



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

MEMO

DATE: October 3, 2022
FROM: Glenda Carson, national chairperson of legislation
TO: Parish chairpersons of legislation
CC: Parish presidents, diocesan presidents, provincial presidents and life members (on request)

Often the arrival of fall brings a feeling of renewal, of returning to routine after a summer break. With the return to routine, of course, come our tasks at hand. Parliament resumes sitting in September. There are currently 187 bills at some stage of consideration in the House of Commons and the Senate. Many of these bills tie directly to the core interests of the League and its members. The federal government website, *LEGISinfo* (parl.ca/legisinfo), provides a concise listing of bills currently before the federal government.

Euthanasia or medical assistance in dying (MAiD) continues to be an active and concerning focus for legislation. The special joint committee completing the required parliamentary review arising from Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*, has been given an extension. The committee has until October 2022 to bring its final report to the House of Commons. The committee is tasked to review the *Criminal Code*. It will provide recommendations concerning the expansion of MAiD to include, but not be limited to, mental illness, emancipated minors, Canadians living with disabilities and advanced requests. Further, the committee will review the current state of palliative care in Canada.

Concurrently, Bill S-248 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (Medical Assistance in Dying)*, is at its second reading in the Senate. This bill proposes to change the *Criminal Code* so physicians and nurse practitioners can waive the requirement for final consent when a person has indicated a desire for assisted death before losing mental capacity. This raises significant concerns since many people may be in a state that renders them unable to indicate they have changed their mind about being euthanized. This is especially true if their capacity or ability to communicate has changed. These legislative acts will directly affect the lives of many Canadians and their families. Therefore, it is important members continue to monitor these actions of government. Members must be proactive advocates and join the voices of concern for the ever-increasing number of vulnerable Canadians coming under the umbrella of euthanasia.

Legislation will no longer be a standing committee as councils move forward with elections in 2023 and 2024. The new structure brings many benefits to the struggles the League has as an organization. It allows for more flexibility and ease of filling leadership positions and encourages more participation by members overall. However, the move to a less formal leadership position puts more responsibility on members collectively to ensure the League remains a strong and active voice in government matters—a voice that is proactive in response to government legislative deliberations and actions. At the 1921 national convention in Toronto, first National President Bellelle Guerin called on the members of the young organization to remain a voice for Catholic women and the Catholic faith:

A nation-wide unification of Catholic thought and action is necessary to preserve the sacred rights of our homes and families; we must be educated and educate others in the events of the day. Every Catholic woman should acquire a larger and reliable knowledge of all the questions and problems that call for legislation, many of them concern very closely the welfare of the Catholic Religion.

The Catholic Women's League of England charges itself with the civic education of its women. It is time for us to be up and doing; legislation sometimes seems to conspire against our religious convictions, so prudence requires of us to prepare for the defence of our sacred interests, and this can be accomplished by the enlightened devotedness and Christian sense of our women.

Social justice, a core pillar of the League, speaks to the importance of reflection on everything that influences the human condition in society. Action must follow reflection. If members lose the pulse of knowledge and understanding of what governments at all levels debate, the League risks of falling short as a representative organization for Catholic women in Canada. How will your council carry forward the vision Bellelle Guerin ignited at the inception of this organization?