

**THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S  
LEAGUE OF CANADA**



***2019 Annual  
Report***



**Care for our**

**Common Home**



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# **The Catholic Women's League of Canada**

## **Annual Report 2019**

(Contains full reports of national officers  
and provincial presidents)



## Anne-Marie Gorman

### National President and Chairperson of International Relations



The provincial councils consisted of numbers ranging from fewer than 300 to more than 41,000 members for a total of more than 75,000 in 1,176 parish councils. Varying numbers of membership and parish councils resulted in numerous opportunities to learn from one another. Response rates for parish council reporting were up in most provincial councils. Nationally, 68% of parish councils submitted an annual report, of which 96% had a sitting president, while 60% had

been president more than once. The importance of the League in the spiritual growth of members set the organization apart from all other women's organizations in Canada and was what kept members engaged. Many parish councils had more senior members; however, many places saw a modicum of relatively younger leadership. One provincial council reported 72% of presidents were 11-25 year members.

The most common method to inform members about the League's position was through *The Canadian League* (89%), but also of great assistance were national communiqués and diocesan newsletters, followed by provincial and national websites and parish bulletins. To a lesser extent, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) website, Internet searches, local newspapers and the Catholic Organization for Life and Family, in that order, were used to inform members. The parish priest, other Catholic organizations, minutes, regional meetings and personal telephone conversations were also ways in which parish presidents received information to share with members.

Predominant national priorities taken up by parish councils included the national theme, *Care for Our Common Home* (86%), medical assistance in dying (69%), and removing the attestation clause in the Canada Summer Jobs Program (52%), the latter two of which were

in response to nationally adopted resolutions. Besides these, parish councils actively supported palliative care in their communities, hospice services, rights of the pre-born, establishment of standards for products labelled flushable and the United Nations *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*. Human trafficking had become an issue of concern in all provincial councils, and genetics education was researched as it applied to bioethics. Members read and discussed the CCCB document *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation and Transformation*, and the *Laudato 'Si* encyclical.

The many ways members introduced the aforementioned topics included whole meeting discussion upon reading the documents (95%), program presentations by standing committee chairpersons and speakers whose expertise were in the fields (39% and 30% respectively). Letter-writing sessions during meetings, discussion from a newsletter article and taking part in online surveys were also used. The Pornography Hurts postcard campaign was well used to get the League's message to federal government. Members were encouraged to and found ways to be more environmentally conscious.

Almost 50% of parish councils reported meeting with the spiritual advisor monthly. A small number met weekly, annually or never. Twenty-seven per cent met rarely. However, 92% reported the spiritual advisor was supportive. Reasons stated for being unable to meet with the spiritual advisor included his duties outside the parish, serving several parishes, a lack of tradition of the spiritual advisor's interaction with the council formally, distance to travel to meet with parish councils and health issues relating to the advisor. Sixty-six per cent of respondents reported other reasons for not meeting, most of which were connected to a lack of understanding of the League, resulting in a lack of interest by the advisor.

Primary resources used by parish councils were the *Constitution & Bylaws* (63%), parish council policy manual (59%), *Executive Handbook* (54%), *National Manual of Policy and Procedure* (44%), followed by *Robert's Rules of Order* and *Parliamentary Procedure*. Parish councils reported the strong support of immediate past

presidents, life members, long-serving members and executive members, and resources such as annual calendars of events and minutes books.

The parish council president was a signing officer for the council. She signed cheques, bank documents, letters directed internally and outside the League, and supported through her signature petitions.

The president represented her parish council within the church and in the broader community. Church functions (91%) were at the top of the list, followed by diocesan meetings and conventions (76%), special masses, fundraising events (58%), sacramental celebrations, regional meetings (50%), community events (48%), workshops and conferences (47%), provincial meetings and conventions (36%). To a lesser extent, she took part in or attended pro-life events, national convention and meetings with her member of the legislature. The obvious importance for the parish council was to support events in the parish, while meetings and events within the region followed closely. Attending provincial and national conventions was an area where more encouragement might be needed if it would result in greater support and engagement of members when they returned to their parish council. Having given the aforementioned percentages, parish councils in very high numbers took part in the annual national initiative “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care” and seasonal programs within their parishes, were faithful in support at funerals and all parish events generally.

Related to members’ attendance at events, conferences and conventions may have been the ability to subsidize costs. The majority of parish councils (72%) did not provide subsidies for attendance at events where costs were incurred; 22% covered the entire costs, while a small number (four per cent and two per cent), paid 50% and 25% of related expenses. To educate, inform and engage members, workshops were developed and provided at the least cost to attendees. Members needed to be fed, spiritually and intellectually; hence, there may have been a need to consider how to support members financially to attend events. Assistance to attend diocesan convention, for example, ranged from 55% to cover all costs to a low of five per cent paying 25% of costs. Parish councils

reported less financial support to attend provincial and national conventions at 35% and 15% respectively.

There was a slight division among parish councils with regard to having a policy and procedure manual. Fifty-seven per cent had one; 43% did not. A slight majority of those that did not have a manual indicated it would be helpful to have one and would like assistance to develop it. While most parish councils did not form new policies, many updated existing policies, such as funeral protocols, welcoming ceremonies, pre-paid memberships, awards, bursaries and scholarships, distribution of funds and dates for regularly scheduled events in the parish year.

The resources available to parish councils were well used. The *Executive Handbook* was used by 86% of parish councils and was noted as very helpful. Those that did not make use of this resource relied on members' expertise, were familiar enough with duties, did not find the handbook helpful for their parish council or neglected to study the document.

In keeping members informed annually, most parish councils provided a report. More presented the report orally (65%) than in written form (54%), while some e-mailed the report to members (46%). If this were included as part of the written report, it might have raised the percentage, but this was not completely clear from the survey. Close to one-third included a summary of the year's events in the bulletin or parish newsletter.

Parish councils demonstrated an overwhelming charism of service from the number of committees appointed throughout the year, beyond the formal standing committees. Some of these included annual events, funeral, social events, fundraising, visiting, bursary/scholarship, donations, catering, policy, telephone tree, community outreach, prayer chain, prayer shawl, hospitality, awards and ceremonies for members, church premises and a "courtesy" committee.

To say parish councils were centred in service and advocacy was exemplified by the myriad of times the parish president represented Christian values in the community and beyond. She organized petitions—"Time to Care" was noted as one where increased care to



residents in residential homes was initiated. Besides giving a monthly report to council, a summary of the national convention, and updates on the strategic plan, the president spoke on and encouraged support for Catholic Missions In Canada, the homeless, the lonely, an end to human trafficking, medical assistance in dying, income security in Ontario, vocations and Birthright International. She took part and presented at diocesan development days, in the HUG Project centenary initiative and “soles for souls” to assist the needy. She assisted in promoting parish, diocesan and national events, especially the national theme, Indigenous issues, autism and vocations. She encouraged viewing and/or organized viewing of films *Fatal Flaws* and *Unplanned*. One parish council reported having sponsored a refugee family.

Parish presidents reported many challenges. Keeping members engaged, not having a full slate of officers, recruitment, paperwork, time to complete all that was required of a president, lack of training or being undertrained, resistance to new ideas, inexperience, technology, delegation of duties, tedium, meeting expectations and lack of attendance at same, and to a lesser degree, public speaking, member conflict, chairing meetings, lack of confidence and organizational skills were noted. Presidents also noted a lack of interest in accessing program funding, encouragement of the use of awards ceremonies and service pin presentations, using online membership renewal service, improving the education of members, engagement of the spiritual advisor and reporting. While most parish councils (83% of respondents) liked having a national theme and logo to focus activities on, there were many variations in the length of time each theme should be in place. Stating the challenges gave an excellent opportunity for education and promotion of the needs of provincial councils.

Given the challenges, one would have expected parish councils would be somewhat discouraged. More than 100 pages of comments submitted describing what they were most proud of belies that. This was where they might learn from each other. What one parish council’s challenge was may have been overcome by a sister council. Some parish councils were proud of their growth in numbers, engagement and attendance at meetings. All parish

councils were proud of the way members stepped up to serve in all capacities within the parish and greater community. While there was much work to do regarding the challenges faced, members could be very optimistic that parish councils were willing and able to continue to work towards personal spiritual growth, and to reach out for assistance in the areas where weaknesses were known and expressed.

Provincial presidents took important initiatives within their council to meet members' needs. These included leadership development, communication including "Find Your Voice" training, and "Mothers of Love and Faith" workshops. Also, a "Warmth and Comfort" project to support a provincial theme of *Homelessness* demonstrated faith in action. One provincial council began a new provincial theme of *Loneliness*, and in every provincial council, efforts were made to educate parish councils on the strategic plan.

To pursue the national theme, I chaired regular meetings of the administrative committee by conference call in order to meet more often, shorten the in-person meeting time and save treasury resources. Four national executive/board meetings were held—winter, pre-convention, post-convention and fall. Two parish council mailings were completed and sent, the only time during the year when national officers were able to communicate directly with their sisters at the parish level. The focus for year two of the national theme was determined at the fall meeting, to provide financial assistance to a community home in India (see community life annual report for details). A successful 99<sup>th</sup> annual national convention was held in Calgary, where the speakers focused on an aspect of caring for creation. Plans continued for the celebration of the League's centenary with the invitation of presenters for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary convention. Speakers secured were Dr. Cory Labrecque, Dr. Donna Orsuto and Sr. Nuala Kenny.

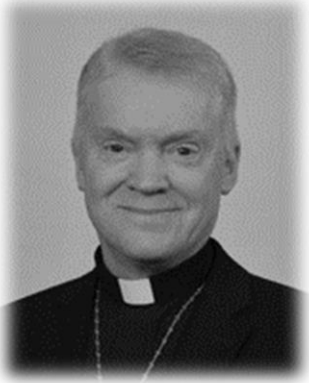
As *The Canadian League*, published three times annually, was of such importance to parish councils, the president's message provided a unique opportunity to speak to all members. Monthly "Adventures with Anne" columns were posted on the website and

Facebook and provided another opportunity to interface with members directly.

While challenges understandably faced an organization of such size, it was gratifying to know League sisters were so closely connected and generally positive about the future. The parish presidents themselves said it best in their statements:

Members showed “teamwork, [were] supportive, prayerful, considerate, respectful”. “Councils work[ed] hard to ensure a good balance of spirituality, education, and fun.” [Members] “witness[ed] to the love of God through ministry and service,” and members demonstrated “continued passion and dedication to the core purpose and mission” of the organization. “Members [were] supportive, endearing, kind, helpful, cooperative, and the nicest group of women I could work with.” With these words, members could be optimistic that with the intercession of Our Lady of Good Counsel and the work of the Holy Spirit, The Catholic Women’s League of Canada would continue to be a vital part of the church, Canada, and the world.

**Bishop Stephen Jensen**  
**National Spiritual Advisor**



Throughout the first full year during my term as national spiritual advisor, I was pleased to offer some thoughts on what I had observed, experienced and learned as I worked with the national executive/board and staff.

First, on behalf of the bishops of Canada, I expressed appreciation for the League’s solidarity with us in promoting the life of faith and service in the parishes of the dioceses. The

League was a strong partner for pastors in their efforts to build parish communities. The League’s initiatives to address moral issues that affected everyone in Canada strengthened the church’s witness and changed many lives for the better. I commended the national leadership for understanding and supporting the bishops’

efforts to strengthen the Catholic identity of Development and Peace—Caritas Canada, a work that would continue.

I attended the meetings of the board and, in the summer, the meeting of the resolutions committee that carefully reviewed proposals from the provincial level. I was very impressed by the dedication, professionalism and wisdom evident in the League's national leadership. Its commitment to the highest standards of policy development ensured the League's voice would be taken seriously in the councils of government.

As the implementation phase of the strategic plan unrolled, the need for effective communication of the plan to spiritual advisors and parish priests would be paramount. I would suggest that provincial presidents share the PowerPoint presentation with diocesan presidents, who could ask their bishops for time at a clergy study day or in deanery meetings to present the plan to pastors.

The job description for the national spiritual advisor listed three primary goals: he should be accessible to the national executive and, in particular, the national president, provide advice and guidance for spiritual programs and participate in meetings and conventions. I enjoyed working with an impressive group of women who guided the League at the national level, and I look forward to another year of service together.

**Kim Scammell**  
**Executive Director**



National office is responsible for the daily administration of League affairs at the national level. This allows the national executive/board to focus on projects and priorities in keeping with the objects of the League and to enable timely response to current issues.

**Financial Administration**

Expenses were processed, on average, within 15 days of receipt. Monthly unaudited financial statements were

prepared and distributed to the finance committee, along with quarterly investment statements.

National office deposited and disbursed more than \$2,267,500, \$689,400 of which was deposited through electronic funds transfer (\$383,700 in 2018). The average weekly cash received and deposited totalled almost \$44,000. More than 2,190 orders for supplies were processed, increased by about 200 from the previous year, or just over eight orders per day.

### **Investment Administration**

Investments were managed through consultation with CIBC Wood Gundy. Four fixed income instruments matured, two of which were reinvested in similar instruments with interest rates of 3¼ per cent. The others were held in cash for liquidity purposes. There were no extra contributions to the portfolio made from general revenues, nor were any draws taken on the portfolio to offset negative cash flows.

### **Membership Administration**

Membership packages were sent to parish councils in November 2018. During the year, 4,273 membership batches were processed, for an average of 16 parish council remittances per day. Each of the 1,176 parish councils, therefore, submitted memberships in approximately three to four batches over the course of the year.

### **Technological Resource Management**

One laptop was purchased for use by the implementation committee project coordinator.

### **Human Resource Management**

As of December 31<sup>st</sup>, national office had five full time, two seasonal, and one contract position, all of which are established by the national executive. The positions of executive director, senior accounting clerk, membership coordinator, office assistant and executive secretary were full time, and the positions of office clerk and data entry clerk were seasonal. The position of implementation committee project coordinator was a contract position.

During the year, the executive secretary was offered an opportunity, which resulted in the position remaining vacant for a few months. Her successor was the former membership coordinator,

necessitating the search for a new membership coordinator in fall 2019. The two seasonal employees retired at the end of the 2019 season, and both were replaced, also in fall 2019. The implementation committee, fully active with implementing strategies, required staff assistance, resulting in the creation of the role of project coordinator.

**Janet McLean**  
**National Secretary-Treasurer**



**Secretary**

Secretaries across Canada learned new skills and used ingenuity and creativity to record and transcribe council minutes. One reported using a voice recorder to keep track of council meetings, many encouraged those reporting to give them a copy of their report, and some learned new computer skills.

The online survey indicated 53% of secretaries were elected, 41% were appointed and six per cent of parish councils had no secretary. Thirty-nine per cent were both the recording and corresponding secretary. Many secretaries were longstanding members and had previously held the position while 20% had been members for five years or less. Only 60% of secretaries were signing officers for their parish council. Secretaries reported many challenges which they worked to overcome. Those challenges included balancing their League duties and work responsibilities, completing the online survey, summarizing lengthy reports, dealing with extraneous noise during meetings and remembering details of oral reports. However, they also felt they had an increased knowledge of the League, were encouraged because of mentoring support received from more experienced members and felt satisfaction in a job well done.

Diocesan and provincial secretaries reported that, on occasion, the position required a considerable time commitment. However, they also reported satisfaction in their work and practical ways they

found to improve efficiency. They felt parish secretaries could use more education, particularly with basic computer skills, as well as a comprehensive list of the responsibilities required of them by their council. An excellent suggestion was made that secretaries should always have documents proofread before they were circulated or released.

National office's executive secretary performed an outstanding job in providing all the daily secretarial duties the League required. This included all routine correspondence sent under my signature as well as transcribing minutes of executive meetings and the national convention. Minutes were then forwarded to the members of the minutes' review committee and myself for verification and adjustment, if necessary, before circulation. I prepared two memos for secretaries for the parish council mailings during the year and responded to e-mails directed to me from members.

### **Treasurer**

All provincial treasurers submitted annual reports which greatly helped in the completion of this report. While reporting was down in some provinces, the overall number of reports was consistent with previous years. Some parish treasurers still reported problems accessing, saving or printing the online survey. More than one-half of parish council treasurers had held the position before; they also tended to be more mature members. Bank statements, chequebooks, deposit books and ledgers were the preferred method of keeping track of financial records. However, computer programs gained popularity in some areas, particularly at the diocesan and provincial levels. Books were updated regularly and financial reports were presented at general meetings. More than one-half of parish councils reported memberships were collected in December, although February was still when most memberships were sent to national office. Almost all parish councils required two signatures on cheques and had more than two signing officers. Just more than one-half of parish treasurers prepared a budget, which was then presented to the council for approval. About one-half of parish treasurers had the books reviewed annually, although many were only able to have this done biennially. Problems in finding someone

to perform the review was the main reason this was not done on a regular basis.

When it came to fundraising, the sky was the limit—if it could be thought of, a parish council used it to raise money to help others. While bake sales were still the most popular fundraiser, others included exercise classes, line dancing, Zumba® classes, trivia night, movie night, missal sale, parish brunch, community barbeque, rock-a-thon, Praise the Lord concert, yard sale, paint nights, Mother’s Day dinner/dance, purse, scarf and belt sale, and spaghetti dinners. A small number of parish councils reported they did not fundraise, which was perfectly acceptable.

Once again, parish councils were extremely generous in financially supporting many organizations and causes. A total of \$98,442 was donated to the League’s national voluntary funds, \$7,788 to the National Bursary Fund, \$1,971,072 under the various standing committees, \$1,137,780 to parishes, and \$28,692 in other donations for a total of \$3,243,774. This was impressive—in fact, it was phenomenal—and it represented only part of the whole as some councils’ efforts were not included. When the priceless cost of countless hours of volunteer service was considered, members could be proud of their contribution to their church, community, country and the world.

The League’s financial statements showed that, from operations, net revenue exceeded net expenditures by \$9,937; after adding investment income, total revenues over expenditures were \$118,000. Regarding revenue items, as has been the trend, per capita fees decreased by two per cent. National convention registration fees were up \$39,000 as the fee had increased from \$50.00 to \$100.00. Investment income was up for the first time in several years as the market value of equity funds increased. The investment portfolio at year end consisted of \$871,500 in fixed income investments and \$923,742 in equity investments for a total of \$1,795,242. This was down almost \$200,000 as investments that matured at year end were not renewed but were retained as cash. A change in investment advisors was made at the end of the year in order to benefit from more personalized investment advice in the coming year.



Regarding expenditures, most were comparable to 2018 and in line with the budget. Overall, expenditures were almost \$84,000 under budget. Under League development, council requests for development funds decreased by \$14,429. Promotion costs were higher due to additional costs associated with the centenary coffee table book. Strategic planning expenses (\$37,361) were shown as a separate line item with an additional amount spent on an in-person committee meeting (\$7,023), a mailing to all spiritual advisors (\$4,510) and staff support to committee members (\$26,016). National executive expenses were \$17,408 below budget due to reduced costs for mid-term executive meetings, postponement of the fall trip to government due to the election and attendance by the president at fewer diocesan conventions. Operating costs were below budget as computer support was not required. Staff costs were down \$42,464 as one employee left in May and two part-time employees retired at the end of June. These positions were filled in November.

The daily accounting needs were ably performed by the executive director and senior accounting clerk. Monthly bank statements and financial reports were sent to me for review. A detailed analysis of the audit working papers was performed, and the audited financial statements were verified before submission to the board for approval. With assistance from the executive director, a budget was prepared and submitted to the board. A communiqué was sent to secretaries and treasurers, two articles were written for *The Canadian League* and two memos to treasurers were prepared for the parish council mailings.

Thank you to all those who served the League at the various levels as secretaries and treasurers. Well done, good and faithful servants.

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**FAITH — SERVICE — SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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## Shari Guinta

### National First Vice-President and Chairperson of Spiritual Development



Sub-committee: Life Members Mary Lou Watson and Gloria Lundberg

#### Activities for the National Chairperson of Spiritual Development

- Three communiqués were written. The last one announced that October was Extraordinary Missionary Month and was inaugurated on October 1, 2019, by Pope Francis, the Feast of St. Therese of Lisieux, Patroness of Missions.
- Canadian home missions were highlighted, and parish councils were reminded to consider donating to the permanent Catholic Missions In Canada National Voluntary Fund.
- An *ad hoc* committee was formed to study and report on the *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation* document released by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB). The committee made recommendations to the national executive/board for future actions. Parish councils reported they had studied and discussed the document. A letter was sent to the CCCB from the 99<sup>th</sup> annual national convention in support of the document and offered the League's assistance. A prayer was created and adopted by the board for use in discussions and to pray for those who had been abused. A presentation about protecting minors was drafted for presentation to the board.
- Prayer services were created for board meetings and the national convention.

#### Spiritual Growth of Members

Mass before meetings continued in most parish councils, and offering one-third of the meeting to spiritual activity was reported throughout. *Lectio Divina* was an activity that parish councils reported. Other activities included:

- pilgrimages
- retreats and adoration
- stations of the cross, rosary, novenas, candlelight vigils
- Chaplet of the Divine Mercy
- Crowning of Mary and litany prayer services
- one day a month devoted to continuous recitation of the rosary
- prayer calendar with each day devoted to prayer for a member and the spiritual advisor

Technology served to help parish councils learn and investigate many ways of reflection and spiritual education. It was appreciated that most parish councils had the spiritual advisor present at meetings.

### **Study of Catholic Teachings**

Parish councils continued to study and learn about the Pope's encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, in conjunction with activities for the national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*. Chairpersons mentioned the theme resonated with members. Speakers, programs, prayers and information sessions were offered. Different materials and websites, including the Vatican website, were used to encourage development and interesting aids in Catholic and church teachings. Alpha course and RENEW Internationals' "Why Catholic?" program were also mentioned.

### **Role of Women in the Church**

Some study of the "genius of women" was reported as well as women in scripture in various ways. A long list of ministries that women served in was reported across the country. High percentages (in some provinces more than 60%) had women on various diocesan and parish committees, councils and participated in or led lay formation groups. Parish councils also worked with other ministries and groups such as the Knights of Columbus on joint efforts.

### **Evangelization and Mission Assistance**

Catholic Missions In Canada was reported to be supported strongly. Local mission assistance including monetary support and donations of clothing, food and school supplies was also reported. Other missions supported were Esk-Omi Missions and St Francis Xavier Mission.

## **Lay Ministries**

Members participated in and coordinated Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults processes and sacramental preparation programs, including marriage preparation. Members were present throughout the church in activities and ministries as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, choir members, sacristans, pastoral council members and hospitality members, as well as on bereavement, finance, diocesan and liturgical committees.

One provincial council reported discussion of and prayer in a program regarding the sexual abuse of minors by clergy and the CCCB document, *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation*.

## **Ecumenism and Interfaith Endeavours**

Joint prayer services were attended, with women in the community invited to parish council meetings and social events. Parish councils participated in Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada and World Day of Prayer. One provincial council mentioned it had cooperated with an ecumenical ministerial association and delivered food to the homeless when the temperature dipped below minus 30 degrees.

## **Resources reported**

- *The Word Among Us* magazine
- diocesan, provincial and national League websites
- the Vatican website
- League resources including prayer booklets and services
- communiqués
- material from Alpha course
- various books and workshops
- *Shorter Christian Prayer* book

## **Other**

Most provincial councils reported that members observed the Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel through mass and devotion on April 26<sup>th</sup> and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8<sup>th</sup>.

A suggestion was made for parish councils to budget specifically for items required in spiritual development. Sharing of resources, particularly prayer services and programs, would benefit all chairpersons of spiritual development. A list of resources should be distributed regularly.

There were some challenges reported with the online survey and reporting system and knowing what members wanted and needed as far as spiritual reflection and development was a challenge. Perhaps a parish or diocesan survey to address that might be designed.

Prayers and reflections might be sent to those who did not attend meetings on a regular basis, to try to engage those women.

### **Fran Lucas**

#### **National President-Elect and Chairperson of Organization**



The implementation committee, struck by the national executive/board, and led by Sharon Ciebin, Lisa Henry, Sister Susan Scott and Life Member Jacqueline Nogier, worked conscientiously on the first year strategies approved in the 2018-2023 strategic plan. It was “all systems go” as the strategies to include, affirm and validate members (led by Sharon), to

reorganize the League (led by Lisa), and to market the League (led by Lisa) met via teleconference calls numerous times. The committee and working groups clocked more than 3,000 hours researching, culling information, collaborating, creating surveys and calling members across Canada for their input. More than 5,000 members took part in presentations on “The League of the Future—Year 1” to learn about the work accomplished to date and what was to come.

#### **Recruit Members and Maintain Membership**

The 2019 membership stood at 75,463. Membership in parish councils ranged from 1 to 279, all sharing the same love of the League. Parish councils continued to struggle with vacancies in the position of president-elect. In numerous parish councils where someone served as a president-elect, that person was unwilling to

take on the president's position. Reasons cited included a lack of time, energy or training. Members were engaged in fundraising and special events, with far fewer attending meetings.

The most popular method of recruiting members continued to be via some form of personal invitation, then through advertising in the church bulletin/bulletin board, followed by potluck dinners, membership teas and other social events. Several parish councils mentioned education was an incentive to join. High on the list of engaging new members were: welcoming them at meetings; having personal conversations with them; extending invitations to them; and gifting them with new member kits. Visibility in the parish by wearing a League pin and scarf while participating in ministries was a focus for a few parish councils, as was recruitment presentations at mass. Spiritual advisor support always had a positive impact. Several parish councils indicated a desire to increase its cultural diversity. Members who were no longer able to participate were delivered baking, visited in person, spoken to on the telephone and sent cards.

The presentation of service pins was highest on the list of how members were recognized. One base council in Military Ordinariate Provincial Council framed photographs of members with a short biography to recognize their League and community work, which were displayed in the church foyer.

Of 1,176 parish councils, 756 (or 64.3%) used the online system for membership administration.

### **Leadership Development**

Strategic planning sessions, including one that was web-based, were the most attended events delivered at regional, diocesan and provincial meetings. Members who participated in working groups for the implementation committee identified that opportunity as a unique source of skills utilization or development. While some League development days were offered, many indicated these did not occur in their area. Specific leadership development opportunities were rarely offered, which gave further rise to a lack of eligibility for leadership positions. Many provincial councils that had members participate in the Catholic Women's Leadership

Foundation's Leadership Program called on them to deliver presentations, which was readily accepted. Workshops held in conjunction with conventions were viewed as the most opportune time to have leadership sessions.

### **League Resource Material**

The *Constitution & Bylaws* continued to be the most popular resource. Different than in past years, the next "top three" in order of resources to have on hand were *The Canadian League*, *CWL Prays* and the *Executive Handbook*. Communiqués were mentioned as sources of inspiration, motivation and education. Online access was favourably acknowledged by some.

### **Annual Reports**

Annual reports were an important means of communicating with others in the parish council, community and country. As of December 31<sup>st</sup>, the League had 1,176 parish councils with 802 participating in the annual report survey. That was up almost seven per cent from last year. Requested changes were made to the questionnaire, which improved completion. New issues did surface, but national office worked hard to respond as quickly as possible. For the first time, age demographics were asked, and age ranges for more than 49,000 members were submitted. This information would be valuable for various aspects of League work.

The reviewing of minutes, either as a group or individually, was the method of choice used to complete the annual report. Monthly activity calendars and chairpersons' reports were valuable as well. The enhancement of the diocesan level having access to the survey was viewed positively as it allowed for monitoring of parish councils needing follow up.

### **Life Membership**

The League's 15 honorary life members and 335 life members continued to be valued for their many works at all levels of the League. They served as life member liaisons, workshop facilitators, researchers, parliamentarians, guides in discussion and on special projects and support in a multitude of ways.

Life member liaisons made contact with honorary and life members by way of communiques, e-mails, telephone calls and cards.

Members were recognized on their birthdays and when prayers were requested. The national life member liaison took on additional tasks of writing biographies and collecting photographs of new life members for submission to *The Canadian League*.

At the winter meeting in Winnipeg, the board was pleased to accept the following 11 new life members by motion:

- |                        |                                       |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Shirley Christo        | Brampton, Ontario                     |
| Chantal Devine         | Saskatoon, Saskatchewan               |
| Marie-Theresa Lamphier | Windsor, Ontario                      |
| Linda McClinton        | Prince George, British Columbia       |
| Susan Melchiorre       | Saskatoon, Saskatchewan               |
| Margaret Schwab        | Saskatoon, Saskatchewan               |
| Ruby Sharpe            | St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador |
| Ana Sousa              | Cambridge, Ontario                    |
| Barbara Thuen          | Winnipeg, Manitoba                    |
| Anna Tremblay          | North Bay, Ontario                    |
| Anne Vincelli          | Cornwall, Ontario                     |



Care for our  
**Common Home**



## Membership Statistics for the Year Ended December 31, 2019

<b>Provincial Council</b>	<b>Jan 1 2019</b>	<b>New</b>	<b>Reinstated</b>	<b>Did Not Renew</b>	<b>Paid Members</b>	<b>Deceased</b>	<b>Dec 31 2019</b>
<b>Alberta Mackenzie</b>	9,134	538	243	715	9,200	99	9,101
<b>B.C. &amp; Yukon</b>	8,475	523	273	765	8,506	120	8,386
<b>Manitoba</b>	2,202	56	42	160	2,140	36	2,104
<b>Military Ordinariate</b>	280	11	-	20	271	8	263
<b>New Brunswick</b>	1,866	37	12	163	1,752	38	1,714
<b>Newfoundland and Labrador</b>	505	16	4	31	494	3	491
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	3,728	74	57	225	3,634	74	3,560
<b>Ontario</b>	42,552	1,792	1,113	3,451	42,006	640	41,366
<b>Prince Edward Island</b>	1,844	28	27	95	1,804	30	1,774
<b>Quebec</b>	854	36	6	50	846	9	837
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	6,236	181	54	522	5,949	82	5,867
<b>Total</b>	<b>77,676</b>	<b>3,292</b>	<b>1,831</b>	<b>6,197</b>	<b>76,602</b>	<b>1,139</b>	<b>75,463</b>

## Council Statistics for the Year Ended December 31, 2019

<b>Provincial Council</b>	<b>Jan 1 2019</b>	<b>New</b>	<b>Reactivated</b>	<b>Amalgamated</b>	<b>Unpaid</b>	<b>Inactive</b>	<b>Disbanded</b>	<b>Dec 31 2019</b>
<b>Alberta Mackenzie</b>	157	-	-	-	2	-	-	155
<b>B.C. &amp; Yukon</b>	126	1	-	-	1	-	1	125
<b>Manitoba</b>	47	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
<b>Military Ordinariate</b>	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
<b>New Brunswick</b>	43	1	-	2	2	-	2	38
<b>Newfoundland and Labrador</b>	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	70	-	-	-	2	-	1	67
<b>Ontario</b>	526	3	3	-	2	-	1	529
<b>Prince Edward Island</b>	33	-	-	-	-	-	-	33
<b>Quebec</b>	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	136	-	1	-	3	-	1	133
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,187</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1,176</b>

**Pat Deppiess**  
**National Chairperson of Christian Family Life**



Sub-committee chairpersons and life members Evelyn Rigby and Joan Bona were unable to participate due to personal reasons. Life Member Nancy Simms kindly reported on vocations.

Congratulations and appreciation are due to the 11 provincial chairpersons of Christian family life for submitting an annual report of their numerous and tremendous works and acts of charity. In regard to how many parish councils (of those that submitted a report) had a standing committee chairperson, in 2018, there were 412 filled and 199 vacant, and in 2019 there were 392 filled and 198 vacant. Though a bit down, parish councils worked hard to do as much as they could. Chairpersons responded to the questions asked and even added many other good works done in the comments section.

**Marriage and Family**

Parish councils did an amazing job supporting marriage and families. Family enrichment programs were promoted, which included marriage encounter weekends for engaged couples, marriage preparation and natural family planning. Some parish councils gave a crucifix and card to newly married couples and hosted liturgical celebrations for couples celebrating special anniversaries.

**Sanctity of Life**

Sanctity of life was a very active and main focus of parish councils. All reported they had prayed regularly for the protection of life.

- One council dedicated a memorial to the unborn.
- They supported March for Life, pro-life fundraising dinners, Life Chain, vigils and 40 Days for Life events. Most parish

councils reported they had fundraised for these various initiatives and sold pro-life Christmas cards.

- Parish councils were active in advocating for the sanctity of life. They encouraged members to write letters, organize pro-life walks, circulate petitions and meet with their local members of parliament regarding the League's position on life.
- At least one-half of parish councils wrote to legislators advising them of the League position on Resolution 2019.01 Canada to Honour its Commitment to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Many attended the films *Unplanned* and *Fatal Flaws: Legalizing Assisted Death*.
- Parish councils donated to Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, Birthright International, Campaign Life Coalition, Pregnancy and Family Support Services and Priests for Life.
- Many participated in a Dying Healed program sponsored by LifeCanada.

While most parish councils had not yet provided the updated pro-life brochure to members and made them available to all parishioners, they said they would do so in the new year. Most reported they had not sponsored or attended a presentation on Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, again; they planned to do so in the coming year.

### **Ministry to Youth**

Parish councils reported having many young people in their parishes who participated in various roles in the church; choirs, lectors, ushers, cleaning, catechists, gardening, coffee service, etc. They sponsored many youth events and had started promoting World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal in 2022. Some provided small gifts and celebrations when youth received the sacraments. They supported summer camps, Catholic Christian Outreach, NET Ministries of Canada and Girl Guides of Canada. Several parish councils arranged a living rosary in May at their parish schools. Only six councils had a Catholic Girls' League but several expressed interest in this, St. Vincent de Paul youth groups and encouraging girl guides.

## **Ministry to Disabled**

Many parish councils reported their church had been made wheelchair accessible with designated spaces for wheelchairs. They also made the persons with disabilities feel welcome at the church and meetings. Some had presentations by L'Arche. Parish councils brought communion to homes of disabled persons, prayed with them, visited or called shut-ins, sent cards and provided transportation.

## **Ministry to Seniors**

Parish councils encouraged seniors to attend meetings, offering rides. They attended mass at nursing homes and also led the rosary, brought communion to seniors who were shut in, telephoned them to provide them with a friendly voice, and involved them in activities. Members supported Meals on Wheels. They encouraged newly retired women to share their faith stories, bringing new ideas and energy to the League. One parish council had a Christmas luncheon for seniors with carol singing.

## **Ministry to Widowed**

Most parish councils assisted at funerals, providing funeral lunches. Members were excellent at providing prayer and support after the death of a loved one. They called, sent cards, visited and sometimes gifted the person with a prayer shawl. Widows were invited to attend meetings and events. Some parish councils had bereavement programs that the widowed were encouraged to attend. One provincial chairperson gave a presentation to a group of widows about pre-planning for a funeral, last wishes and family involvement.

## **Ministry to Separated and Divorced**

Parish councils offered their time to talk if those affected by separation or divorce needed a non-judgmental confidant. They offered to babysit and invited them to join group outings. One parish council started a group for separated and divorced women to provide support. It experienced good results as the women found it really helpful to have a support network. They were going to open the group up to other parish councils in the area. Some reported having the brochure *Annulments Today—Merciful and Just* available in

their parish. Many parish councils were interested in getting copies of the brochure and to having a speaker. Some had a speaker on annulments, who was well received. Others looked forward to doing so in the future.

### **Vocations**

Parish councils supported the priests in their parish and especially helped those priests new to Canada. Vocations were well supported, and members responded with enthusiasm to inviting priests into their home. They prayed for vocations and at times adopted a seminarian by sending him letters, birthday cards and gifts. Priests, deacons and seminarians were invited to speak about their vocations, and parish councils hosted luncheons and dinners for priests and religious.

The reports from the provincial chairpersons were amazing and demonstrated their leadership qualities! They expressed certain concerns or challenges in participation of members for things such as life projects. They felt parish councils required more training in all facets of the standing committee. This may be improved with strategic planning initiatives.

At the national level, two articles were written and submitted to *The Canadian League*, one on annulment procedures and one on vocations; several communiques were sent, as well as spring and fall memos to parish councils. I responded to many telephone and e-mail queries and attended all national executive/board meetings. A new brochure *Annulments Today—Merciful and Just* was written and submitted to national office for purchase by councils interested in this important and very much misunderstood subject, and it appeared to be well-received.

So much great work by councils and so little space to report!

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Uniting Catholic women to grow in faith, and to  
promote social justice through service to the  
church, Canada and the world.

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## Marie C. Rackley

### National Chairperson of Community Life



#### Sub-Committee Chairpersons

- Dignity and Rights of Persons: Life Member Dorothy Johansen
- Refugees, Immigration and Citizenship: Madonna Clark
- Developing Countries: Irene Gallant

Eleven provincial chairpersons of community life submitted an annual report.

#### Dignity and Rights of Persons

Members continued to participate in information sessions on the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Parish councils respected those who could not fully help themselves and spent countless hours in aid of homeless shelters and soup kitchens. They continued to help those suffering from poverty with donations of clothing and food for their needs as reports of soup kitchens serving daily meals to an increased number of children and younger adults were heard.

Parish councils were generous in their support for those leaving abusive situations through financial donations to shelters and transition houses. They collected items for donations to shelters and supported walkathons and other fundraising events. Several volunteered at shelters and thrift stores that supported transition houses and provided Christmas gifts to families in shelters. Members provided phone support for a domestic abuse crisis line. They also had an educational component that included speaking at high schools and parishes about abuse and what help was offered.

There was an increase in bullying in schools, neighbourhoods and playgrounds, with children tortured by words and violence to the point of self-destruction. An increase in bullying through social media, where youth were targeted for all to see, was noticed. Several parish councils invited school guidance counsellors to their meetings for an anti-bullying information session, as well as the

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and local police departments. Increased awareness of anti-bullying strategies was necessary to help children in need, and much information was made available on the League website.

Parish councils continued to pray for Indigenous women and invited them to monthly meetings so members could hear firsthand about their struggles within society. They took part in activities such as the Native Women's Association of Canada's Faceless Doll Project and KAIROS Blanket Exercise, attended special masses for missing Indigenous women, visited those incarcerated, and on June 21<sup>st</sup>, celebrated National Indigenous Peoples Day, sponsored by the federal government.

Many parish councils reviewed *Building a Safe and Resilient Canada: Public Safety Canada 2018 Human Trafficking Consultations Report* released by the federal government. Human trafficking continued to be a concern and caused great damage to youth (as young as 12 years old) who became actively involved in the trade. Several parish councils reviewed the article "Human Trafficking Today," written by Life Member Dorothy Johansen and published in the fall issue of *The Canadian League*. They strongly supported the postcard campaigns on human trafficking by signing and sending the cards to government officials. Several parish councils invited the RCMP to speak at monthly meetings and opened these events to the parish community.

The Canada Summer Jobs Program attestation was a concern for many Christian organizations that had applied for summer students and did not qualify. Letters and cards were sent to the federal government as a follow up to Resolution 2018.01 Attestation Requirement on Canada Summer Jobs Program, and changes were subsequently made to the application. Parish councils continued to monitor to make sure the application was available for all organizations in Canada.

### **Social and Economic Justice**

Parish councils were active in volunteering countless hours to help their communities. Members could be seen at local food banks, soup kitchens, Canadian Red Cross, hospital gift shops and school



breakfast programs. They held fundraisers with donations made to Habitat for Humanity. Most parish councils participated in the HUG Project, where toiletries were collected and distributed to the needy.

Members visited women in local detention centres and worked with organizations such as the Elizabeth Fry Society, Coverdale Centre and John Howard Society. Guest speakers were invited to meetings and received a financial donation to help their cause. One parish council held a purse drive, with purses collected and filled with personal items and delivered to a women's centre.

### **Refugees, Immigration and Citizenship**

Members worked closely with refugees as hundreds arrived in communities from countries that had destroyed their families and taken away their freedom to live. Outreach programs were developed through parish councils, and members took part in English as a Second Language programs (ESL). Resolution 2016.01 Equal Access to Permanent Resident Status, an Amendment to the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, continued to be reviewed and monitored.

### **Development and Peace—Caritas Canada**

Although the national executive/board had suspended the national voluntary fund supporting Development and Peace—Caritas Canada's 1% Program, some dioceses supported the 2019 Share Lent program within their parishes. Parish councils also donated funds directly, but attached a note stating the funds raised were not to be allocated to the 52 programs under review by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Talks remained ongoing.

### **Developing Countries**

Parish councils continued to support the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) National Voluntary Fund, financially and with prayers, to help the struggles of Christians living in the Middle East and in support of the many works of the local church. At the 99<sup>th</sup> annual national convention held in Calgary, a motion was made to designate one special day a year as a National Day of Prayer for Christians in the Holy Land. The day chosen was the Feast of the Holy Family on December 29<sup>th</sup>. Plans were underway with CNEWA to assign a particular day each year to celebrate this event. Support

of Velma's Dream through national voluntary fund donations continued.

Parish councils supported programs such as Buy-a-Net Malaria Prevention Group, Canadian Food for Children, Chalice, Doctors Without Borders, Sleeping Children Around the World, Operation Eyesight International, Save a Family Plan, Samaritan's Purse and World Vision to name a few. They kept in touch with women's issues throughout various organizations and continued to monitor child labour in developing countries.

Parish councils needed to be praised and recognized for the work they did for those who needed assistance. Countless hours were contributed to the wellbeing of the organizations they worked with. Although many parish councils reported a vacant chairperson of community life, the work was done by the membership. As one member said, "it [was] what we should do as we [were] able and God's people need[ed] help." What a wonderful organization to belong to, a Christian organization that worked with Christian women for the betterment of Christ's people. May Our Lady of Good Counsel continue to bless each of you in your daily work.

### **Faith Anderson**

#### **National Chairperson of Education and Health**



#### **Sub-Committee Chairpersons**

- Catholic Education: Life Member Peggy McNeil
- Wellness and Sickness / Disease: Life Member Dr. Rayleen De Luca
- Environment: Rita Janes

The annual reports captured the accomplishments of members committed to dealing with issues related to this standing committee. Their achievements were vast and members could be commended for their efforts in addressing topics such as Catholic

education, literacy and continuing education, wellness and the environment, and for exploring genetics.

### **Catholic Education**

Parish councils were fully supportive of Catholic schools in their community. In provinces without Catholic schools, parish councils promoted the value of Catholic education and focused their energies on catechesis in the parish. Seventy per cent of parish councils reported being informed on local Catholic education and had made enquiries in regard to any needs; however, only 38% actively participated. Parish councils reported some members were teachers at Catholic schools and members of Catholic school boards.

Members identified needs and brought Catholic values to public schools through: donations of clothing, personal hygiene products and school supplies; assistance with school food programs, field trips, recess supervision, extracurricular activities, tutoring, Shrove Tuesday events, Advent activities; and by teaching the rosary. Some members participated in a parish volunteer program that involved entering the classroom once a month to teach a theme chosen by the school. One parish council provided funding for transportation for students to visit a local nursing home. Public speaking skills were developed through local and provincial contests. Grade 6 students were invited to write an essay on their priest and Catholic church, with a monetary prize provided for diocesan and parish winners. Parish councils supported a capital campaign to build a new school. Books were donated to a new school library and a donation plate was inserted in each book. Christmas donations were provided to students and families at a Catholic school. Supplies were provided to build prayer tables at schools and altar cloths for prayer centres in classrooms and chapels were donated. Christmas dinner for 400 students, teachers and staff was prepared. Parish councils helped high school students earn service hours. One parish council purchased Catholic books for a local Catholic school, encouraged use of a seed library and provided information to members on resources in the new library. Forty-four per cent of parish councils reported being aware of the family life programs taught in Catholic schools in their area or diocese. Members helped students read through the LOVE (Let Older Volunteers Educate) program. One

parish council reported actively monitoring a new sex education program recently introduced in the Province of Quebec.

Some members were personally responsible for the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) program and others sponsored candidates. They were involved in children and youth centred catechesis to adult faith formation through bible studies and parish and diocesan programs as well as volunteering as catechists and assistants. One parish council gave welcome cards to RCIA candidates at Easter.

### **Literacy and Continuing Education**

Life-long learning courses in local communities were promoted to senior members. Nova Scotia Provincial Council reported, "Members [were] very supportive of working and assisting others in their communities to improve their literacy and English Language Skills." Many mentored and tutored new immigrants and students, and participated in Family Literacy Day, sponsored by ABC Life Literacy Canada.

### **Scholarships and Bursaries**

Approximately 50% of parish councils reported having a list of scholarships and bursaries available that could be accessed by Catholic women to further their education. Many (64%) provided bursaries and scholarships to elementary, high school (47%) and some post-secondary students. Thirty-four per cent of parish councils indicated supporting the National Bursary Fund and Coady International Institute. One parish council established a community service award for its local Catholic elementary school. Prince Edward Island Provincial Council reported parish councils were aware of and/or financially supported a Catholic girls bursary, while Nova Scotia Provincial Council reported the Marguerite Burns and Alice Egan Hagan bursaries were available annually to members. Parish councils also supported the Catholic Women's Leadership Foundation with a few members enrolled in the course. Some provided funding for a Christian ethics awards, scholarships to Quill Plains Music Festival and to a music student. One parish council offered a bursary for students in Triunfo, Guatemala via Guatemala Hope. A bursary was provided by a parish council to a female

student enrolled in an adult continuing education program. Bursaries provided by parish councils varied in amounts.

The League gratefully acknowledges the following donations designated to enhance the national bursary fund.

• Annunciation, Prince Rupert	50.00
• Cathedral of the Holy Family, Saskatoon	150.00
• Christ the King, Courtenay	300.00
• Church of Our Lady Immaculate, Guelph	442.43
• Church of The Annunciation, Nipigon	100.00
• Corpus Christi, Edmonton	75.00
• Corpus Christi, Vancouver	40.00
• Good Shepherd, Brossard	50.00
• Holy Cross, Burnaby	100.00
• Holy Family, Deux-Montagnes	50.00
• Holy Family, Sechelt	40.00
• Holy Rosary, Wyoming	45.00
• Holy Spirit, Saskatoon	100.00
• Immaculate Conception, Delta	100.00
• Mary Mother of God, Oakville	200.00
• Notre Dame de Lorette, Lorette	25.00
• Notre Dame, Dawson Creek	60.00
• Notre Dame, North Battleford	200.00
• Our Lady of Fatima, Sydney River	25.00
• Our Lady of Lourdes, Toronto	25.00
• Our Lady of Lourdes, West Kelowna	150.00
• Our Lady of Mercy, Burnaby	30.00
• Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Chateauguay	50.00
• Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Labrador City	50.00
• Our Lady of the Assumption, Stratford	50.00
• Our Lady of The Lake, Blind Bay	20.00
• Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Russell	50.00
• Our Mother of Perpetual Help, New Liskeard	100.00
• Palmer Road, Palmer Road	25.00
• Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, Belleville	50.00
• Resurrection, Fort St. John	100.00

• Sacred Heart of Jesus, Marmora	25.00
• Sacred Heart, Kimberley	50.00
• Sacred Heart, Terrace	134.00
• Saint Mother Teresa of Kolkata, Halifax	20.00
• St. Aidan, Scarborough	125.00
• St. Albert, St. Albert	300.00
• St. Andrew, Fraser Lake	50.00
• St. Andrew, Vancouver	50.00
• St. Ann, Penticton	100.00
• St. Anne, Osoyoos	25.00
• St. Anne, Saskatoon	200.00
• St. Anthony, Drumheller	200.00
• St. Bartholomew, Scarborough	100.00
• St. Benedict, Sarnia	100.00
• St. Boniface, Scarborough	50.00
• St. Columba, East Point	25.00
• St. Francis of Assisi, Lincoln	20.00
• St. George, Crystal Beach	100.00
• St. Gerard, Yorkton	200.00
• St. Gregory, Islington	50.00
• St. James, Wilkie	80.00
• St. John The Baptist, Perth	100.00
• St. John Vianney, Lower Sackville	25.00
• St. Joseph, Kingston	50.00
• St. Joseph, Streetsville	150.00
• St. Joseph, Victoria	50.00
• St. Joseph's Basilica, Edmonton	125.00
• St. Jude, 100 Mile House	100.00
• St. Jude's, Vancouver	50.00
• St. Kevin, Montreal	50.00
• St. Louis, Louisdale	40.00
• St. Mark, Quispamsis	50.00
• St. Mary, Brampton	200.00
• St. Mary, Carleton Place	50.00
• St. Mary, Chilliwack	62.00

• St. Mary, East Bay	10.00
• St. Mary, Provost	50.00
• St. Mary-St. Cecilia, Morrisburg	25.00
• St. Matthew, Rocky Mountain House	200.00
• St. Michael The Archangel, Belleville	100.00
• St. Michael, Leduc	75.00
• St. Patrick, Napanee	50.00
• St. Patrick, Vancouver	100.00
• St. Peter, Ingonish Beach	50.00
• St. Peter, Winnipeg	25.00
• St. Peter's, Calgary	100.00
• St. Pius X, Vancouver	100.00
• St. Rita, Castlegar	100.00
• St. Roch, North York	25.00
• St. Simon St. Jude, Tignish	50.00
• St. Theresa, Fredericton	150.00
• St. Thomas More, Dartmouth	10.00
• St. Thomas of Villanova, Conception Bay South	50.00
• St. Vincent de Paul, Weyburn	300.00
• Star of The Sea, White Rock	160.00
• Swift Current, Swift Current	100.00

### **Wellness and Sickness/Disease**

Parish councils undertook a variety of means to inform members on health issues. Community wellness challenge presentations, seminars on preventing falls and safety on ice and organ donation, speakers on mental health, and presentations on Canada's food guide were some of the undertakings of parish councils. One parish council reported, "Members were made aware of the need for better resources and access to health care in our Northern communities."

Parish councils continued to support a variety of organizations including the ALS Society of Canada, Alzheimer Society of Canada, the Arthritis Society, Autism Canada, Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Mental Health Association, Canadian Red Cross, children's treatment centres, Children's Wish Foundation of Canada, Crohn's and Colitis Canada, Diabetes Canada, Grief to Grace retreats, Heart & Stroke Foundation, Kidney Foundation of

Canada, Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Relay for Life, Ronald McDonald House Charities Canada, Terry Fox Foundation and VON Canada. This truly was an indication that members supported organizations that function for the betterment of health of Canadians.

Only 15% of parish councils used the Mental Health Postcard to voice concern on mental health in Canada. Thirty-nine per cent were not aware of the postcard campaign and 46% did not take action. Parish councils (7%) reported supporting Canadian Blood Services' Partners for Life Program by donating blood.

The "12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care" initiative was well supported by parish councils. Nova Scotia Provincial Council reported, "Many councils [felt] that Palliative Care/Hospice Care [was] a very important issue and want[ed] to ensure that the increased awareness and focus remain[ed] and [was] not diminished especially in light of the legislative changes to Bill C-7." Services were held in parishes and homes. Parish councils invited neighbouring churches, distributed prayer cards, invited speakers, and provided refreshments and information. Some collected goodwill offerings for palliative and hospice care. Participants were invited to share their personal experiences. Letters were sent to government expressing members' concerns.

Parish councils supported the health and wellness of members and the community by financially supporting a Eucharistic ministry in a hospital and having a paramedic teach cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Presentations on genetically modified (organisms) foods were held. Donations were given to Queen Elizabeth Hospital Foundation that reached an amount significant enough to be listed on the donor wall.

### **Environment**

Parish councils (49%) reported participating in the "National Water Pledge Challenge." More than 2,000 pledges were received confirming members were consciously aware of their use of water at home.

B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council indicated 50% to 90% of parish councils participated in the challenge. Concentrating on water in



2019, councils acted on resolutions 1999.09 Bulk Fresh Water Resources, 2001.04 Water Quality in Canada, 2004.07 Water Use in Canada and 2005.06 Developing Countries and Water. Parish councils were aware of environmental issues and knowingly recycled (73%), eliminated styrofoam products (67%), eliminated use of plastic water bottles (52%), reduced water use (47%), used green bins for organic waste, composted, reduced paper use at meetings and avoided single use or disposable items. Members encouraged the use of reusable containers. B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council reported members were encouraged to restrict the use of plastic bags and cloth bags were used to distribute food hampers.

There was some participation by parish councils for the United Nations' World Water Day, Earth Day and the Earth Action Initiative promoted by the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations. Members participated in outdoor community clean ups, roadside or adopt-a-highway programs, planted trees, kept creeks and beaches clean, held a prayer service for the United Nations' World Water Day and cleaned church grounds.

Educational presentations around the national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*, were held. One parish council reported hosting a spiritual reflection luncheon with Sr. Susan Scott on the topic, "If Not Me, Then Who? If Not Now, Then When?" Saskatchewan Provincial Council reported hosting guest speaker Sr. Judy Schachtel who spoke on "New Understanding and Awakening of the Universe (Mystics and the Catholic Faith)." Parish councils studied Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* and several reported becoming more aware of climate change. One parish council reported attending the climate change strike in Montreal, while another introduced FOG (fats, oils, grease) cups. The cups and lids were compostable, biodegradable certified and approved for use in green bin programs. Funds were raised for a well for a needy community and one parish council reported sending water postcards to government. Another placed a water bottle at the back of the church and money collected was donated to the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax. Small inserts were placed in the parish bulletin regarding *Care for Our Common Home*. Parish councils made concerted

efforts to become aware and be educated on the environment and climate change.

### **Genetics**

Some parish councils reported they had a good understanding of genetics and received the free newsletter from the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute. The annual survey indicated there was still a need for more information in this area and its relation to the teachings of the church.

### **Comments**

All reports indicated parish councils were very active addressing the areas in this standing committee. So many initiatives were undertaken and this report was only the tip of the iceberg of activities. Parish councils indicated involvement in Catholic education, health and wellness, and environmental issues. The national initiatives provided such as “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care” and the “National Water Pledge Challenge” continued to be well received. Additional awareness on the Mental Health Postcard campaign, Canadian Blood Services’ Partners for Life Program and genetics was needed. More information on the National Bursary Fund and Coady International Institute would need to be explored in the future.

### **Doreen Gowans**

**National 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President and Chairperson of Communications**



Eleven of 11 provincial chairpersons of communications reported.

#### ***The Canadian League Magazine***

*The Canadian League* was widely embraced by members, particularly those who were unable to attend meetings regularly—especially senior members. It was the primary source for spirituality, advocacy, action, education, membership reminders, and new ideas regarding the strategic plan and League promotion. Articles in the

Winter 2019 issue widely used as a resource were “President’s

Message”, “The League Objects”, “Our Father Who Art in Heaven”, “Personal Budgeting for Peace of Mind”, “Cannabis, It is Time to Take Action – on Resolution Action Plans”, “Jesus – the Best Communicator”, “Core Purpose, Core Values, Mission Statement, Envisioned Future”, “The Road to Senegal” and “Listen to Silence.” The Fall 2019 articles that resonated with members were: “President’s Message”, “Comments from the National Spiritual Advisor”, “Highlights from the 99<sup>th</sup> Annual National Convention in Calgary”, “99<sup>th</sup> Annual National Convention Resolutions”, “Oral Reports”, “Addicted to Porn”, “Role of a Life Member”, “Dignity and Rights of Persons: Human Trafficking in Canada” and “Marguerite: A Woman Who Compassionately Lived Life on the Peripheries.” Evaluation of the spring issue was missing from some reports; however, popular articles from the issue included “The League Objects Continued”, “The Genius of Women”, “Annulment Process” and “Communication – Tips and Tools.” Though some reported some members did not read the magazine, chairpersons felt overwhelmingly that *The Canadian League* was a good, very good or excellent resource.

## **Media**

**Evangelization:** Parish councils invited local press to events with some of the following media used to assist in their mission to evangelize—*The Catholic Register* newspaper, Salt + Light TV, Vision TV and Eternal World Television Network (EWTN). Some parish councils supported Salt + Light Media, Vision TV and *The Catholic Register*. Most parish councils made use of media in various forms. Some promoted faith-based programs such as the televised Our Lady of Good Counsel mass on April 26<sup>th</sup>, her feast day, mass for shut-ins and daily televised masses. World Communications Day (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in June) sponsored by the Holy See was advertised. Two provincial councils reported they had watched the 2019 convention speakers on cwl.ca. Some parish councils used local media to advertise, with fewer submitting news releases. Few parish councils had a budget for advertising. Parish councils reported they had viewed the videos produced to promote the League and rated them as good, very good or excellent. Most

members made good use of the League website, Facebook and Twitter.

Resolution 1978.03 Catholic Press encouraged members to subscribe to and promote Catholic newspapers. Some parish councils financially supported or purchased Catholic newspapers or periodicals, with few having budgeted for publicity. A couple of parish councils financially supported EWTN and Salt + Light TV. Catholic publications accessed were *The B.C. Catholic* and *The Catholic Register*.

**Promotion of the League:** E-mail usage increased and was used to distribute meeting agendas, minutes and other pertinent information, with those not using e-mail sent information via regular mail. Others used parish websites, community websites and local radio stations and newspaper advertisements. The national website was promoted and used by most parish councils that sought resource information for meetings, functions and for members' personal knowledge.

**Evaluation and promotion of good content:** Those that monitored content were most concerned about abortion, euthanasia, palliative care and pornography. One provincial council reported less than one-half of parish councils monitored media content. Letters and e-mails were written and sent to elected representatives with telephone calls made to radio and television stations lodging complaints regarding inappropriate content, particularly against the airing of the television program series, *Mary Kills People* and the film, *The First Temptation of Christ*.

**Newsletters and bulletins:** Parish councils utilized parish bulletins, bulletin boards, e-mail handouts, posters, community web pages, promotional brochures, community calendars, diocesan websites, WhatsApp, telephone committees, text messaging, and face-to-face sharing during meetings to promote activities. Few reported having a newsletter; however, those that did, reported less than one-half were published annually, one-third published quarterly and less than one-quarter bi-annually. Parish bulletins and newsletters remained the primary method of communicating.

**Media Relations:** Parish councils reached out to the media inviting them to attend events and sent material to be published as well as thank you cards after an event.

**Pornography:**

Mailings of Pornography Hurts postcards (age verification) were sent to government representatives from many parish councils. Members used a variety of means to educate themselves about the influence of pornography on children. One parish council held a pornography and human trafficking round table discussion at its monthly meetings, others read articles, reviewed current legislation, and attended seminars and conferences. Some reported they had not taken many steps to become informed on the influence pornography had on children and adults. Members were encouraged to visit the website [fightthenewdrug.org](http://fightthenewdrug.org) for current information. During the 2019 federal election, members were encouraged to source their respective politicians' views before voting. Others viewed the *Over 18* or *Red-Light Green Light* documentaries.

Some parish councils contacted their members of parliament regarding Resolution 2017.02 Mandatory Age Verification Mechanisms for Adult Pornographic Websites and requested government enact laws that required these mechanisms to prevent minors from accessing pornographic websites. Other parish councils reported monitoring the federal government's response to this issue. One parish council reported a letter of concern regarding adult pornographic websites was made available for all parishioners to sign. The letter was sent to an elected official who informed them the letter and postcards were not accepted and not effective.

Eight provincial councils reported councils had acted on the following resolutions:

- 2017.02 Mandatory Age Verification Mechanisms for Adult Pornographic Websites
- 2004.11 Link Between Violent, Graphic Imagery and Aggressive Behaviour and the Mechanics of Killing
- 2002.11 Responsible Internet Use for Children
- 1978.03 Catholic Press

## **Strategic Planning**

Most parish councils participated in a strategic planning workshop, while some had not presented the strategic planning initiative. One-half of parish councils were made aware that changes and exciting times were coming. Most of the strategic planning information had come to the parish councils through communiques and *The Canadian League*, with some aware of the new goals. Few parish councils used the League website for updates on the strategic plan, with fewer yet reciting the CWL Prayer for Renewal. Unfortunately, one provincial council reported that none of the strategic planning information on the website or in *The Canadian League*, or in the workshop had been shared with its members.

## **Summary Comments and Suggestions from Provincial Chairpersons**

### **Challenges:**

- Finding a chairperson and those willing to take on leadership roles was difficult.
- Newsletters were time consuming and many found it hard to keep a balance between not enough and too much information.
- Keeping members engaged and enthusiastic was challenging.
- Difficulty in keeping e-mails interesting, informative, inspiring and not too wordy was noted.
- Communicating with members who did not use e-mail was difficult.
- Accessing reliable and affordable Internet due to geographical location was a challenge for some parish councils.

### **Positive Feedback:**

- Communication was noted as an excellent way to promote the League.
- Communication was the key to attracting and informing members, parishioners and the local community of important and current issues faced.
- English was a second language for many members; however, they were kept informed through newsletters.
- Parish councils felt successful in improving the communication to their membership through enhancing and updating the

newsletter, e-mailing monthly, sending quarterly updates by mail and keeping the website fresh and current.

- Designing and implementing two new websites helped form countless friendships from all regions of the province.
- “There are many ways that our children and families can be exposed to values that are not in accordance with Church teachings, and it is only by our efforts that we can work to ensure quality of life for the next generation.”
- One provincial council would have liked more training on standing committee’s roles and responsibilities.
- E-mails to members keeping them abreast of current events and activities were appreciated by most members. One council was very supportive of one another and as a result it drew in members because of the dynamic that was readily visible to the community.

**Cathy Bouchard**  
**National Chairperson of Resolutions**



“Through our resolutions process, the League addresses injustices and advocates for change. Key issues are addressed at top levels of government; to be the hands, face, feet; this is the key. As a human race we need to stand in solidarity, to try and comprehend what is truly, humanly speaking, incomprehensible. Many examples may be found in the list of current resolutions.” (*S’mores Development Days*, pg 47).

From the annual reports returned for the resolutions standing committees, “it [was] easy to note the dedication of the women in [T]he Catholic Women’s League across Canada. Despite some issues with forming resolutions committees, and finding members to sit as the chairs of the committees, members endeavour[ed] to follow the action plans of resolutions [adopted] at the various levels of the League.”

The provincial chairpersons shared information, suggestions, ideas and presentations. Networking between parish councils and

provincial councils was an excellent tool for aiding the resolutions process. This process needs to continue at all levels.

Five hundred and thirteen responses to the annual reports were received. Sixty per cent of those who responded were the chairperson of the committee, and 80% of the respondents managed both the resolutions and legislation standing committees. Eighty-eight per cent of respondents referred to communiques and annual reports from other levels.

It was impressive to learn that members and parish councils were active writing letters, e-mailing, phoning, signing petitions, sending postcards and visiting politicians. Members were made aware of resolutions through guest speakers, newsletters and general meetings. Working with resolutions mobilized members to address issues locally through outreach. The municipal level of government received the most in-person contact, followed by provincial and federal government contacts. Members and parish councils wrote about provincial issues in the areas of health or education. To assist members in letter-writing campaigns, sample letters had been drafted and were distributed to parish councils and attached to communiques. Parish presidents were encouraged to copy these documents for members as a guide for personal letter-writing at home or to have a letter-writing evening for their parish council.

### **Research and Preparation of Resolutions and Briefs**

Two resolutions were adopted at the national convention:

- 2019.01 Canada to Honour its Commitment to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* gifted by the B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council under the Christian family life standing committee.
- 2019.02 Canadian Support for the United Nations *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* gifted by the Ontario Provincial Council under the legislation standing committee.

### **Provincial and National Levels, Presentation of Resolutions to Government**

Several provincial councils met with provincial government representatives to present the year's resolutions. Some continued to work toward securing a full delegation meeting date with provincial



cabinet members to present outstanding and unresolved resolutions. Due to the federal election in the fall, delegates from the national resolutions committee were not able to meet with federal government representatives.

### **Issues for consideration for resolutions and letter writing**

Members were most passionate about medical assistance in dying and conscience rights, hospice and palliative care, home care, mental health (especially in youth), human trafficking, pornography and aboriginal communities. Additional common themes reported included child poverty, the plight of refugees, pro-life, medication labelling, and gender identity and expression.

### **Challenges**

A philosophical challenge in the area of resolutions was to increase members' understanding of how much the League's advocacy, through resolutions, had the power to effect change. There were a number of challenges to creating and working on a resolution. Trying to identify the issue being spoken to and then focussing on the desired outcome in preparing a resolution was a concern. An attitude of ownership could lead to frustration when a resolution moved on to another level. If a resolution was returned for more work, parish councils needed direction on what more was needed. There was a need for parish councils to access the assistance that was available each step of the way from provincial and diocesan chairpersons as well as the manuals and procedures of the process.

### **Accomplishments**

Parish councils recorded several positive ideas about their work with resolutions. They encouraged members to choose resolution issues that were important to them and work on those issues. The details of resolutions and action plans helped members communicate the League's concerns. Making members aware of the various resolutions proposed or adopted created an awareness of the global or far-reaching thinking that was happening at the provincial and national levels. The chance to be involved in standing up for church values at the various levels of government, inspired women to join parish councils. Members received responses to many of their letters, and some councils at each level met with members of

parliament every year. It would have been wonderful to see some resolutions enacted into law. Members who attended the national resolutions dialogue and business sessions benefitted greatly in thought process and understanding.

### **Conclusion**

The League's role in Canada and the world was promoted through the work of resolutions. The creation and study of resolutions encouraged increased interest and skills in initiating, researching and writing resolutions. The courageous efforts of members to persevere were the core of what resolutions were about. As members embraced changes within the League's structure and changes to the resolutions process, they were encouraged to take a leap of faith and worked collectively to address issues that impacted society.

### **Betty Colaneri**

#### **National Chairperson of Legislation**



**Sub-Committee Chairpersons:** Life Members Jacqueline Nogier and Wilma Vanderzwaag

Legislation impacts nearly every aspect of life—it organizes and protects the rights of everyone in the community, province and country. As members of society, it is an obligation and responsibility to be educated and aware of existing legislation. In doing so, members can develop an understanding of how it affects municipalities, the country and the environment.

The provincial chairpersons of legislation and members worked together in understanding the importance of this position and were conscientious in monitoring legislation at all levels of government. Where the position was vacant, parish councils worked as a team to report to members the initiatives the federal, provincial and municipal governments took. Parish councils requested to be added to the mailing lists of their political representatives so they could be at the forefront of issues discussed at the various levels. Keeping current on the status of bills or monitoring legislation could be a

time consuming and daunting task, however the provincial chairpersons diligently persevered.

Resolution 2019.02 Canadian Support for the United Nations *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* was adopted at the national convention and fell under the legislation standing committee. Parish councils acted on this resolution by writing letters to the prime minister and local members of parliament indicating support of the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* as well as monitoring the federal government's response to this resolution. Members were also given a list of websites and printed materials to increase knowledge of the hazards of nuclear warfare.

Councils at all levels were encouraged to continue monitoring the federal government and writing letters to the prime minister and the minister of justice and health regarding Resolution 2018.03 Legislate Designation of Hospice/Palliative Care Services in Facilities to Exclude Medical Assistance in Dying funding.

**Federal Bills monitored and/or acted on nationally:**

- C-45 *An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other Acts*
- C-48 *An Act respecting the regulation of vessels that transport crude oil or persistent oil to or from ports or marine installations located along British Columbia's north coast* Intended to formalize a crude oil tanker moratorium on the north coast of British Columbia and set penalties for contravention of this moratorium.
- C-50 *An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (political financing)*
- C-57 *An Act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act*
- C-69 *An Act to enact the Impact Assessment Act and the Canadian Energy Regulator Act, to amend the Navigation Protection Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*
- C-75 *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*

- C-76 *An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (Elections Modernization Act)*
- C-87 *An Act respecting the reduction of poverty*
- C-211 *An Act respecting a federal framework on post-traumatic stress disorder*
- S-215 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sentencing for violent offences against Aboriginal women)*
- C-233 *An Act to respecting a national strategy for Alzheimer's disease and other dementia*
- C-243 *An Act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy*
- C-255 *An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (appeal process for temporary resident visa applicants)*
- C-257 *An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (sugar content labelling)*
- C-262 *An Act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*
- C-277 *An Act providing for the development of a framework on palliative care in Canada*
- C-316 *An Act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act (organ donors)* Intended to authorize the Canada Revenue Agency to enter into an agreement with a province or territory regarding the collection and disclosure of information required for establishing or maintaining an organ and tissue donor registry in the province or territory.
- C-326 *An Act to amend the Department of Health Act (drinking water guidelines)*
- C-332 *An Act to provide for reporting on compliance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*
- C-336 *An Act regarding the right to know when products contain toxic substances*
- C-404 *An Act to amend the Assisted Human Reproduction Act* Intended to decriminalize payment to surrogates and donation of sperm or ovum.

- C-418 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)* Relating to Resolution 2017.04 Protection from Coercion of Conscience for Healthcare Professionals.
- S-228 *An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (prohibiting food and beverage marketing directed at children)*
- S-240 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (trafficking in human organs)*

### **Provincial Bills:**

- Alberta Bill 207 *Conscience Rights (Health Care Providers) Protection Act*
- British Columbia Bill M210 *Tobacco and Vapour Products Control (Vulnerable Adolescents Protection from E-Cigarettes (VAPE)) Amendment Act, 2019*
- Nova Scotia Bill 152 *Plastic Bags Reduction Act*
- Nova Scotia Bill 185 *Affordable Hearing Aids for Seniors Act*
- Ontario Bill 13 *Time to Care Act (Long Term Care Homes Amendment, Minimum Standard of Daily Care, 2018* Intended to require long-term care homes to provide its residents with at least four hours a day of nursing and personal support services, averaged across the residents.
- Quebec Bill 21 *An Act respecting the laicity of the State*
- Ontario Bill 58 *Family Caregiver Day Act, 2018*
- Ontario Bill 63 *Right to Timely Mental Health and Addiction Care for Children and Youth Act, 2018*
- Ontario Bill 74 *The People's Health Care Act, 2019*
- Ontario Bill 82 *Single-Use Plastics Ban Act, 2019*
- Ontario Bill 91 *Peter Kormos Act (Trillium Gift of Life Network Amendment), 2019* Intended to change tissue donations requirements from a consent required approach to an implied consent approach, with opt out ability.
- Ontario Bill 128 *An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act*

### **Other Actions Taken by Members:**

- Chairpersons provided lists of members of parliament and members of the legislative assembly as a reference.
- Presentations were made to educate members and parishioners.

- Petitions were circulated and signed.
- Members were encouraged to follow the calendar for the House of Commons and become familiar with the bills coming from parliament and what stage they were achieved.
- *Hansard*, a printed record of proceedings for the provincial and federal government was used as a resource.
- Members were informed of the pending federal election and where the candidates stood on critical issues.
- The *Laudato Si'* encyclical was read as a reference as it related to legislation pertaining to the environment.
- Parish councils accessed the League's provincial and national websites as a reference to inform members of the League's position on issues of concern.

A large majority of councils expressed the challenge of filling the position of chairperson of legislation. Though many did not have an active chairperson, they were still able to ensure the tasks that referred to the position were fulfilled. Parish councils continued to stress the importance of keeping abreast of legislation regardless of the vacant position.

### **Recommendations:**

- Have sub-committee chairpersons to help with the time restraint of monitoring and researching federal and provincial government legislation.
- Have a sub-committee chairperson to interpret proposed bills, their contents, how they work and an explanation of legislative terms.
- Prepare a flow chart of how bills go through parliament, outlining the stages so members have a better understanding of the process.
- Stimulate interest with ongoing issues to update members.
- Hold a workshop for better understanding.
- Seek members that have a specific interest in politics.
- Educate members on how to search for information on legislation.
- Look for interesting ways to convey information to the members.

- Join with other standing committees to try to influence government action.
- Invite younger members that would have interest in legislation and computer research to assist.
- Focus on an important major issue rather than be overwhelmed by many.
- Create a way of explaining the terms that are referred to in the bills, so members have a better understanding of what is being referenced.
- Hold more workshops on the importance of legislation and how it affects daily life.
- Legislation topics should always be included on the agenda for meetings (even if the position is vacant), to bring issues of concern to members for discussion and action.

Legislation was a way for members to create social change. By working together, with a united voice, members could make a difference that could impact society. It was essential that members put their faith in action through legislation for the good of their parishes, communities, provinces, country and for the *Care of Our Common Home*.

**Margaret Ann Jacobs**  
**National Past President and Chairperson of Laws**



It was a unique experience reading and comparing the annual reports filed by past presidents, joyfully illuminating the work undertaken in their provincial councils with the online survey submitted by parish councils (143 pages). Indeed, Canada is vast with different demographics reflecting different parts of the country. The one constant shining through was the pride reflected by past

presidents and their unfathomable desire to sustain and improve the League regardless of where they lived.

### **Serve in a Consultative Capacity**

Nationally, 46% of past presidents had been a member for more than 25 years, with the largest majority reflecting the 65-74 year age group. More than one-half always attended executive, general and spiritual meetings and events. Eighty-three per cent of parish presidents felt supported and encouraged by past presidents' help.

### **Archives and History**

The majority of past presidents (70%) were responsible for archives with other members also appointed to this role. Historical files included photo albums (84%), books of life (82%), deceased members' histories (61%), history books (51%), financial records, past executive lists, membership renewal data, executive and general meeting minutes, and records of pin and award recipients. Much of this was stored (indefinitely) in filing cabinets, bankers boxes, and on memory sticks, CDs and DVDs located at the church in the hall or office and reviewed only as required. One past president made a presentation to a parish council on the process of archiving while another distributed a brochure on archiving procedures.

### **Study and Implementation of the *Constitution & Bylaws***

Although 96% of parish councils reported having a copy of the *Constitution & Bylaws* and 90% had a copy of the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*, 46% rarely (if ever) accessed either to help guide a decision or help with the processes or procedures. More than one-half of parish councils (59%) had their own policy manual, updating it most often whenever a policy was changed. Advice was rarely sought from the diocesan executive (37%), provincial executive (48%), national executive (49%) or national office (50%) and life members (never-37%, rarely-34%), although the spiritual advisor was consulted monthly (37%).

### **Other Duties as Assigned by the President**

Past presidents actively promoted the parish council in church and community events; participated on the nominations and elections committee; explained resolutions and levels of the League; planned and attended conventions; organized spiritual, social and fundraising events; sat on task forces; prepared spreadsheets and



agendas; accessed surveys/reports; offered technology training; monitored websites; prepared newsletters; and organized honour guards, prayer shawl ministries and centennial celebrations.

Nationally, 67% of past presidents supported the implementation of the envisioned future of the League through *The Catholic Women's League of Canada Plans Strategically 2018-2022* by presenting workshops, participating in surveys, reading updates in *The Canadian League* and initiating discussions and prayer at meetings.

### **Laws (National Level)**

In an attempt to comply with the League's communication plan, the toll-free number for national office was retired. Greater focus was placed on following the "chain of command" parish ↔ diocese ↔ province ↔ national. As national chairperson of laws, questions facing councils were addressed with the guidance of past or current executive members, honorary life members and the executive director. Every effort was made to offer consistent succinct advice with the guidance of wise mentors.

### **Challenges and Successes**

The challenges facing the League were not new and included the reluctance of (younger) members to accept leadership roles, demands on time by other parish and community organizations, and computer literacy and technological roadblocks.

The greatest success stories were embodied in the glowing reports of unique parish projects planned and executed cooperatively with oversight by experienced past presidents. Comments were shared about the materials archived when churches closed and parish councils disbanded. Previous parish councils' histories were documented and tributes prepared for deceased members, including stories of early years in the parishes. Brava! Past presidents set an excellent example for future past presidents and parish councils to follow.

Past presidents, may your knowledge, expertise and abiding love of the League sustain you as members move into the next century "For God and Canada."

## **Anne-Marie Gorman**

### **National President and Chairperson of International Relations**



In 2019, there were occasions to be directly involved with both Catholic organizations and faith groups outside the Catholic tradition.

A report was prepared from input of all national table officers upon the request of World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) Vice President General Maribeth Stewart Blogodowski. WUCWO was seeking information on how organizations were addressing the

four resolutions adopted at the 2018 conference in Dakar, Senegal in October:

- 1) A Healthy Planet Depends on All of Us
- 2) Let Us Take Care of the Family in Difficult Situations, Especially its Most Vulnerable Members
- 3) Let Us Eliminate Discrimination and Violence Against Women
- 4) Let Us Educate to Respond to the Call to Holiness

In June, I participated in an intense one-day session at Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center, Marriottsville, Maryland. Thirty men and women (including young adults), from many religions across the continent, met for the North American consultation for Religions for Peace. The goal was to study five academic papers and make combined responses to be shared at its world assembly in Lindau, Germany in August. The five papers considered were:

- 1) *Advancing Shared Well-Being by Promoting Integral Human Development* (Jeffrey Sachs)
- 2) *Advancing Shared Well-Being by Promoting Just and Harmonious Societies* (Dr. Katherine Marshall)
- 3) *Advancing Shared Well-Being by Protecting the Earth* (Gay Gardner)

- 4) *Caring for Our Common Future: Advancing Shared Well-Being by Preventing and Transforming Violent Conflicts* (Dr. Mark Owen)
- 5) *Positive Peace as Shared Well-Being* (Dr. William F. Vendley)

National President-Elect Fran Lucas and I attended the 99<sup>th</sup> annual convention of the National Conference of Catholic Women (NCCW) in Atlanta, Georgia, leaving directly after the national post-convention meeting August 22<sup>nd</sup> and returning August 24<sup>th</sup>. Presiding was NCCW National President Maribeth Stewart Blogodowski. I brought greetings to the conference on behalf of the 75,000 members of the League. Presentations by the three commissions, composed of women from across the United States of America—service, leadership and spiritual—each one hour in length, provided updates on what the council focussed on for one year. The environment was a significant focus, as well as nurturing local councils. An evening screening of the film, *Pray: The Story of Patrick Peyton*, was enjoyed by many registrants. The total registration for the conference was 559, which included 402 voting delegates.

## **Judy Look**

### **Alberta Mackenzie Provincial President**



The presidents of the diocesan councils were: Jan Myhre, Calgary; Mary Molloy, Edmonton; Christine Becher, Grouard-McLennan; Shirley Gutierrez, Mackenzie; and Lola Alsmo, St. Paul.

The League was alive and well with 9,101 members in 155 councils with 109 parish councils reporting. *Care for Our Common Home* was the number one priority for all

diocesan councils whether the focus was

- environmental—recycle, reuse, reduce and working on Resolution 2018.02 Setting a Standard for Products Marketed as “Flushable”
- spiritual—growth in prayer, spiritual development, celebrations

of deceased sisters, World Day of Prayer and special celebrations of Our Lady of Good Counsel

- sanctity of life—participating in the March for Life, working on Resolution 2019.01 Canada to Honour its Commitment to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and supporting Rachel’s Vineyard
- community needs—challenging governments to exclude medical assistance in dying from palliative care hospices, continuing the Pornography Hurts campaign, writing letters protesting the Canada Summer Jobs Program attestation, praying “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care” and working on Resolution 2019.02 Canadian Support for the United Nations *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*

All five diocesan councils reported embracing the strategic plan in various ways. Efforts in this area included presentations on *The Future of the League—Year 1* at fall, regional and council meetings; encouraging members to join working groups; encouraging councils to adopt the pillars of faith, service and social justice as a format for their work and educating members on the plan.

Continued professional development was encouraged. Resources such as websites, communiqués, *The Canadian League* and Catholic publications were used to help increase growth in knowledge on various subjects. Parish councils used the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure* and the *Constitution & Bylaws* to educate about the workings of the League. Attendance at conventions, regional meetings, workshops and retreats contributed to members’ growth.

To run more efficient meetings, some parish councils turned to *Robert’s Rules of Order* and the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure* as well as the *Executive Handbook*. Mentoring for presidents came mostly from past presidents.

Communicating with members through online newsletters, bulletins, prayer lists and e-mails kept members informed. Some parish councils shared the results of the online survey with members.

The involvement of spiritual advisors varied between diocesan councils, with some playing very active roles and others much less. For most parish councils, the support of the spiritual advisor was paramount.

Memorial services for deceased members, funeral honour guards, funeral lunches, scholarships, fundraising, visiting shut-ins, mass ministry, telephone committees, retreats, pro-life events, conventions, workshops, regional meetings, working on resolutions, guest speakers, milestone celebrations and prayer services continued to be activities of parish councils.

Challenges included:

- membership—recruiting younger members, retention of members, how to work with shut-ins, keeping members interested
- leadership development—lack of members taking executive positions
- funding—funds available for presidents to attend conventions and other meetings
- communications with national office—the online annual report survey and information around memberships

Other areas mentioned include developing policy and procedure manuals, technology and time commitment.

Diocesan presidents reported they were proud of parish council presidents. They appreciated their hard work, determination and resolve in keeping their parish council a vital part of the League. They admired their creativity and flexibility as they faced challenges presented to them. They also appreciated the work of their members as they developed strategies and programs to share with their parish council counterparts.

The work of the five diocesan presidents and the parish councils was outstanding. The love of the League permeated the reports as they embraced change without losing focus on faith, service and social justice—pillars that have been the foundation of the League from its beginning.

**Gisela Montague**  
**B.C. & Yukon Provincial President**



- One hundred and three of 126 councils reported.
- One hundred per cent of diocesan councils reported.

**Informing Members**

Sources of information reported most frequently were *The Canadian League* (85%), followed closely by national and provincial communiqués and websites. Though the survey did not offer the diocesan level as an option for obtaining information, it was the medium diocesan presidents used regularly to not only share information from national and provincial levels but also to provide specific action items. Parish bulletins and conventions were also used.

**National Priorities**

National priorities most acted upon were: opposing medical assistance in dying and the Canada Summer Jobs Program attestation; protecting rights of the pre-born under the United Nations *Convention of the Rights of the Child*; and promoting *Care for Our Common Home*, standards for labelling of products deemed flushable and the United Nations *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*.

These topics were discussed at meetings and explained in newsletters. Parish councils engaged standing committee chairpersons, and letters were written to government officials expressing concerns. Approximately 40% of parish councils arranged to have speakers at meetings.

**Communication with Spiritual Advisors**

Almost all parish councils reported the spiritual advisor was supportive; however, only 45% attended monthly meetings. Other duties in and outside of the parish kept spiritual advisors from meetings. Very few parish councils stated the spiritual advisor was not supportive of the League. Cultural differences were noted in

some parish councils as a reason for spiritual advisors not fully understanding the League's role.

### **Council Policy & Procedure Manual**

Most parish councils had a local policy and procedure manual and found it beneficial to have one, but did not use it all the time. Some parish councils without a manual reported they would like to have one and would need help to develop one. One diocesan president made it a priority to create a manual once she becomes past president. Another diocesan president reported planning a workshop, and at one diocesan meeting, a video was produced and forwarded to parish presidents.

### **Foster Open Communication**

Parish presidents provided an annual summary of activities to all members. Parish councils communicated via e-mail, oral reports, written reports and newsletters. Some diocesan presidents reported dealing with tension in parish councils, caused by personality conflicts and conflicts between new and former executives. A need existed for open, proactive communication between pastoral councils and the corresponding parish council. One diocesan president was curious to see how parish councils get input from members to formulate annual plans and projects.

### **Resources Used at Meetings**

The following resources were used: *Constitution & Bylaws*, *Executive Handbook*, council policy and procedure manuals, *Robert's Rules of Order*, *National Manual of Policy and Procedure* and *Leading the League*.

### **Promote Active Leadership in Councils**

Most parish councils had a president, and in one diocese, 72% had held the position before. In another diocese, five parish presidents stepped down but let their names continue to be used. Some parish councils challenged members to step up to the executive level and standing committees. One parish council developed a flyer with the title, "Do You Want to Make a Difference?" Another parish president remarked on the change in members' confidence and ability when they took on an executive position. Parish councils were encouraged to apply for the leadership fund. Diocesan and

provincial leadership funds and the National Development Fund were used by parish councils. Attending conventions was promoted by incentives at the diocesan and provincial level and were well used. Not all delegates to conventions and meetings were fully subsidized by parish councils, and such subsidization should be more encouraged. One diocesan president reported 61% of parish presidents had been members for 15 years or less. Most parish councils had received *The League of the Future—Year 1* presentation on the update of the strategic plan.

### **Assistance when Assuming President**

Parish presidents reported the immediate past president was the most relied upon resource. More assistance came from past presidents, the current executive and life members.

### **Greatest Challenges in Transitioning to President**

The most significant challenge for parish presidents was keeping members interested and having to rely on fewer people to do the job. Feeling overwhelmed, filling executive roles, amount of paperwork and e-mails, resistance to new ideas, meeting expectations, feeling undertrained, finding time, member criticism, public speaking, lack of confidence, resistance to new ideas, technology, delegation and dealing with personality conflicts were other challenges in transitioning to president. New members with young families were unable to attend or participate and one parish president stated that women find when they join the League “they get another job.” One diocesan president reported focusing on all the goals and issues the League is involved in as a challenge encountered. Many councils did not have the president-elect position filled.

### **National Theme**

Most presidents found it beneficial to have a national theme and agreed with the change in theme with each national president.

### **What Makes You Most Proud of Your Council?**

Teamwork, how much was accomplished with such few members, being a welcoming parish council, support, energy, enthusiasm and involvement of active members who comprised one-third of members, participation in conventions, spiritual programs and fellowship within the church were sources of pride for parish



presidents. Overwhelmingly consistent comments included—members worked well together, were supportive of each other, had great love, were determined, were proud of the achievements, and were prayerful, considerate and respectful. Members worked as teams and were particularly active in special events. One parish president was thankful for having a life member who wrote important resolutions and brought great information to meetings.

One diocesan council focused on faith, service and social justice and changed the format of the two interim meetings from reports to workshops, including “Opening Doors to Social Justice”, “Communication our Service and our Future”, “Our Faith-Built on Solid Rock” and “Mentoring Wisdom-The Art of Servant Leadership”. Another diocesan council accomplishment was hosting the provincial convention and establishing a new parish council. A special travel fund was developed by one parish council for the annual national convention in Montreal, Quebec.

### **Comments/Suggestions**

One diocesan president suggested having an online calendar or project management software so that every member could log in, see what has happened, track the progress and become involved. Managerial and project applications existed that would keep a record of all that was done. It would be good to have one that could be used throughout all levels, rather than continually training people on ever-changing technology.

Another diocesan president reported speaking for almost all parish councils that they were hanging on in the hopes that the future changes in the League would give them new life. One parish council reported starting a “Do you know” section in the parish bulletin with tidbits, sometimes as simple as an explanation of the colours of the League crest. To simplify paperwork, one parish council used a whiteboard agenda, had simplified reports and encouraged the use of websites. Another parish council used job sharing on committees and built teams to work on special events. One parish council suggested diocesan councils send out annual report surveys using hyperlinks. One diocesan president instituted a “Questions/Comments” box at meetings for members to have the

option of asking questions anonymously. This resulted in some procedural changes and ideas for future workshops and programs.

### **Provincial President's Activities**

My second year as provincial president was as busy as the first year. I attended my parish council meetings as well as four Vancouver diocesan council meetings. I brought greetings from the provincial council to the Vancouver Diocese's sisters' appreciation dinner and St. Luke (Maple Ridge) Parish Council's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary where I presented an anniversary certificate. I prepared and chaired the provincial spring meeting at St. Nicholas (Langley) Parish and, in September, presented a workshop on "Communiqués" to the newly elected executive of the Vancouver Diocesan Council.

I attended the LifeCanada Gala where Raymond Arroyo from Eternal World Television Network was the guest speaker, and participated in the spring and fall national executive/board meetings. I enjoyed being a member of the board. One highlight was the annual national convention in Calgary, Alberta, where I represented the provincial council.

B.C. & Yukon Chairperson of Resolutions Sharon Ciebin organized a panel of speakers who gave a presentation on human trafficking. As I was attending Prince George and the Nelson diocesan conventions, B.C. & Yukon First Vice-President and Chairperson of Spiritual Development Catherine L'Heureux represented me at the Knights of Columbus' annual general meeting and state convention.

I read the proposed resolutions to the provincial convention. Many e-mails flew back and forth in preparation for the convention in beautiful Nanaimo. Victoria President Christa Grillmair and her team hosted a successful gathering at the Coast Bastion Hotel, right by the ocean. Bishop Gary Gordon (Victoria) was instrumental in organizing a panel of First Nations people as keynote speakers. The opening mass was drummed in followed by the Creed spoken in their native language. Other speakers included Amber Zolc, a consultant from Catholic Christian Outreach on the provincial theme, *Witnessing to the Truth*, and Alissa Golob, co-founder of RightNow on "How to Elect Pro-life Politicians". Anna Hudson, an elder abuse facilitator for Saanich Peninsula Community Response

Network, spoke on “Elder Abuse” by family and friends, how to recognize it, and she shared recommendations for providing support. Sharon Ciebin presented the “Strategic Plan for the Future of the League” and B.C. & Yukon Spiritual Advisor Fr. David John enlightened all with an unexpected conversion story beautifully presented, as only he can do. A well-decorated beach party was enjoyed on Friday evening with the Glen Foster Group.

The provincial fall executive meeting was held in October in Kelowna and included watching the film, *Unplanned*. The provincial council was asked to host the annual national convention in 2022, three years earlier than planned, and Kelowna was chosen as the host city. Bishop Gregory Bittman (Nelson) sent an invitation letter to National Spiritual Advisor Bishop Stephen Jensen (Prince George), and a planning committee was formed.

**Janet Brunger**  
**Manitoba Provincial President**



Three of three diocesan councils reported.

**Inform the Membership of the League’s Position**

*The Canadian League* appeared to be the primary source for membership to obtain information, followed closely by: diocesan, provincial and national communiques; parish bulletins; the national website; the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops website; and

the provincial council website and newsletters. Also accessed was the Catholic Organization for Life and Family website.

National priorities introduced, discussed or acted upon by parish councils were: excluding medical assistance in dying from palliative care and hospice facilities; *Care for Our Common Home*; rights of the pre-born under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*; removing the Canada Summer Jobs Program attestation; and standards of testing and labelling for products deemed flushable.

## **Foster Open Communication with the Spiritual Advisor on All League Matters**

Most parish councils felt the spiritual advisor was supportive. They were extremely appreciative of their spiritual advisor's involvement in activities. For those whose spiritual advisor did not attend meetings and events, reasons cited were duties outside the parish and the lack of tradition of having him at meetings. Regular communication helped foster and develop better relationships and understanding of the League.

## **Preside at Meetings and Conventions**

All councils used the resources available to them, namely, the policy and procedure manual (either council or national), the *Constitution & Bylaws*, *Robert's Rules of Order* and *Parliamentary Procedure*. Attending conventions at any level helped foster knowledge of how to run meetings.

## **Signing Authority**

Presidents used their signing authority on cheques, banking documents, petitions and letters concerning League business directed to parties within and outside of the League.

## **Provide Active Leadership**

Presidents represented their councils by attending parish functions, anniversaries, fundraisers, dinners, sacramental events, special masses, provincial and diocesan meetings, conferences and conventions. They attended pro-life events, workshops, school ceremonies, Remembrance Day services and World Day of Prayer.

Less than one-half were reimbursed for their expenses in attending these events by the council.

## **Initiate Policy, in consultation With the Officers of Council**

Most councils had and utilized a policy manual, and updated it regularly. Others incorporated policies regarding years of service and Bellelle Guerin awards, and adjustments to the value of honorariums for speakers and gifts for shut-ins and members who had been ill.

## **Keep Informed on the Operation of the League and Report Annually to the Membership**

Councils utilized the *Executive Handbook* as well as past presidents as active resources. Many summarized the year's activities in a report to members. Most councils struck sub-committees to fulfil a goal, namely, fundraising of various kinds, collecting goods for social outreach and signatures for petitions, as well as for visitations and funeral lunches. In addition to visiting shut-ins, many members assisted with mass for residents of nursing homes, and hosted Christmas and birthday parties. Following special masses, members hosted coffee socials and offered rides where needed. Others, in addition to bringing communion to shut-ins, also brought Christmas dainties, took seniors out for a meal and entertained them with games and special treats, as needed or warranted.

### **Official Spokesperson**

Parish council presidents spoke about medical assistance in dying, rights of the unborn, homelessness, child poverty, right to clean water, water conservation in homes, heart health, pornography, and human trafficking, including trafficking of children. They also spoke of organizations and events such as March for Life, Operation Christmas Child, A Port in the Storm, Samaritan's Purse, Chalice, Save a Family Plan, World Vision and Catholic Missions In Canada. They spoke of the national and provincial voluntary funds, women's safe haven/shelters and various programs such as local friendship centres, programs for inmates, local programs in need and a Knights of Columbus project to support filling a dresser with clothes for a mother who decided to keep her baby. They also spoke about the support of local charities and other topics of importance.

Parish council presidents addressed their parish not only on behalf of the above issues but also in regards to upcoming fundraisers and monetary and goods collections for the disadvantaged. Parish bulletins, e-mails, newsletters and reports were also utilized to reach out to members about upcoming events.

Pulpit presentations were used to inform parishioners of the benefits of being a member, as well as to inform of the current theme, concerns regarding environmental impact, inviting youth to get

involved, pornography issues, World Day of Prayer, and much more.

### **Mentorship**

In carrying out their duties, parish council presidents reached out to immediate and former past presidents, life members (where available) and their current executives. In addition to learning her duties, the most significant challenge a new president faced in transitioning into the role was not having a full slate of officers. Others felt inadequate in areas of running meetings, trying to please, resistance to new ideas, others' expectations, and delegating. Others expressed frustration that they had been unable to reach out to ethnic minorities in the parish.

### **Theme Changes**

Most parish council presidents found it very beneficial to have a national theme upon which to focus the council's activities. Presidents felt that between two and three years was an adequate amount of time to allow between theme changes.

In summary, parish council presidents were proud that members supported each other and enjoyed working together toward a common goal. They were thankful for the presidents who had gone before them and laid a good foundation for the rest to follow. Although members were ageing, they enjoyed getting together and loved the involvement. Members were passionate about making their collective voices heard regarding several important issues. Parish councils worked hard to ensure a good balance of spirituality, education and fun.



**Tawnya Stringer**  
**Military Ordinariate Provincial President**



- Eleven of 13 base councils reported.
- Ten of ten provincial standing committees reported.

As president of Military Ordinariate Provincial Council, I was happy to report that while base councils continued to face struggles in areas of membership retention and recruitment, as well as needed improvement in communication and training, the membership was dedicated to their communities, the League and country. Each member belonged to one of the 13 base councils located across six provinces.

Though missing two base council presidents' reports, 100% of the provincial administrative committee reported in a timely fashion. This allowed me to collate the activities of the provincial council and membership to reveal an accurate depiction of endeavours.

The national annual report survey asked base council presidents to report how long they had been a member. Seventy-two per cent of them reported having been members for 11-25 years. I, too, fell into this range, with 23 years of service.

Base council presidents were returners; seven of 11 reported having held the position previously, though it was not known if at the same council. There were also returning past provincial presidents in base council president roles. Leadership development continued to be an area in need of attention. Despite providing training at the convention, the provincial council had not been successful in implementing opportunities throughout the year. Online opportunities to meet and deliver strategic plan information were offered; however, the anticipated responses were not received, and sessions were poorly attended.

Base council presidents sought information from *The Canadian League* (100%) and national communiques (91%) to inform members. Both at 64%, provincial newsletters and the national

website were also widely used. Members were media-savvy and used Internet searches to obtain information from sites such as the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB), Catholic Organization for Life and Family, and others. As provincial president, I relied greatly on national communiques and Internet searches for the information I shared with the membership. Having served on a national *ad hoc* committee that examined the CCCC document, *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation*, I also relied on information from Catholic bishops. I made regular use of the Military Ordinariate diocesan website and the national website for information. The provincial council's Facebook page was another resource, and had 107 members.

All base councils reported they acted upon and educated members on the national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*. Removing the Canada Summer Jobs Program attestation and excluding medical assistance in dying from palliative care and hospice facilities continued to be areas of interest and action for members. Resolutions adopted at the annual national convention were discussed and acted upon by members, with approximately one-half of councils reported they had informed members of the resolutions. Meetings, engaging standing chairpersons and inviting speakers to educate members were the top three methods used to inform members.

In 2018, the provincial executive obtained permission from New Brunswick Provincial Council to use its template for a postcard petitioning the removal of the Canada Summer Jobs Program attestation and had postcards made for distribution to members for personal advocacy. The project continued in 2019. The council educated members on the national theme at the provincial convention by inviting Dr. Cristina Vanin of St. Jerome's University to speak on *Laudato Si'*. Provincial council was invited to assist with the Ontario provincial convention, and it created centrepieces for the banquet using locally grown, recycled and repurposed materials.

Sadly, two base councils experienced unsupportive spiritual advisors. One of the reasons listed for the lack of support was the



spiritual advisor's involvement elsewhere. It was also reported the spiritual advisor believed the members' role was limited to support of the church, including donating all fundraising to the church. When military chaplains met in exercise, I wrote a letter to them. It was delivered by the provincial spiritual advisor. The letter expressed members' support of them and thanked them for their support. Provincial spiritual advisor Padre Maria Codina presented a PowerPoint to the chaplains, which explained the League and the provincial council. Members were happy to hear she was permitted to exceed the initial allotment of 15 minutes and spoke for almost one hour. Provincial council would continue to reach out to spiritual advisors and seek their support for base councils, through education and self-promotion.

Base council presidents used national, provincial and their own council materials to help facilitate meetings. Most base councils reported using the *Constitution & Bylaws*, as well as council manuals of policy and procedure and the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*. There was an increase in 2019 in the presidents' use of the *Executive Handbook*; ten of 11 presidents reported using it to help them understand their duties.

As provincial president, national and provincial manuals were used and referred to weekly. At the annual convention in May, the administrative team was tasked with compiling a brochure-style handout for voting delegates to bring home. The information came from the *Executive Handbook* and provincial and national websites and was intended to be a quick reference guide. Also included in the brochure were links and contact information of provincial counterparts.

Base council presidents were active in their communities, representing members at functions, sacramental celebrations and meetings. Five of 11 respondents reported having attended the convention; however, in fact, voting representation from all 13 base councils was present. As provincial president, I represented members at national meetings and convention. I was invited to local diocesan conventions, where I brought greetings on behalf of the provincial council.

The online survey asked members if they provided a yearly summary of council activities to members. Seven responded “no” and four, “yes.” My annual report was distributed to base councils through a provincial newsletter, *Maryline*, which is published twice a year. Base councils were encouraged to submit a report of activities to *Maryline* as well. Providing reports following attending convention and meetings was an expectation of those who attended.

Base council presidents were asked about committees in their councils (besides the standing committees)—55% reported having a fundraising committee. Also reported were committees for donations, funeral lunches, social, annual projects, and scholarships and bursaries.

Two of eleven councils reported using League letterhead when corresponding. The only members permitted to use provincial or national letterhead were the provincial president and national president, respectively. Permission must have been granted to use letterhead as its use implied speaking for the members, and the provincial and national presidents were the voice of their respective members. When it was used, the members who were represented would need to be referenced, one of the two councils reported doing this.

The greatest challenge faced while transitioning into the role of president was not having a full slate of officers. Other challenges included recruiting new members, feeling overwhelmed, running meetings, meeting expectations, member conflict, using technology and organizational skills. One person reported outdated policies were inhibiting membership at base chapels. While she did not elaborate, the provincial eligibility criteria had come into scrutiny. At the provincial level, guidance from the spiritual advisor and bishop was sought to ensure eligibility requirements reflected the uniqueness of military chapel communities. I could relate to the respondents in the challenges they faced. I agreed that keeping members interested, feeling overwhelmed, recruiting, and I would add, communication were also my concerns. Some of these issues, I hoped, would be addressed and alleviated through the implementation of strategic planning. Interpersonal conflict and

emotional intelligence also contributed greatly to the challenges in base councils.

When asked about the benefit of having a national theme and logo, nine of 11 respondents said they liked it. Eighty per cent responded they felt it was good or very good for the theme to change with each national president, the other 20% were okay with it changing. I liked the themes and as I looked back over my years in League, I recalled many themes which opened my heart and mind to new faith experiences and ideas.

I conclude by sharing some of the sentiment shared by members when asked to describe what they were proud of in their base councils. Words used were togetherness, sisterhood, willingness, generosity, love, kindness, accomplishment, support and commitment. They responded to their local and national communities with their good deeds and continually made a difference in the military chapels and across Canada. The League was a resilient group of women who exemplified the League values of faith, service and social justice. Members continued to make me very proud as they worked “For God and Canada.”

**June Brown**

**New Brunswick Provincial President**



**Provincial Spiritual Advisor: Rev. Paul LeBlanc**

The following is an overview of 2019 for New Brunswick Provincial Council. After a well-attended provincial convention in May and the national convention in August, regional meetings were held in Rexton and Lincoln. National President Anne-Marie Gorman attended the provincial convention and the regional meeting in Rexton and presented a Planning Strategically workshop at each. The Planning Strategically workshop was also presented at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Rothesay during a “Meet the National President” gathering.

Three parish councils celebrated significant anniversaries. St. John the Evangelist Parish Council (Belledune) celebrated 80 years, St. Rose of Lima Parish Council (Saint John) celebrated 75 years, and St. Thomas the Apostle (Red Bank) celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The longtime president of St. Rose of Lima Council (Saint John), Yvonne Theriault, was presented with the Bellelle Guerin Award. Members mourned the death of Life Member Joyce Shannon.

Although without diocesan councils, Catholics in the Diocese of Saint John said goodbye to Bishop Robert Harris and welcomed Bishop Christian Reisbeck. Both of these bishops were great supporters of the League, and members were thankful for their service.

Though the membership was ageing and it was difficult to attract new members, councils worked diligently for their parishes and continued to gather ecumenically and socially. Due to health concerns of her husband, Rob, Provincial President Hazel Robichaud submitted her resignation on October 1<sup>st</sup>, and I stepped into the role at that time.

## **Ellen Merrigan**

### **Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial President**



As provincial president, I was honoured and privileged to represent 18 parish councils. It was quite evident from both the online reporting and written reports that members strived to adhere to the core principles of faith, service and social justice. Although small in numbers, great work continued in all parish councils. It was obvious they held

the League Object “to achieve individual and collective spiritual development” as a high priority. This was portrayed by the many prayer services, reflections, rosaries, stations of the cross, memorial services for the deceased, days of reflections and services to honour Our Lady of Good Counsel. Parish councils took part in “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care”, Divine Mercy Sunday services, World Day of Prayer and other ecumenical services.

The provincial executive embraced the national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*, and provided a plan to promote it. National Water Day (March 22<sup>nd</sup>) was publicized, and a spiritual program focusing on water was distributed to all councils. Most parish councils participated in the “National Water Pledge Challenge” campaign. They were encouraged to develop action items regarding water issues pertinent to their local area. The guest speaker at the 39<sup>th</sup> annual provincial convention spoke on “Fracking”, a topic especially important to Lourdes and the west coast councils. At the fall meeting, the guest speaker from the Mercy Centre for Ecology and Justice highlighted Pope Francis’ call for all to become good stewards of the earth.

The provincial resolutions committee drafted Resolution 2019.01 Wetlands Conservation. This resolution was adopted at the convention in June. As president, I wrote the premier concerning this matter. Members were urged to write letters to the premier and provincial minister responsible for the environment. Members continually pursued ways to protect and care for the environment. There was tree planting, cleaning of beaches, cleanups of trash along road sides, recycling, Earth Hour, refurbishing and elimination of plastic bags. Members tried to do small things that would count in the long run.

Parish councils demonstrated enthusiasm about following up on resolutions and motions. They reported members had written letters to appropriate government representatives. Based on motions adopted at the convention, letters were sent to government representatives concerning the health and well-being of seniors who live in long-term care facilities. A motion on autism was acted upon. They also wrote to government officials regarding the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and medical assistance in dying.

The rights and dignity of human beings were constantly challenged. Members tried to bring about change by being proactive and used their voices, votes and pens to let government officials know what was important to them. Members knew with the help of the Holy Spirit, they could make a difference.

Parish councils were very involved with promoting the sanctity of human life and its sacredness from natural conception to natural death. They supported the Centre for Life, attended prayer services for the unborn and educated themselves by attending presentations and films such as *Fatal Flaws*.

Members were strong advocates for seniors whose lives were enhanced by visits both to their homes and long-term care facilities. They volunteered to bring holy communion to the sick and elderly. Youth were also supported. Life was important and precious at all stages.

Members continued to reach out to the disadvantaged in the community. Parish councils provided lunches for seniors, supported food drives, donated to women's shelters, Gathering Place and even delivered "Blessing Bags" on the streets to the homeless. Monetary donations were made to Catholic missions, Coady International Institute, Doctors without Borders, the Canadian Red Cross, Holy Childhood Association and various other organizations. Members from all parish councils answered the call to serve and provided support for anyone in need.

Parish councils upheld and defended Christian education. Apart from the province's several private Catholic schools, Newfoundland and Labrador had no public Catholic schools. However, members were involved in volunteering at local schools and parish councils were aware of how religious education was delivered at the parish level. Several members were involved with sacramental preparation and catechetical programs in their parish. Some parish councils provided gifts (rosaries and bibles) to children receiving the sacraments. Some members were involved in the Rites of Christian Initiation. Parish councils took part in the Pornography Hurts campaign.

Many members played important roles in the church community. Some had leadership roles on parish councils and liturgy committees, and were leaders in ministry. It was evident that members showed their concern and support for other women by the support they provided for shelters, the letter writing to government condemning violence against women and the help given to

Indigenous women. Parish councils worked to become more aware of the plight of Indigenous women.

Many good things occurred; however, some challenges were faced. Recruitment of general members and leadership positions continued to be a struggle. On a sad note, one parish council was lost. The use of technology for ageing members presented its problems. Annual reporting continued to be an area of concern for members. Parish councils continued to have trouble accessing the surveys and questioned the relevancy of the information collected; however, more parish councils used the online process than in 2018. The online report summary from national office did not match the number of parish councils that submitted online. Parish councils reported not receiving the parish council mailings. The geographical distance and the high costs of visiting parish councils made it difficult to share and explain the strategic planning process.

In reviewing the annual reports, the overwhelming message was one of pride. Members had great pride in their councils and their love and support of the League. It was amazing what the League could accomplish when members worked together, being good stewards of creation. I was in awe and admiration of all the fantastic women I served and represented—all strived to serve and lived the gospel values in today's world.

**Glenda Carson**  
**Nova Scotia Provincial President**



I am privileged to offer this annual report reflecting on the information submitted by Nova Scotia parish councils. The average parish council reporting response was slightly less than 60%, with a broad variance across standing committees. This response rate was an increase from 2018.

There was a positive change in the number of responses by standing committees among several of the reports submitted. This was a positive note indicating parish councils were attempting to fulfill their organizational roles and to report on those committees that remained without a chairperson in their council.

Standing committees were most often lead by more experienced senior members, although more members new to the organization stepped forward into some leadership roles. Of great significance was the quality of activities reported by councils, which reflected members were indeed, “women united in a common purpose,” embracing the organizational core values of faith, service and social justice.

Parish councils generally embraced the national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*, both in prayer and as a focus in presentations and activities. Members gathered in prayer and spiritual reflection during monthly meetings. The rosary played a strong central part in members’ spiritual lives, being recited at meetings and gatherings within their councils, parishes and communities. Deceased sisters continued to be respected and remembered through funeral honour guards, prayer services and masses of remembrance. The Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel remained a special day, celebrated with masses and social gatherings. Attendance at ecumenical events was best represented by participation in World Day of Prayer services. Members’ dedication to their faith and church was evident in their very active service in church ministry.

Parish councils used resources on websites and in communiques when developing services and programs to enhance the spiritual growth of members. Lay formation programs were available to members but more easily accessed by those in larger communities. Suggestions to allay this inequity included encouraging members living in smaller, more rural areas to seek online programs and the formation of lending libraries, perhaps at the diocesan council level.

Members took advantage of broader continuing education funding for both faith and secular based programs through bursaries and scholarships at all levels. However, the number of applicants tended to be low, which indicated a possible need to promote these opportunities better. Parish councils provided learning experiences through guest speakers and presentations. Genetics was an area that councils reported a desire to obtain a greater understanding, especially in relation to the current issues with bioethics. Past presidents were identified as council role models and mentors.



While engaged by some councils for leadership and mentoring roles, honorary life members and life members remained an untapped resource.

Membership continued to decline. The small annual growth experienced through recruitment of new members and reinstatement of memberships was lost by attrition due to members not renewing their membership. In 2018, the provincial council appointed a special committee to reflect on disbanding diocesan councils in light of membership attrition. Its report was presented at the 2019 provincial convention in which committee members determined it would be premature to eliminate diocesan councils. The organizational structure did not drive the financial concerns and leadership issues experienced. Rather, they were affected by membership decline related to member retention and challenges with member engagement. It appeared important to address the core reasons for these challenges rather than eliminate potentially supportive council structures. Another review in five years would be planned.

Among the special committee recommendations was the need for leadership development at all levels and flexibility in structure and events. This would aid member participation and assist parish councils in meeting organizational requirements, goals and values. There was great hope that changes brought through the national strategic planning would assist in meeting some of these needs. The provincial and diocesan councils did initial planning for more localized leadership workshops, including information on the plan. Financial support was budgeted for these leadership initiatives, and strategies to meet the needed human resources for the presentations were explored. To aid in building spirit, the provincial council supported a fundraising project that would assist members to attend the national convention in Montreal, Quebec, for the League's centennial year.

Many parish councils reported that less than one-half of members were active in the council. Factors affecting this and some of the non-renewal of memberships were lack of interest, age and ill health. Parish council presidents were encouraged to ensure ill and

infirm members were supported in their membership fees, even if they were unable to be active in events. Many of these members had long terms of service that required recognition when they reached a stage in life where they could no longer be an active participant in League functions. However, membership service was well recognized at the parish level through the awarding of service pins. Re-affirmation and new member ceremonies could perhaps have been used more by parish councils to celebrate and respect those who were serving as leaders and those who had accepted the invitation to become a sister in the League.

The elimination of the 1-800 number by the national executive/board resulted in a positive change as members looked more to diocesan and provincial executive officers for assistance in problem-solving. For example, information on budget preparation and information on parish council insurance renewal was offered through the provincial treasurer. Previously, parish councils had often reached out to national office for some of this information. Members also looked to websites, social media and e-mail for information and to stay connected. *The Canadian League* and officer communiques remained the most popular resources for members to stay abreast of League information. While recognizing the importance of in-person connections, teleconferencing was used more often to reduce time and cost for travel. Other conveniences for council administration, such as the online membership renewal, seemed to require more promotion and support as only about 50% of parish councils used this resource.

Human trafficking and pornography were two main focuses for members from an educational perspective, as well as concerns brought to the attention of their communities and politicians. Sanctity of life concerns and support for the faith development of youth and families and vocations were a priority in parish councils. Members participated in the community viewing of the film, *Unplanned*, as well as activities such as March for Life, vigils, masses and the 40 Days for Life campaign. Members continued to be strong advocates for better support for palliative care in Canada. They participated in “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care” and

engaged in learning events that enhanced their understanding of the experience and importance of palliative care.

Members continued to be actively engaged in community outreach and enhancement of the quality of life for those disadvantaged and those facing injustice. Some parish councils focussed on the concerns and struggles of Indigenous people and how they were called to seek ways to build relationships and a common understanding. Participation in community celebrations of National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21<sup>st</sup> by some members was a positive step to building relationships.

Members were strong in their actions to relieve the suffering of others and assist in the building of strong futures for children. They provided financial and material support and many hours of service as volunteers to the homeless, the hungry, the disabled and those suffering abuse. Support was given to programs and services for youth and parent programs, skill training and anti-poverty initiatives. Most parish councils provided bursaries and scholarships for youth in their parishes and financially supported school meal programs and the purchase of school supplies for those in need. Seniors and those sick and housebound were provided with special celebrations, entertainment and teas, as well as home and residence visiting that included bringing the Eucharist and praying the rosary. Members volunteered to meet the needs of newcomers to Canada and assisted them in attaining needed skills for employment, such as learning English. Parish councils provided generous financial support to organizations such as St. Vincent de Paul Society, Catholic Missions In Canada, Catholic Near East Welfare Association, Chalice and Save a Family Plan, as well as secular organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross. Many members supported Development and Peace—Caritas Canada as individuals, given the endorsement of the Share Lent and Fall Action campaigns by bishops in the province.

Members took an active interest in governmental affairs and community action despite most parish councils not having a chairperson of legislation. They reflected on the variety of bills and resolutions identified by standing committee chairpersons and those

connected with the national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*. This included positive recognition for the provincial *Plastic Bags Reduction Act*, participation in an online survey related to the federal government changes to the Canadian euthanasia law and support for The Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience’s campaign to address concerns around this legislation.

While the number of reporting councils was low for the resolutions standing committee, there was an increase in the number of parish councils that had a chairperson. This hopefully reflected rising interest in resolutions at the parish level, although this standing committee presented a leadership challenge for most councils. As many chairpersons were new to the role, there was a need to build knowledge and confidence in the resolutions process. It appeared important to facilitate a better overall engagement by members in the importance of resolutions to the organization. Parish councils acted on existing League resolutions by following up on action plans, often through letter writing. Information on changes made to the resolutions process was communicated to members at all levels.

In summary, while councils continued to face some core challenges, the annual reports identified a strong, continued passion and dedication to the core purpose and mission of the organization. This, in turn, promises a good strength for building a positive future as the League in Nova Scotia steps forward into the next 100 years.

**Colleen Perry**  
**Ontario Provincial President**



- Thirteen of 13 diocesan councils reported
- Thirteen of 13 provincial executive members reported

It was my honour to represent members in 2019 as president. The more than 42,000 members across the province were dedicated to their parishes, communities, province and country.

Parish councils acted on and educated members on several national priorities. Many diocesan councils hosted sessions to update

members on the work of the national implementation committee as they continued to navigate through the five-year strategic plan. “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care” was celebrated and was attended by many parishioners who supported the League’s initiative to improve palliative care. Members supported the national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*, by education and practice of the reduce, reuse, recycle and refresh policies. All embraced the “National Water Pledge Challenge” campaign.

Parish councils supported the “Warmth and Comfort Project” by collecting socks, peanut butter and crackers for the homeless, and the “HUG Project” gifted blessing bags, backpacks, purses and shoeboxes filled with essentials for those in need.

As part of the provincial theme of *Homelessness*, the chairperson of legislation and her sub-committee came up with a “Legislation Scavenger Hunt”. Members worked in teams and researched to discover what programs and services were available in their communities to target homelessness (such a vast topic) and what legislation was in place (provincially and federally). It was hoped that the project would spark interest in the legislation standing committee and, by participating, members did their part to try to alleviate homelessness. Twenty-eight teams participated. Those who went on the hunt expressed how much they appreciated the opportunity to participate, and were glad they did, as they discovered services offered in their cities/towns they never knew existed. One team noted, “The knowledge gained was unbelievable.” Members were amazed at what they learned about programs available in “their own backyard.” Congratulations on a successful project and theme.

The annual provincial convention, hosted by the Kingston Diocesan Council, was spectacular. A record number of members (425) attended. Attendees enjoyed the spiritual programs, guest speakers and business sessions.

A new provincial theme of *Loneliness* was introduced in July. Councils were asked to focus on education and awareness of those suffering from this quiet and often overlooked emotion. Guest

speakers were invited into many parish councils for days of reflection and workshops.

A renewed focus was placed on leadership development. “Find Your Voice!” a course to develop communication skills, increase self-confidence, and provide a warm, supportive and fun learning experience was developed in the Sault Ste. Marie Diocesan Council and shared. Members were excited by the format and experience. Many parish councils went back to the basics of leadership and refocused on spiritual development. Many workshops were presented using the *Constitution & Bylaws*, *Executive Handbook* and *Leading the League*.

Vocations were supported with financial and spiritual support through parish council-based initiatives and the provincial Bishop Bernard F. Pappin Memorial Bursary Fund.

Website Wednesdays continued to be promoted. Members gained knowledge and shared information from national, provincial, diocesan and parish websites. Improving communication was a constant goal for all councils. Even though e-mail was the preferred method of communication, most councils were aware of those members who did not have access to technology and so used the telephone to relay information. Monthly newsletters were used very effectively in keeping members (and non-members) informed in parishes and communities.

Resolutions were acted on by many parish councils. Resolutions adopted at the provincial convention in July were sent to the premier and several ministers by e-mail and responses were received. The provincial executive was unable to arrange a government visit because the legislature was only in session for 75 days. Parish councils contacted local members of provincial parliament and issues of concern were discussed. There was a renewed importance on making elected officials aware of these issues of concern and members found their voices to promote change.

Membership and filling executive positions was still the biggest challenge. Parish councils struggled to keep members engaged—having a national and provincial theme was notably helpful. It was

often said that if all Catholic women knew the benefits of this sisterhood, membership would soar.

Parish councils must strive to be inclusive and welcoming so that everyone can gain the blessings that The Catholic Women's League of Canada has to offer, especially in Ontario!

**Shirley Pierce**

**Prince Edward Island Provincial President**



I was very pleased with the many activities the capable members of the provincial executive organized and brought to completion since the 2019 convention in Summerside. There were many events including two fall conferences, four area meetings, two provincial executive/parish council presidents' meetings/ leadership workshops,

three meetings with Bishop Richard Grecco (Charlottetown), and clergy and ongoing e-mails and letters that helped to bring to fruition my two priorities for my term: leadership development and communication.

In June, an annual spiritual retreat was held at a special home on the peaceful Trout River. Committees were reviewed and plans were made for the year. Meetings were held again in September and November, either at SDU Place or at Kinkora Place.

On September 28<sup>th</sup>, the provincial council joined with the Knights of Columbus for an annual rosary and pilgrimage for Canadian Martyrs, held yearly at St. Peter's Church in Seven Mile Bay. Many members and knights were in attendance. After a very meaningful service, refreshments were served in the basement. Money collected during mass was donated to the PEI Right to Life Association.

Two very successful fall conferences were held: September 14<sup>th</sup> at Stella Maris Parish in North Rustico and October 19<sup>th</sup> at Immaculate Conception Parish in Palmer Road. Sixty members attended each of these conferences. Members enjoyed presentations on the

spirituality of music, Aboriginal issues (North Rustico only) and strategic planning. Members donated money for local charities. As well, members generously donated boxes of necessary items to the HUG Project. All items and cash donations were given to local women's shelters.

The 33 parish presidents, as members of the provincial executive, were invited to attend either the November executive meeting in Kinkora or the January meeting in Charlottetown. Twelve members attended each of these meetings and their contributions to the discussions were appreciated. An important part of the agenda was the leadership workshop where the League Prayer and Objects of the League were covered.

National President Anne-Marie Gorman chose *Care for Our Common Home* as the two-year theme. In 2019, the focus was on water. Workshops, speakers and discussions on water conservation were hosted. Members were asked to support the National Water Pledge Challenge action plan and commit to taking positive actions in their homes, parishes and communities. Together, members made a big difference.

Area meetings were held simultaneously on February 23<sup>rd</sup> in four locations across the province. Executive members worked in teams to deliver meaningful workshops on discernment as well as water conservation and *Care for Our Common Home*. Many members attended and enjoyed the networking, social activities and potluck lunch.

Several executive members and I met with Bishop Grecco and clergy at their three zone meetings and presented information on the League's history, current provincial statistics and activities, the strategic planning process and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops' document, *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation*, sharing what members could do to help. The presidents and members were encouraged to complete an online training module on safe faith.

Planning for the provincial convention started a year in advance when venues were booked. In the months prior to the convention,



work began with planning the program, booking speakers, inviting guests, analyzing councils' electronic reports from national office, preparing written and oral reports, preparing the spiritual exercises, organizing the mass ministries, and preparing and publishing the convention booklet. There were many details to take into account and fortunately, the provincial council had an excellent executive that stepped up to the plate each time it was called on to help. It was decided that the mass collection would be given to the Charlottetown food bank with proceeds from the gift bag sale given to Blooming House Women's Shelter Inc.

Communication was an important part of the League. E-mails and letters were sent regularly to parish presidents and executive members to inform them about initiatives, events and critical issues. Each provincial executive member called three parish presidents to find out if they had any concerns or needed any help. Communiques were sent in February, August and September; each executive member prepared a communique on her position or standing committee. A newsletter was circulated in December that highlighted parish council activities. Members were encouraged to check the provincial website and Facebook page, and the national website, for valuable resources.

I would like to personally thank the members on the provincial executive and spiritual advisor Fr. Brian MacDougall who worked diligently on many activities and initiatives. They were enthusiastic and had a passion for the League. We all grew spiritually, deepened our leadership skills and had a wonderful time in the process.

A special thanks goes to three members retiring from the executive this year—Irene Gallant, Cathy Favaro and Elaine Black. These members made a wonderful contribution to the League in Prince Edward Island.

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“For God and Canada”

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**Rosa Lam**  
**Quebec Provincial President**



The highlight of my first year as president was working with the most amazing group of women at the national table and with the executive of the provincial council. I was very grateful to the members of the provincial executive for their dedication and hard work, especially the secretary-treasurer who was the core of communications, and the spiritual advisor who was the guiding light on

members' spiritual journey.

Provincial executive members, including the president, had close communications with their national counterpart and were grateful for the help and guidance they received.

Many members attended the 99<sup>th</sup> annual national convention, where the presentation of the 100<sup>th</sup> annual national convention was offered by the provincial council, many of whom were involved in planning for the 2020 national convention.

Twelve of 18 parish councils reported; however, some chairpersons of standing committees did not report. Ongoing concerns were maintaining parish councils, membership and finding members willing to serve as officers in the different standing committees. Most members were 55 years of age or older. Some parish councils needed help with procedural issues and resolving internal issues.

A provincial workshop day was organized by the chairperson of organization. Topics covered included *The League of the Future—Year 1*, 2020 national convention, *Care for Our Common Home*, and resolutions revisited. Evaluations revealed the day was a huge success and members expressed an interest in more leadership training. Presentation of *The League of the Future—Year 1* to as many parish councils as possible was planned.

Many members needed support to help them participate in the annual report surveys and to write annual reports. Parish councils that had not written annual reports for several years needed guidance

on how to do so. Some parish councils felt the only requirement was the annual report survey.

Materials most frequently used were the *Constitution & Bylaws*, *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*, *Executive Handbook*, *Handbook for Organization Chairpersons*, and *The Catholic Women's League of Canada Plans Strategically 2018-2022*. The *Canadian League* and national communiqués were read and used to inspire, motivate and educate.

Members enjoyed fundraising, social events, spiritual activities and attending meetings. They were encouraged to attend conventions at all levels.

Membership recruiting and renewing was done using different forms of communication such as e-mail, personal contact and telephone calls, and also by awarding pins and certificates. Thirty-three new members joined, of which nearly 60% were less than 40 years old. The total number of members as of December 31, 2019 was 837.

Provincial council donations were distributed as follows: national voluntary funds (\$1,425), standing committees (\$27,484), parish donations (\$12,637) and other donations (\$1,236) for a total of \$42,782.

Some parish councils did not have secretaries and so the president or someone from the executive took the minutes.

The national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*, was acted on. Parish councils banned the use of Styrofoam cups and bottled water. Members began composting programs, reduced plastic use and worked on home water management.

Members played an active and valuable role in the parish. Some ministered to the sick and provided education on palliative care and issues surrounding euthanasia. Some reported outreach to their community through an invitation to pray. Some parish councils had members on the parish liturgy committee. Parish councils sponsored masses in honour of the Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel. One parish council discussed the topic of bioethics, regarding the link between Catholic teaching and birth control.

The *Ceremonies Booklet*, *CWL Prays* booklet and the *Word Among Us* were the most common resources for developing liturgies and spiritual programs. Few spiritual advisors attended parish council meetings. Parish councils without spiritual advisors relied on the chairperson of spiritual development for spiritual enlightenment.

The provincial council co-hosted two retreats at Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal in collaboration with the Holy Cross Fathers. For the Lent retreat, *Forgiveness: The Key to Heaven*, the preacher was the rector, Father Claude Grou, CSC, who was recovering from being assaulted by an individual armed with a knife. For the Advent retreat, *Partaking in the Kingdom of God*, the preacher was Fr. Nicholas Sengson, SVD.

The provincial life member liaison was in close communication with the 15 life members, and advised parish councils of any concerns, ideas and suggestions they had, as well as prayer requests they made. Four life members were involved with the 2020 convention committee. Three candidates were presented to the national executive/board for nomination to life membership.

Several parish councils reported promoting World Youth Day, participation in programs for young people and religious education programs for children, support to organize a Catholic Girls' League and Knights of Columbus youth programs. Members served as hospitality ushers, and participated in parish choirs.

Most parish councils reported members helped with memorial services and funeral lunches, prayed and supported widowers after the death of a spouse, and visited and sent cards to the widowed. They also participated in prayers for vocations.

All parish councils reported accessing the national website, [cwl.ca](http://cwl.ca). Other media platforms used were Facebook and Twitter. Church bulletins, e-mails and local media were used to advertise council activities and events, while telephone committees were used to communicate with members. Pornography, human trafficking and pro-life issues were topics of discussion during meetings. Some parish councils participated in distributing Pornography Hurts postcards. Members recommended adding an adequate search function to the national website.

Every parish council participated in the HUG Project and gave packages to the needy. Many members were involved in the parish catechesis of children. As schools are non-denominational, parishes took care of Catholic education programs. There was participation in adult faith education and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program.

Members actively monitored a new sex education program introduced by the provincial government that was not based on church teaching. Technological literacy was promoted in some councils. One member pursued a Catholic leadership training course with help from the National Bursary Fund. Parish councils invited guest speakers on mental health and participated in “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care.”

At the provincial convention a resolution was adopted on the need for services for severe/classic autistic people over the age of 20. Parish councils were encouraged to write letters to the provincial government, and raise funds to support those living with autism and their families. Interactive workshops, PowerPoints and other resource material were made available to members to provide information about the resolutions process. Members signed petitions and wrote letters to federal and provincial government officials. Some members attended and participated in the resolutions dialogue session at the national convention.

In reference to Resolution 2019.02 Canadian Support for the United Nations *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, some parish councils monitored government responses and provided information on the hazards of nuclear warfare. Some parish councils monitored provincial Bill 22: *An Act respecting the Laicity of the State*. The bill prohibited certain persons from wearing religious symbols while exercising their duties. Lack of involvement with government and fear of the legislative process seemed to impede greater involvement by councils.

A majority of parish councils supported a large range of groups, primarily through donation of funds and time. Domestic violence shelters were well supported financially and with supplies, toiletries, gifts and food. One parish council worked on a project related to

Indigenous people's rights. Some members were involved in a coalition against human trafficking. Parish councils cared for those in need by donating to local food banks and organizing fundraisers. One diocesan council organized a Christmas parcel drive where shoeboxes were filled and a Christmas card was attached, then distributed to seafarers through Mariners' House of Montreal. Members participated in the Canada Day parade, the poppy campaign and Remembrance Day.

Members sent Christmas greetings to members of the Canadian Armed Forces and Valentine's Day cards to veterans. One parish council funded a refugee family applying for citizenship. Share Lent was supported. Members were kept informed of the League's stance on the commitment to Development and Peace—Caritas Canada's 1% Program.

Parish councils supported Buy-A-Net Malaria Prevention Group, Chalice, Doctors Without Borders, Habitat for Humanity, Canadian Red Cross and Operation Christmas Child. One diocesan council continued to send financial support to an orphanage for disabled women in India, Bhavan Vimala. Helping men's shelters, women's shelters, school breakfast clubs, leadership programs for at-risk teenage girls, and visiting and making telephone calls to shuts in were some of the many activities. One parish council fundraised for an Inuit village in Kuujjuarapik and collected bathing suits for girls.

Only 33% of parish councils viewed the strategic planning presentation. They were encouraged to invite the provincial executive to present this workshop. As the five year plan unfolds, the provincial executive hoped to continue to help councils stay "in-the-know" and to be inspired by the League's progress into the future.



Care for our

**Common Home**

**Chantal Devine**  
**Saskatchewan Provincial President**



The mission of members echoed through the reports of the three diocesan presidents. In this, the fourth year of online reporting, the number reporting in the Diocese of Regina almost doubled over the previous year! Fifty out of a possible 69 parish councils reported. In the Diocese of Prince Albert, just over one-half of parish presidents reported—13 of 21. The

Saskatoon Diocesan Council had a 71% response, with 30 of 40 parish presidents reporting.

In every parish council, the position of president was filled. More than one-half of presidents reported being a member for more than 25 years, and the same number had previously held the position. In Prince Albert and Regina diocesan councils, most fell into the 65-74 age group. In Saskatoon Diocesan Council, presidents were slightly younger. Forty per cent of presidents fell into the 65-74 years of age category, 37% were between 55-64 years of age, and 30% were between the ages of 34 and 44.

Nearly all parish presidents responded that members received a majority of information from *The Canadian League*. The magazine served as a positive tool in keeping members connected. A close second was national communiques, as well as diocesan newsletters and communiques. About one-half used the national and provincial websites to find information.

The national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*, was well received and discussed at parish council meetings. Some parish councils brought in speakers to expound on the topic. Other issues of great interest were excluding medical assistance in dying from palliative care and hospice facilities, and removing the Canada Summer Jobs Program attestation put forward by the federal government. In Saskatoon Diocesan Council, an Indigenous awareness evening was organized to help members learn more. The resolutions on the rights of the pre-born under the United Nations

*Convention on the Rights of the Child* and establishing standards of testing and labeling for products deemed flushable were also discussed by about one-half of presidents who reported.

The role of the spiritual advisor was very important to parish councils. Seventy per cent of parish councils met with the spiritual advisor monthly. The majority of respondents felt the spiritual advisor was very supportive of the League, even though a few parish councils rarely met with him or her. This lack of contact could be due to the great distance priests needed to travel in rural areas, especially those who ministered to more than one parish. To help increase the attendance of spiritual advisors at meetings, parish councils were advised to meet with the spiritual advisor in September before scheduling the dates for monthly meetings so as to accommodate his schedule.

Various resources were used for reference, training and discussion. The majority used the *Executive Handbook*. The *Constitution & Bylaws*, the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure* and the parish council's manual of policy and procedure were used by more than one-half of councils. About 25% made use of *Robert's Rules of Order* and the *Parliamentary Procedures* booklet.

More than 90% of parish presidents signed cheques and banking documents on behalf of the council. More than one-half signed letters directed within the League, but very few signed letters to go outside of the League, nor did they sign many petitions.

Every parish president reported representing her council at church functions. This was followed closely by workshops, World Day of Prayer, regional and diocesan meetings, conventions and community events. It was unfortunate that only 25% took part in Remembrance Day ceremonies, a lost opportunity to increase the visibility of the League in the community.

Most parish councils did not subsidize their president to attend conferences, fundraising dinners or events. However, at least 60% subsidized the total cost of attending provincial and diocesan conventions. Forty per cent either did not subsidize, or paid for either one-half or 25% of their costs. About 20% completely subsidized the cost of attending workshops, while a few reported



being compensated for one-half or one-quarter of the cost. Very few parish councils reported subsidizing attendance at the national convention, which was reflected in only ten per cent of parish presidents attending.

Less than one-half of parish councils had a parish policy manual. More than one-half of those that did not have a policy manual would like to have one and would like help in developing it. This may be an area where members of the diocesan or provincial councils could hold a workshop. About six per cent of parish councils reported making new policies this year.

The *Executive Handbook* was a valuable manual to all parish councils. It was used as a reference guide in reviewing the duties of each chairperson. This helped ensure the council fulfilled the Objects of the League as cited in the *Constitution & Bylaws*.

Just more than one-half of parish presidents provided an annual report to members. Most chose to give an oral report; very few submitted a written report. Some sent their report via e-mail or had it printed in the parish bulletin.

Many of the larger parish councils formed committees to undertake projects. Members of smaller parish councils worked together as they did not have the numbers to set up committees. The most active group was the funeral lunch committee, followed closely by the annual events committees such as teas, bazaars, and visitations. Some parish councils had a committee to provide scholarships and bursaries to deserving individuals.

All councils reported that providing an honour guard at funerals for deceased members was very important, and members felt privileged to be a part of it. Due to the provincial focus on Canadian Northern Missions in the previous two years, many parish councils chose to continue that support. Parish councils were also very involved with Development and Peace—Caritas Canada, “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care,” pro-life organizations and Cuernavaca. One parish president reported introducing a spiritual book club in her parish. This was a very positive endeavour that drew members and non-members together in a time of learning and fellowship.

As mentioned previously, not many presidents wrote letters, as such, the League letterhead was seldom used. Also, with more members becoming computer literate, most notes and letters were in the form of an e-mail or text message.

As leaders of their parish councils, presidents reported speaking on all issues that affected their council and the League. They visited neighbouring councils and brought anniversary congratulations, welcomed members to conventions or brought greetings to regional workshops. Parish presidents spoke on the topics of social justice, euthanasia and pro-life. They promoted Teen-Aid Saskatchewan and prayers for priests.

The majority of parish presidents said their greatest assistance came from the council's immediate past president, secretary and treasurer. About one-half stated former past presidents, the current executive as well as the diocesan president provided some assistance.

The greatest challenges for presidents were keeping members enthused about the League, recruiting new members and attendance at meetings. This was followed closely by members not wanting to take on a leadership position which resulted in not having a full slate of officers on the executive. More than one-half felt overwhelmed and undertrained. Other challenges mentioned were dealing with technology and finding the time to deal with paperwork and tedious policies and procedures.

Most parish presidents appreciated having a two-year national theme. The theme helped in bringing a new focus and made members feel more connected to their sisters across Canada.

Parish presidents were most proud in the way members came together to be of service to others and to grow in their faith. As one president put it, "We are all interested in growing our faith and working together for the betterment of our church, God and Canada." Whether the council was large or small, this was the common theme expressed in the three diocesan councils.

The greatest challenge in completing the annual report survey was finding the time to do it! Older members were frustrated in not having the computer skills to do the report and having to rely on

someone else to do it. One person commented, “If everything is online by 2022, it will eliminate the older members, and as it’s difficult to convince younger members to join, where will this leave the League?” Several said there was no challenge at all and were appreciative of those who had compiled the survey.

Along with the suggestions stated in this report, I saw a need for:

- workshops in completing and writing annual reports
- leadership workshops to motivate members to take on an executive position
- encouraging parish councils to subsidize the president so she can attend the provincial convention and all diocesan conventions
- holding strategic planning workshops in every region to instill excitement about the League and encourage recruitment of new members
- promoting letter writing and signing of petitions on important social justice issues
- encouraging members to submit articles and to visit the national and provincial websites

I felt blessed and honoured to be a part of this steadfast and faith filled group of women. Their commitment to “witness to the love of God through ministry and service,” was highly evident in the annual reports. The mission of the League will continue in Saskatchewan because of the faith and dedication of members. These qualities were very important in dealing with all the challenges members faced in their daily lives.



## 2020 Life Members

In The Catholic Women's League of Canada, life membership gives to the recipient, in addition to the honour, a permanent place on the national council, the same voting privileges as accredited delegates at an annual meeting or convention (C&B, Part XV, Section 2(c)), a voice in its affairs and eligibility for a national appointment. Privilege entails responsibility as national council expects support and service from its life members. Life members are expected to maintain their memberships by paying annual per capita fees through their parish councils and to provide research, present workshops, and actively respond to requests made to them by national, provincial and diocesan councils.

### Life Member

Janet Brunger  
Glenda Carson  
Madonna Clark  
Lea Colbeck  
Doris Dickson  
Elizabeth Doyle  
Irene Gallant

Patricia Hannan  
Colleen Holloway  
Karen McDonald  
Alice Noble  
Sandra O'Connell  
Carol Schlachter  
Joanna Sisk  
Carol Lynn St. James Fascia  
Wendy Tedford  
Patricia Weller

### Nominating Council

Winnipeg Diocesan Council  
Nova Scotia Provincial Council  
New Brunswick Provincial Council  
Winnipeg Diocesan Council  
New Brunswick Provincial Council  
Nova Scotia Provincial Council  
Prince Edward Island Provincial Council  
Montreal Diocesan Council  
St. Boniface Diocesan Council  
Sault Ste. Marie Diocesan Council  
St. Jean Longueuil Diocesan Council  
Nova Scotia Provincial Council  
Calgary Diocesan Council  
Ottawa Diocesan Council  
St. Jean Longueuil Diocesan Council  
Peterborough Diocesan Council  
Pembroke Diocesan Council

## **Notes**

## **Notes**

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## **Mission Statement**

The Catholic Women's League of Canada calls its members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service.



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