

Nova Scotia Provincial President Jessie Parkinson

Madam president,

This is my first report as provincial president, representing the wonderful women of the Catholic Women's League in Nova Scotia.

Despite issues facing many councils, our members remain committed to service "For God and Canada." Many councils report a new awakening following the enforced confinement of COVID-19. Parishioners are supportive of their activities, buying tickets, attending events and expressing thanks to the councils for the work that they do. We feel a new energy to help, and we realize that we must capitalize on this. As never in our memory, external pressures are challenging us: lack of attendance in our churches, inability to attract younger women who try to balance work, family and life, economic pressures that stretch the ability to give and last but not least, an ageing population tired of being the ones who always volunteer. Many women are saying, "I have done my time. Now I want to spend more of my time with my husband and grandchildren." To address this issue, we will be focusing on leadership over the next two years. Utilizing the many resources available to us and with some of our own creative ideas, we will provide tools to councils to develop leaders from within. I believe that there is a hidden leader in every group of women. The task is to find, nourish and promote her.

In their annual reports, many councils expressed that they felt a disconnect between the national council, the provincial council and their own parish councils. They reported that their relationship with their diocesan councils was strong. To answer this challenge, the national executive developed the Unity Outreach project. The PowerPoint was introduced to our council by National President-Elect and Chairperson of Organization Shari Guinta at our spring meeting in March. It was well received. The plan is to present the project to the Nova Scotia diocesan councils in the early fall so that their presentations to the parish councils can be completed before Christmas.

The balance of 2023 and the first part of 2024 is going to be a busy time for our council. A provincial retreat has been set for September 29th and 30th with a jam-packed agenda. The focus will be on leadership and membership. The opening session will include a presentation by Chelsey MacNeil, B.A. B.Ed, MBA, President of Common Good Solutions, a social enterprise resource company based in Halifax. Chelsey is also a part-time lecturer at Memorial University in Newfoundland. Chelsey's experiences as a young Catholic woman in leadership roles in the community will be an invaluable resource for us in discussing ways to develop leaders in our councils. Our agenda will also include presentations on projects to implement service and social justice in our councils, as well as a presentation on creating a budget and sticking to it.

We do not intend to overlook the importance of faith and the need for prayer and dialogue. I have tasked our chairperson of faith to create a booklet of appropriate opening and closing prayers for meetings for distribution to our councils. In addition, we will be looking at the *Prayer Service Planning Workshop* (#628) in the fall as a tool for engaging faith chairpersons in creating their own prayers and services. In all of this, we have utilized the many resources on the national website, including *The Joy of Leadership* (#630), *Toolkit for Service* (#637), *Intergenerational Activity Program* (#634), *Actively Engaging New Members and Homebound Members* (#635) and

Toolkit for Social Justice (#639). We are excited about reviewing these wonderful resources created for us by the national council and the various working groups, and we are very grateful. I have asked our executive to be “on the move,” both literally and figuratively.

We held our first in-person AMM/convention in June, co-hosted by four councils in one area. We were delighted to welcome as our guest speaker our national president. A new format was trialled that is designed to make provincial conventions more affordable and attractive to members to attend while not neglecting the need for a social aspect. Attendance was good, so we will continue to refine this.

As women, we have a special responsibility today. During this time in the church, when many clergy have been discredited because of the abuse scandals, it is more important than ever for us to be heard and to say what we believe and what we know to be true. One way of doing this is by sharing our faith, our commitment to service and our stories with our League sisters and beyond.

This concludes my report. ✚