

**Nova Scotia Provincial Council  
Catholic Women's League of Canada  
Legislation Annual Report for 2016**

Statistics received indicated that only 17 out of 73 councils, in Nova Scotia, filled out Legislation reports. In Antigonish Diocese, only 8 out of 40 submitted a report, which is a mere 20%. The Halifax/Yarmouth Diocese had a slightly higher average with 9 out of 33 councils reporting or a 27.3% return.

Most councils reported that they were familiar with the names of their federal and provincial government officials but some did not know the names of their municipal representatives. The members felt that they were only somewhat informed about the issues at the different levels of government. A few members, however, did attend public forums, lectures and town hall meetings and shared what they learned with their members.

About half of the councils who reported accessed Hansard, which is the printed record of the proceedings of both the federal and the provincial governments. On the National level, 50% of the councils who reported indicated that they had read up on the Bills before the House of Commons. With only 17 out of 73 councils reporting that means only 12% of all councils in Nova Scotia were actually involved in this process. Of the 17 reporting councils, some degree of information was shared with their councils: 65% about Bill C-14, an Act to Amend the Criminal Code, in regard to medical assistance in dying; 25% about Bill C-206, abuse of vulnerable persons. However, Bill C-211, Federal Framework on Post-Traumatic Stress disorder, Bill C-204, gender identity and gender expression and Bill C-223, Canadian Organ Donor Registry, generated very little activity. One council wrote, now retired, Senator Jim Cowan, in support of Bill S-201, a Bill to prohibit and prevent genetic discrimination. The e-petition, circulated, in June 2016, by national Chairperson of Legislation: to specifically identify hospice and palliative care as a defined medical service under the Canada Health Act, had a 70% positive response from the 17 councils who reported. On the provincial level, some members are following Bill 131, the Parenting and Support Act (changes to the former Maintenance and Custody Act.

The councils participated in various ways in support of: Resolution 2016.4, to Amend the Canada health Act to Identify Palliative Care as an Insured health Service: and they also supported Resolution 2016.5, to Amend the Canada health Act to Include Home Care as an Insured Health Service. Members wrote their Members of parliament; educated members in their communities; monitored federal government response; recommended members study the Parliamentary Committee Report on palliative and compassionate care: "Not to be Forgotten". Councils financially supported local hospices, assisted the disabled and the elderly by helping with housekeeping, appointments, cooking shopping and personal visits.

Members were unanimous in their support of the National Catholic Women's league response to the Federal Government's Consultation on Legislative Options on Assisted Dying. They supported this initiative through prayer, guest speakers, petitions. letter writing, distribution of prayer cards, and participation in the "Twelve Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care". Some CWL members have read Dr. Nuala Kenny's book "Health Decisions and Care at the End of Life".

Although many councils had no Legislation Chairperson, the Presidents made an effort to incorporate some aspect of this standing committee into their meetings. Meanwhile they continue to encourage the members to get involved and take on leadership roles. Some councils indicated that they needed to make more of an effort to communicate with all levels of government. One council said that they were going to make a concerted effort, next year, to write letters in support of resolutions. The councils felt that Legislation Chairpersons, at all levels, do an excellent job reporting the most recent information on the various issues. Nevertheless, they felt that more information should be sent, regularly, to all councils. Councils noted that it would be helpful to have a dynamic leader who could present an in-depth workshop on Legislation.

In October, I, as provincial Legislation Chairperson, took part in the October 2016 Provincial/Diocesan Workshop. My workshop centered on "Talk Is Not Enough-Action Gets Results" We discussed various ways to stay informed on government issues; went over the 2016 National Resolutions under Legislation; looked at "*How a Bill Becomes Law*" and the "*Personal Letter Writing Guide*". I sent out three communiques to my Diocesan counterparts, Janet Terrio and Laurena Greencorn, for distribution to the parish councils. In my first communique, I encouraged councils to carry out the action plans for Resolutions 2016.4 and 2016.5. The second communique focused on the topics covered in the October workshop. In my third communique updated the members on the status of the various Bills before the House of Commons and the Provincial Legislature. I again encouraged action on these Bills, especially letter writing.

My first year as Legislation Chairperson has been a great learning experience, for me and I hope that through my communiques, you, the members, have gained a new appreciation for the many possibilities, for action, that exist when you get involved in Legislation. The new way of reporting to National presented some challenges and I want to commend my Diocesan counterpart for their efforts in putting a human face on the statistics.

We certainly see a challenge here when we look at the statistics of the actual participation of our CWL councils in the Legislative process. However, we will not lose heart. We are asked to be open to the movements of the Spirit as we live out our new theme **Inspired by the Spirit- Women Respond to God's Call.**

Respectfully submitted:

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Provincial Legislation Chairperson