



# The Catholic Women's League of Canada

## MEMO

**DATE:** April 18, 2017

**FROM:** Barbara Dowding, National past president and laws

**TO:** Parish past presidents

**CC:** Parish presidents, diocesan presidents, provincial presidents and life members (on request)

I am grateful for the opportunity to address parish council past presidents directly and to all of you I say 'Thank you.'

It is clear that in many cases this executive position is a difficult one to hold. Annual reports indicate scenarios from one extreme to the other, past presidents who moved away, quit, lost interest, or died, as well as others who are also the parish council president, secretary or something else!

Is it because there is nothing to do after being president? Or was the job so hard and all consuming for so many years that it is no wonder a person wants to forget all about it?

Who would have thought of all the standing committee chairpersons we need and even with all the difficulty getting women to take office that the role of past president could be so challenging? Perhaps it is because being past president is perceived as being irrelevant or not necessary. For some it is definitely undervalued, under rated and many times nonexistent.

Clearly in small councils, everyone helps and the jobs get done. I continue to marvel at what some of the tiniest councils produce. It is remarkable. Still even in these there should be some attempt to share the responsibilities, to look for new members with different skills who will keep the council alive. When the president has held office for years and years, it is no wonder she is burned out when the time finally comes that she can be a past president.

What is happening in your parish council? Even the smallest group needs the expertise and guidance of leaders who have served before. Where there is no immediate past president it makes sense to seek the advice of others, either previous presidents or life members.

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Who is looking after your history? If what I read is correct, there are many councils where this is neglected or ignored. If it is not being looked after by the past president, perhaps consider asking another committee to take it on or look for a member who likes that kind of thing. I love looking at the history but I really don't like looking after it so I can relate!

I hope you had a chance to read my communiqués and at the risk of repeating myself I would like to remind you of the following.

*As past presidents it is important to stand back and allow the new president and her executive to do their job and make their own way. It is important, however, to remember that you are part of the executive and subsequently have a role and a responsibility that goes with it. Your voice is needed and hopefully wanted. It is not about you, but about making sure there is open communication and sharing. I encourage you to share your wisdom, experience and love of the League in your parish and to the best of your ability.*

We are not out to PAST-ure, rather we are the part of the future.

For those holding the role of past president and president or any other office, please consider asking for help. Serving was never meant to be onerous or overwhelming. What better way to engage a member than reach out? You might be surprised what someone will do if asked directly!

Psalm 27 says, "be strong, and let your heart take courage..." That's what we are being called to do in this important and so necessary role.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barbara Dowding". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbara Dowding