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## The CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE of CANADA

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# MEMO

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To: Parish Council Secretaries, Parish Council Treasurers  
From: Shari Guinta, National Secretary-Treasurer  
Date: October 23, 2014

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*So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart (Ps 90: 12).*

This memo is my first correspondence with parish council secretaries and treasurers as I begin my duties on National Council following the elections at the 94<sup>th</sup> annual national convention in Fredericton. If you are also new, welcome!

I was recording secretary at the parish level many years ago. In fact, that was my first position with the League in 1986. I was treasurer for Ontario Provincial Council, which was also my first position with the province. Now, at national level, the positions are combined. You may also do this.

The position(s) of secretary-treasurer is an important one. Good minutes are a tribute to the secretary and the council, and relied on at future meetings. The treasury, of course, is very important and needs to be taken seriously with good records kept.

To our secretaries, I suggest you get a copy of *Robert's Rules of Order*, either the full edition of *Newly Revised* or *In Brief*. This book will help you with procedural questions you may have that come up at meetings. National office also has a *Handbook for Secretaries* on the website that you can download. We need to know what our job description is in order to do it well.

Minutes should be concise but not detailed i.e., you don't record everything that is said or even who says it. You simply record *action*.

- A motion is an action. It is moved and seconded to do something.
- Forming a committee is an action.
- Spending money is an action.

You do not even have to record who makes the motion and seconds it as long as it is moved, seconded, discussed and voted on (depending on the kind of motion). There is more on that in *Robert's Rules of Order*. I mention these few items because the secretary can be of great assistance to the president who presides over well-run meetings.

One other point regards the minutes book. Some councils still have to use a handwritten minutes book, however more and more councils are using computers to record minutes. This can be much easier and faster. You can have an agenda setup in minutes form and simply “fill in the blanks” as they happen - the action. Care should be taken to record minutes correctly and store them properly. Once approved, store them in hard copy and on a flash drive in PDF format so they cannot be altered. The flash drive will be given to the next secretary for her reference. From personal experience, I suggest saving the document you are working on several times during the meeting. I have accidentally hit the wrong button before and wiped out minutes! Not good.

The *Guidelines for Treasurers* is available as a resource from national office. You can print it off if you haven't already. Regular reporting is important to members and should be done at monthly meetings. I encourage treasurers to attend their diocesan conventions and listen to or review the financial reports given there. It is important to know the finances of the League at all levels.

It is important that all councils prepare and present a budget to its members. It can be very simple but should have some thought put into it. Income and expenses planned for the year demonstrates good fiscal responsibility. I encourage you to report to the next level as a budget at the parish level affects every level of the League.

Finally, I encourage you to assist in sending in per capita fees in a timely manner. Remember that all levels of the League rely on these funds for operating capital. National office works hard to keep records up-to-date and to process memberships as quickly as possible. The online remittance of per capita fees is becoming more and more popular, and I encourage you to use it if you do not already do so.

Best of wishes to you as you record the words, dollars and cents of the League in your parish. May God bless you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shari Guinta', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shari Guinta  
National Secretary-Treasurer