

LIFE MEMBERSHIP THEN AND NOW

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National Life Member Liaison



Life membership has been part of the League since its very beginning. Article IV of the first *By-Laws* of The Catholic Women's League of Canada in 1921-1922 states: "Life members may be enrolled with the Dominion Executive upon payment of the fee of \$100. They shall be entitled to receive all official publications of the League and to attend Annual Conventions, but may not vote as such." Like other organizations at that time, members could buy their own life membership. This was one way for the League to raise funds as it became established. The first life member of national council was Mrs. Walter Armstrong who was also elected honorary secretary at the founding conference in 1920.

Various changes have occurred over the years. By 1948, Article VII of the *Constitution and By-Laws* states: "Life members shall be proposed by the diocesan council or by the national or provincial federated organization, as the case may be. They shall be enrolled with the national executive committee upon payment of the fee of one hundred dollars. Life members shall have the right to vote at the annual national convention on all matters, *except* those involving extraordinary financial undertakings, the election of officers and amendments to the bylaws."

In 1958, Article VII of the *Constitution and By-Laws* states: "Life members shall be proposed by the Parish, Diocesan or Provincial Council."

Other changes occurred as per Article VII of the 1968 *Constitution and By-Laws*: "(a) Life members shall be *proposed* by the Diocesan or Provincial Council. (b) Life members shall be *enrolled* with the National Executive at the National Office, upon payment of the fee of \$50.00. Requirements of Life Membership shall be established by the National Executive and published at intervals in The Canadian League."

During the 1970s, the life member regulations were published in *The Canadian League*. By 1983 the criteria and amount of fee for life membership were printed in the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure* and Article VII Section 2 of the *Constitution & ByLaws* merely states that, "The National Executive may approve applications for Life Membership submitted by Diocesan or Provincial Councils provided requirements, established by the National Executive and circulated annually are fulfilled."

Much discussion took place in the 1980s and 1990s

regarding criteria and the service aspect of life membership. In order to be accommodating to the realities of our organization, criteria changed over the years and special norms were established depending on the provincial council to which the nominee belonged.

Councils were encouraged to have life member liaisons at the diocesan and provincial levels and a national life member liaison was appointed by the national president.

The current life membership procedure requires that the member be nominated by a diocesan or provincial council by December 15th. This is not a reward for years of service but rather a commitment by the person nominated to offer her talents and expertise to assist the national executive. Upon receipt of the nomination form that has been signed by presidents at the parish, diocesan and provincial levels, national office verifies if the nominee meets the criteria of years served and then forwards a questionnaire to the nominee who indicates her availability and willingness to serve. After confirmation by the national chairperson of organization that the nominee meets all the requirements, the nomination is presented to the national executive at the winter national executive meeting. The recipient continues to pay her own membership fee and expenses to conventions but is given accredited voting status. (Article VII, *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*)

In 1929 Miss Kathleen Drouillard was awarded honorary life membership "in recognition of her splendid services and untiring devotion to the CWL in Girl Guide work". Eleven other members also received this honour for their outstanding work during the Second World War. However, nowadays honorary life membership is reserved for national past presidents. ("*Except the Lord Build the House...*", 1990) †

