

Executive Director Kim Scammell

Madam president,

In the words of Pope Francis, “Every man, every woman who has to take up the service of government, must ask themselves two questions: ‘Do I love my people in order to serve them better? Am I humble and do I listen to everybody, to diverse opinions in order to choose the best path.’ If you don’t ask those questions, your governance will not be good.” A remarkable observation that impacts large organizations, including non-profits like the League.

The national executive/board has modelled these words in the past number of months by committing to a nationwide listening process, which we are calling Unity Outreach.

Unity Outreach began about 18 months ago in a board workshop where members were asked to define the word “crisis” and identify what crisis would look like in the League. Board members identified the pandemic as being a breaking point for many councils that were experiencing several issues for some time—such as member apathy, lack of interest, lack of connection between councils at the same and at other levels, and the sense of being overwhelmed and undervalued.

The board brainstormed five different strategies to address the issues that had been identified. Twelve months ago, the board chose the one strategy it felt would have the most impact—to rebuild relationships and the connections between members and councils. This reflection was the board, these women up here with me, fulfilling the first of three responsibilities they have to you—to set strategy.

The board’s second responsibility is to ensure there are adequate resources available to see any plans through. At the fall 2022 meeting, the board reviewed a bold and courageous operational plan for 2023 to support the strategy and its related budget and adopted each. It was at this time that the board completed its second responsibility to members.

With the plan in place and the budget approved, each national officer visited a provincial executive to roll out the plan—to listen to the members of provincial executives. The provincial officers were then encouraged to do the same and spend time actively listening to the members they serve at the diocesan level about how the provincial executive could best serve them. And diocesan officers were encouraged, too, to go forth and listen to what members of parish councils had to share.

With the information that was received and compiled from the provincial executives, the board just a few days ago chose three priorities to focus on for the next two to three years, ones that every provincial executive mentioned as being roadblocks for them—communications, training and priority-setting, including consultation with other levels. Task forces have been struck to study and remove these barriers between and among members and councils.

The third responsibility of the board is to provide oversight and monitor improvements. After listening, planning and now acting, you may be assured of the board’s commitment to addressing what ails the League. The national board is being responsive to the needs of the provincial executives and, through them, the needs of the members they represent.

How is this a report of national office, you might ask? Well, we at the office support the board in its governance efforts. In addition to data processing and administrative and secretarial support, we help these incredible volunteers, all with unique backgrounds, gifts and experiences, to govern one of the most incredible organizations in this country—The Catholic Women’s League of Canada.

But they—we—can’t do it alone. I appeal to provincial and diocesan councils to join in these efforts. Read the reports of your outreach efforts. Reflect, pray and act on what you have heard. Determine what you can do to help the members you serve. Pray. Reflect. Act.

Madame president, this concludes my report. †