

The Catholic Women's League of Canada



HANDBOOK

FOR

PAST PRESIDENTS



Chairperson's Prayer

“Dear Lord, make me appreciative of the dignity
of my standing committee and its many responsibilities.
Never permit me to disgrace it by giving way to coldness,
unkindness or impatience.

Please bear with my faults, looking only to my intention,
which is to serve you in the person of each member
of the Catholic Women's League.

Increase my faith, bless my efforts and work
‘For God and Canada’.”

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A Brief History of the League

Catholic women of Canada were first organized in Edmonton Archdiocese in November 1912 to assist with the care and placement of the ever-increasing influx of immigrants from Europe and elsewhere. The movement gradually spread to the port cities and other major centres across Canada—Montreal—1917, Toronto—1918, Halifax—1919, then to Ottawa, Sherbrooke, and Saint John, N.B.

In 1920, these groups were invited to meet in Montreal to try to establish a national group of Catholic women. The name “Catholic Women’s League” originated in England in 1912 in response to a perceived need for Catholic lay action and was adopted by the Canadian group.

On June 17, 1920, The Catholic Women’s League of Canada was formally established with Miss Bellelle Guerin of Montreal elected first national president.

In 1921, the League affiliated with the International Union of Catholic Women, now known as the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organizations (WUCWO), an affiliation still enjoyed today.

The first annual national convention of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada was held in Toronto in 1921. The delegates at that convention worked hard producing a constitution, a set of bylaws and the beginnings of a publication—*The Canadian League*.

From its organizational beginnings, as now, the League perceived the need for Catholic lay women’s action in all aspects of Canadian life.

The League crest and seal—the cross surmounting the maple leaves with the words “The Catholic Women’s League of Canada—For God and Canada” in the surrounding circle was designed by Mrs. Emmett Mullally.

The League was incorporated federally in 1923.

In 1927, a national scholarship fund was established to assist Catholic women students and, for many years, this was given for graduate studies in social work. Since 1969, however, this fund has been donated to the Coady International Institute of St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, N.S., to assist foreign students from developing countries.

The year 1938 saw the organization of Business & Professional Women’s CWL Councils in major cities across Canada.

The League was mandated by the Canadian Catholic Conference of the Hierarchy (now the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB)) in 1948, and was under the patronage of His Eminence James C. Cardinal McGuigan, DD, until his death in 1975. Since 1976, the League has been privileged to be under the special patronage of the CCCC and, in 1992, the League was officially recognized by the CCCC as a lay association of women.

The organization of the first provincial councils of the League occurred in 1947–1948, allowing for provincial action and the lobbying of provincial governments.

Fund raising was to be done at parish council level and the other levels. Diocesan, provincial, and national would be financed through per capita fees from the parish level.

In 1965, the Military Vicariate Council was formed to coordinate the councils established on military bases and was given the status of a provincial council. The name was changed in 1988 to Military Ordinariate Council.

In 1969, the League's 1% commitment to the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP) was established.

Leadership courses were formulated in the 70s and, for the first time, resolutions passed at national level on the floor of the convention were presented in person by national officers to the prime minister and members of his cabinet.

In 1980, Newfoundland joined the League as a provincial council.

The main thrust of The Catholic Women's League of Canada is, and has always been, the spiritual development of its members, both individually and collectively.

The activities of the League, since its original purpose of aiding immigrants, have broadened and, in recent years, the emphasis has been on issues concerning the sanctity of life from conception to natural death, social justice, human dignity, the preservation of Christian family life and the concept of a preferential option for the poor.

In 1992, the League's Mission Statement was adopted as follows:

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.

Structure of the League

With Our Lady of Good Counsel as its patroness, the League is an organization with a strong spiritual base.

The League has a *Constitution & Bylaws*, which is reviewed as required and may be amended by a two thirds majority of the voting delegates at an annual national convention, as well as a *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*, which is updated at regular intervals.

Membership consists of:

1. active members
2. associate members (non-Catholic)

The League is composed of four levels:

1. parish
2. diocesan
3. provincial
4. national

Diocesan, provincial, and national are administrative councils which provide the direction, inspiration, and encouragement required to carry out the programs and projects of the League.

The work of the League is carried out through standing committees at each level.

National Council

National council shall be composed of its officers, presidents of provincial councils, honorary life members, life members, and provincial and diocesan delegates accredited to the national convention. (*Constitution & Bylaws*, Article VIII, Section 1d)

The national executive shall be composed of its elected officers and the provincial presidents. (*Constitution & Bylaws*, Article VIII, Section 2b)

Provincial Council

Provincial council shall be composed of its officers, presidents of diocesan councils in the province, diocesan and parish delegates accredited to the provincial convention, and honorary life members and life members holding a membership in the province. (*Constitution & Bylaws*, Article VIII, Section 1c)

The provincial executive shall be composed of its elected officers and presidents of diocesan councils in the province. (*Constitution & Bylaws*, Article VIII, Section 2b)

Diocesan Council

Diocesan council shall be composed of its officers, presidents of parish councils in the diocese, parish delegates accredited to the diocesan convention, and honorary life members and life members holding a membership in the dioceses. (*Constitution & Bylaws*, Article VIII, Section 1b)

The diocesan executive shall be composed of its elected officers and the president of parish councils in the diocese. (*Constitution & Bylaws*, Article VIII, Section 2b)

NOTE: For provinces where no diocesan councils exist (Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Military Ordinariate), diocesan executive roles would be assumed by the provincial executive.

Parish Council

Parish council shall be composed of the individual members. (*Constitution & Bylaws*, Article VIII, Section 1a)

The parish executive shall be composed of the elected officers of the council. (*Constitution & Bylaws*, Article VIII, Section 2a)

Duties of Past President

The past president at any level of the League shall:

- a) serve her council and president in a consultative capacity. She may advise and assist the president using her experience and expertise as a member of the council concerned.
- b) be responsible for the archives and history of her council. If a public archives facility is used as a repository for items of historical value, the past president should identify all items in a catalogue format, retaining a copy for the council records. The history of a council is preserved through scrapbooks, photo albums and council minutes. The past president should be responsible for these important books, so members will have a permanent record of the work accomplished by their council.
- c) facilitate and encourage the study and implementation of the *Constitution & Bylaws*. The past president should encourage members to become knowledgeable about the *Constitution & Bylaws* and to conduct the affairs of the council accordingly. Any questions related to the interpretation of the *Constitution & Bylaws* shall be referred to the national chairperson of laws.
- d) submit an annual report to the next level (parish to diocesan, diocesan to provincial, provincial to national), summarizing her years activities (see *Past President–Guidelines for Reporting*). A copy of the monthly and annual reports must be filed with the recording secretary.

Archives

Archives are important historical material from which information, inspiration and enthusiasm for the League may be derived. They also serve as permanent, lasting records of the achievements of the organization.

Accurate records are basic requirements for the writing of any true history and this should include the preparation of archives.

For The Catholic Women's League of Canada, archives are the complete records of the organization: minutes, accounts, correspondence, *Constitution & Bylaws*, handbooks, manuals and all items used in the administrative work of the League are kept for reference or research.

Specific archives of national council are located in the national archives, Ottawa, the Manitoba provincial government archives, Winnipeg or in national office.

Archives are the responsibility of the past president of the council (*Constitution & Bylaws*, Article XI, Section 7(b)), who may appoint a sub-committee chairperson to assist her in this work. Her duty is to review the records of the organization periodically and, with the help of a small committee, select material of significant and lasting historic interest, discarding items considered to be temporary or of no intrinsic value. If records are being kept correctly, this should not present any real difficulty, since reports of officers, including chairpersons, will be found in the recording secretary's files.

When this work has been completed, it should be arranged simply: all material pertaining to each standing committee should be filed together and the file clearly marked with the name of the chairperson and years. The annual reports of the president, secretaries and treasurer should be similarly filed. Names of officers and years in office should be marked on the outside of each file folder.

As the archives are compiled, categorized and placed in marked files, an index of all materials contained in the archives must be prepared by the past president and passed on to her successor in her files. This is very important in order to provide guidance for assembling archival material and provide continuity, so that the system and order will be continued by succeeding past presidents. This index should show the system by which the work is arranged with regard to records, minute books, correspondence, chairpersons' reports, scrapbooks, etc. It is the duty of the executive on each level to provide for the safe storage of these valuable records, preferably in a permanent location.

In addition, the past president should keep a scrapbook in which she keeps press clippings, photos and other publicity items pertaining to her term of office. This scrapbook should record the name and date of the paper from which the clippings were taken and indicate on the cover the subject, dates, years and name of the president and chairperson.

You were asking about archives...

(preservation of League history)

Parish, diocesan, and provincial levels

- Archives should be kept in a locked filing cabinet on church property or in a secure facility at the diocesan archives location.
- A review of all archival materials should be undertaken by the immediate past president, or by a member with archival interest, appointed by the president, who could serve as on-going archivist for the council.
- Every two years, an index of archived items in safekeeping should be updated and submitted to the president and noted in the minutes.

Parish archives should include

- original charter framed and displayed, if possible; contact national office regarding charters
- minutes of executive/general meetings are the **permanent** record of council activities and should be kept in dated binders
- the recording secretary should retain minutes from the previous two terms only; all other minutes should be transferred to the archival binders
- the recording secretary should retain motion books from the previous two terms only; all other motion books should be transferred to the archival binders
- all accounting records (including cheques and receipts) should be kept for five years
- separate binder for other important information related to the life of the parish council
 1. list of parish presidents/spiritual advisors with names/addresses and term of office
 2. list of recipients of Maple Leaf Service Pins/League pins, with names and dates of presentations
 3. a record of anniversary dates of all members; excellent reference for awards research (refer to annual per capita lists)

Other

- written histories
- scrapbooks and/or albums labeled by date and event
- annual reports
- special project file with financial statements
- sample of newsletters, if applicable
- each past president should be encouraged to write a two to three page story of highlights of her term as president (a valuable resource)

Past President–Guidelines for Reporting

Please use the following as a template to help maintain consistency with all the reports.

How to address the report:

Name of parish, diocese, province

Name, address and telephone number of chairperson

Date

Number of councils reporting (diocesan and provincial)

What to report on:

1. Have you attended meetings in a consultative capacity?
2. Have you worked at updating council's archives?
3. Is the history of your council kept up-to-date? Have you added documents to the history?
4. Did you facilitate the study and implementation of:
 - a) *Constitution & Bylaws*? If yes, how?
 - b) *Manual of Policy and Procedure*? If yes, how?
5. Give a brief outline of work accomplished pertaining to the duties of past president (see *Constitution & Bylaws*, Article XI, Section 7).
6. Give recommendations and/or ideas pertaining to the role of past president.