!

Each year I have been given a unique opportunity to get to know the League better

- Who we are
- What we do
- How we do it and, most importantly
- Why we do it

I would encourage every one of you to enjoy taking up this challenge and opportunity.

This is a year of anniversaries. Forty years ago Christopher and I came with our three eldest children to Canada to start a new life here. It has been a wonderful adventure about which one day I might write a book with the probable title, "How long should I leave the camel in the oven?" and thereby hangs a tale!

It is also 30 years since I joined the League and this, too, has been a wondrous adventure of *faith, fun and fulfillment...*

and above all of friendship. And, of course, it's the 90th anniversary of our beloved League.

Anniversaries are a time of reminiscing and rejoicing, and haven't we been doing a lot of this these past three days, starting with the amazing costumes, jewellery, hats and wigs? It was marvellous that so many of us took up the challenge of decking ourselves out in the various nine decades of the League's past.

What souvenirs we will be collecting and taking back after this convention, which leads me to the topic of archives that those of us who are past presidents are responsible for in our councils. In a very short ten year's time we will be celebrating our 100th anniversary and we will be relying on our national archives to provide us with rich materials for the special centenary booklet that will surely be prepared for this significant moment in our League story.

We have a relatively new committee at national level called the archives committee which two years ago began the work of sorting through documents which had been accumulating at national office for over 15 years! These six dedicated members Marie Cameron, Lucille Cullen, Irene Lefort, Shirley Bernier, Margaret Beardon and Gertrude Nowlan, began to put these documents in order, an enormous task that is nearing completion, and for which we owe them a huge vote of thanks.

At the end of my article in last fall's *The Canadian League*, I asked if any of our members had professional expertise in archival work, and we were lucky enough to get a response from a member, Judi Cummings, who has 27 years of experience as an archivist at the Library and Archives Canada, and who has offered her services. The committee was reduced to three last year and Judi will be replacing Irene Lefort and joining Marie Cameron and Shirley Bernier when they travel to national office to continue the work of maintaining our archives.

If your provincial, diocesan or parish council is going to celebrate a special anniversary and you put something together to mark the occasion, please remember to send three copies to national office for our archives.

The other part of a past president's role is to answer questions on our *Constitution & Bylaws* (C&B) and our *National Manual of Policy and Procedure* (P&P) and to smooth things out when they don't seem to be working quite as they should. These past two years have certainly opened another door into how our League functions and looking closely at how our practice matches our policy. I have tried, as far as possible, to speak with the person who has a concern and, together, try to get to the core of the problem, where there is one. Every so often a situation arises where a very good case is made for updating our guidelines and this is when we begin a process of consultation which ends with a revision or two to the P&P. Taking such a step depends a lot on whether the situation is unique to a certain council or one that actually happens in several councils. We would not change our guidelines for every

exceptional case, but rather find a way of making things work in that particular instance.

Our C&B has stood the test of time. It is not changed lightly or often, with good reason. And our P&P is a set of guidelines intended to give more detailed ways of living out the C&B. Sometimes our policies or procedures need to be fine-tuned so that they reflect the lived reality of women in today's society.

I thought I had a pretty good idea of what is in our C&B and our P&P. What has been fascinating is discovering how others, be they council presidents or chairpersons of standing committees at any level, see and interpret these two documents. This has been a process of education for all of us. What might seem simple and straightforward in one context might not correspond to the lived experience of a council.

So, I encourage each past president to take a few minutes at each, or at least at some, of your regular meetings to have a "Did you know..." session about a section in our C&B, so that members get to know what it really says.

Sometimes a problem boils down to one member not seeing things the same way as another. So it becomes an issue of misconnection or misunderstanding between two members who don't see things eye to eye. So, somehow together we had to try and arrive at a workable solution, while remaining within and in keeping with the spirit and intent of our constitution and policy guidelines. Often this was by inviting the members concerned to meet quietly on a one-to-one basis and engage in genuine problem-solving dialogue.

Our theme of *Women of Peace and Hope* has played a crucial role in encouraging us to help one another, remembering also that we must try a little each day to learn to *Love One Another*. ✚

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Danielle McNeil-Hessian
Bedford, Nova Scotia

This past year has seen a tremendous amount of planning for the World Union of Catholic Women's Organization (WUCWO) 2010 Centenary Assembly being held in Jerusalem October 5th-12th.

We are very proud of WUCWO Vice-President for North America Agnes Bedard for her commitment to both the League and to WUCWO. Agnes has tirelessly promoted WUCWO to members and has made many connections through an invitation to pray for world leaders and with leaders of member organizations all over the world.