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New Brunswick Provincial Council enthusiastically welcomed the new theme, *Women of Peace and Hope*. The amalgamation of two parish councils, Holy Rosary and

Milltown in St. Stephen, is a prime example of members living the theme. Members are accepting the challenges and viewing them as opportunities to join together two spectacular groups of women working for the people of God. Coming together is what Jesus asked of us in Matthew 18:20 when He said, "For where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there among them." And isn't that the *hope* of us all, that when we come together to endeavour to do the Lord's work, that He is here among us? Another parish council, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Chatham Head, had considered disbanding. However with much prayer and discussion members have decided to continue living their faith as *Women of Peace and Hope* in the League.

Although the provincial membership has declined, a number of parish councils have seen an increase. It is our *hope* that the number of successful retreats and workshops being facilitated throughout the province will have a positive impact on membership numbers for 2009. These events include the *One in the Spirit* retreats; workshops on education and health, resolutions and legislation; a presentation on depression; as well as a leadership workshop presented at the provincial convention to help members recognize their individual talents.

Members continued to address social issues such as poverty by attending a dialogue session, "Bringing the pieces together, developing a poverty reduction program". It was noted that there are approximately 13.8% of people in New Brunswick living in poverty and, of the single mothers, approximately 45.4% live in poverty. This is a statistic that we as Catholic women cannot ignore.

Four members have been recognized for their extraordinary service to the League and were presented the Bellelle Guerin award during their respective diocesan conventions.

The provincial council welcomed the opportunity to co-sponsor the local 2009 March for Life. It was an honour for me to bring greetings on behalf of the provincial council. There was an excellent representation of members present to demonstrate their faith in action at the legislature in Fredericton. This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of legalized abortions in Canada. It is more important than ever that we strive to bring *hope* to the most vulnerable of our society, the unborn child.

The council has established a committee to organize members

planning to attend the 2010 March for Life. It is our *hope* to increase the number of members attending and to make our presence more visible. This committee is also organizing members to participate in the 40 Days for Life campaign, a campaign of prayer, fasting and education, in the *hope* of turning the tide of abortion in our communities. The campaign will be held September 25<sup>th</sup> - November 1<sup>st</sup> and is being organized by the New Brunswick Right to Life Association.

Members have embraced the recent national initiatives. They have expressed positive feedback regarding the *CWL Day of Peace & Hope Activities Kit*. During the provincial convention a short workshop from the kit, Words of *Peace* and *Hope*, was facilitated. Members also feel that the promotional postcards are a great asset in recruiting and maintaining members. Also, the new procedure for reporting deceased members is a welcomed change. Articles have been sent to national for publication in the e-newsletter. Members are very pleased with the new permanent membership card.

The provincial council has a new Web site administrator who is very knowledgeable and has a history of working with Web sites. He is in the process of revamping the entire site. An editing committee has been organized to ensure that all articles and reports are edited before being published.

We had the distinct honour of welcoming National President Danielle McNeil-Hessian to the 62<sup>nd</sup> provincial convention. She participated in the leadership workshop and was also our guest speaker at the banquet. She spoke of a traumatic family event and the role of her faith in that journey. She faced the challenge with *peace* and *hope* in her heart and, as she describes it, the outcome was nothing short of a miracle. George Daley, our speaker during our sessions on Saturday, addressed the assembly regarding his work with the Help Lesotho organization. George spent six weeks working with school children in this HIV/AIDS stricken country and continues to share those experiences with his students of District 15 in an attempt to address injustices in the world.

Members are vigilant in writing to government officials regarding Bill C-384 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity)*, the bill introduced to legalize assisted suicide. Members continue to act on Resolution 2008.01 Preventing Human Trafficking at 2010 Olympics. They have been writing letters to Prime Minister Stephen Harper reminding him that all levels of government should combat the scourge of human trafficking and encouraging him to enforce stricter border control.

The first organizational meeting for the 2014 national convention is tentatively scheduled. A voluntary fund has been established to launch the fundraising necessary. ✠

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## MISSION STATEMENT

*The Catholic Women's League of Canada is a national organization rooted in gospel values calling its members to holiness through service to the people of God.*

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