

Catholic Women's League of Canada – Nova Scotia Council

Education & Health 2016 Annual Report

Prologue

The Catholic Women's League of Nova Scotia is teeming with an energy that can be described as nothing shy of electric. Our ladies have accomplished a great deal and demonstrate a desire to serve God and Canada with their enthusiasm and love for the League.

Catholic Education

Nova Scotia does not have a Separate School Board but councils are involved with, or support the religious instructive process-taking place at the parish level. Some members volunteer as instructors with one serving as a co-ordinator for the Family Faith Formation (FFF) or Religious Education program at her parish. Councils have financially supported youth attending Steubenville Atlantic 2016 and World Youth Day in Poland. Both venues provide young Catholics the opportunity to experience spiritual growth and the freedom to unreservedly express their faith. Most councils provide receptions in celebratory support of programs that teach and develop the faith such as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), Baptismal, and Marriage Preparation at the parish level.

Councils noted that CWL members participate and support most parish ministries. In addition, some councils within the province report to have monetarily supported the FFF (Religious Education) within their parish.

Councils support local public schools in the province through member participation at the School Board level, donations in support of breakfast and lunch programs, clothing drives, and

bursaries. Councils support, monitor, and encourage parental participation in school and parish activities in particular, family life programs being offered in public schools throughout the province.

Councils monetarily support the spiritual growth of university students through the CWL National Bursary Fund, Coady International Institute, the National Evangelistic Team (NET) Ministries of Canada, and the efforts of Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO) an organization which challenges students at the university level to live lives in the fullness of the Catholic faith; the end goal being high-quality, moral professionals.

Literacy and Continuing Education

Some councils have members and chairpersons who are full time educators in both English and French languages. One council's Education and Health Chairperson is a member who volunteers with many activities at a French Language school and the Secretary of that council is a teacher at the same school. Councils encourage literacy training and some have members who are trained literacy tutors.

Scholarships and Bursaries

Both Diocesan levels and councils offer scholarships and bursaries ranging from \$100.00 to \$1,000.000 that are available to Catholic women to further their education.

Because some CWL members have sons, and some *only sons*; arguing gender exclusion, one council recently moved to allow Catholic males to receive their CWL scholarship. The recipient of their \$1000.00 scholarship for 2016 was a young male graduating from a French language school.

The 2016 recipient of the annual \$200.00 Marion Hepditch-Littlepage award was presented to Danielle Farrell during the June convocation exercises at the Atlantic School of Theology (AST). The presentation was made by Halifax-Yarmouth Diocesan Life Member, Mary MacDonald.

Wellness and Sickness/Disease

Members throughout the province continue to proactively monitor and address many medical issues that create discontent and division among us while threatening to cause great harm to the future of humanity. They unite in thunderous voices with pen and paper to many looming issues.

Councils continue to guard the teachings and traditions of Catholics and Christian's alike. In their efforts to oppose Bill C-14, councils report to have written letters of support to request services that respect the dignity of patients as well as to protect the rights of health care professionals and institutions from any law to compel complicity in acts that are morally wrong.

As a means to further support Bill C-14 and other ethical medical practices, councils have written letters and financially supported the Catholic Health Alliance of Canadian (CHAC); an advocacy for ethical health care issues. Members were encouraged to weigh in by voicing their continued disapproval to the existing law, and to embark on a writing campaign to express full opposition to any amendment that might broaden the scope of this law. Some council members have written their opposition but expressed a need to have some form of instruction on how to move forward with opposition to Bill C-14.

Councils have written in support of Resolution 2016.02; Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide... a call to revise the guide at five-year intervals which would include the date of the latest vision. They also support Resolution 2016.03; Warning Labels on Food and Drug Products, to provide complete information on all patient information sheets that accompany pharmaceuticals, and to engage in a program of public education on the adverse effects of inactive substances and additives. Councils continue to follow with interest and support, all CWL resolutions. Members are fittingly proud to express support for health related resolutions being generated by CWL councils of Nova Scotia such as; Resolution 2015.01; in support of increased Early Access and Intervention to Children and Youth Mental health Services.

On the subject of Palliative Care; some councils expressed a desire to have more resources and organized prayer programs. One council invited guest speakers and had presentations on the subject of Hospice and Palliative Care. Another reported the purchase of two comfort dressers on wheels and supplied articles to patients and families in a hospital palliative care unit. One council raised funds for Hospice Halifax and one council reported a member belonging to the Palliative Care Society Board of Directors and one to have completed Palliative Care Volunteer training with a goal to educating members at the parish level.

Councils across the province responded positively to local, national, and international organizations, such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Parkinson's disease and numerous others who solicit their support. These organizations strive to improve living conditions for the delivery of treatment, care, and assistance through solid based research which leads to an extended or improved quality of life for many. Members also supported Catholic Missions, respect for life from conception to natural death through Birthright, Project Rachel, MaterCare

International, Canadian Mental Health Association and Operation Smile Canada; an organization that provides free surgery to children from around the globe who are born with cleft lips or palates or suffering other facial deformities.

The insight of a dietician and a physiotherapist to promote health and wellness was achieved by guest speakers at a general meeting. Members were encouraged to read and follow the Canada Food Guide and to participate in regular physical exercise. One council reported an excellent response to an organized weekly walk.

Some councils report to only being able to support the needs of their immediate community concentrating on the needs of their own parish.

Environment

Councils have written to encourage the ban of micro beads in personal care products, (Resolution 2015.02 and other councils supported a ban of the use of neonicotinoid pesticides products Resolution 2015.03. Several councils wrote members of government in opposition to the associated risk of continual exposure to fluoride treated water.

Locally, some councils invited guest speakers to address the issue of health and wellness, raised concerns over such issues as eating clean by avoiding preservatives in food, encouraging proper recycling habits, and by raising awareness of the continued pollution to the region by the pulp and paper industry. Councils continue to discourage the use of Styrofoam and plastics; especially for CWL Receptions at the parish level.

Three councils made monetary contributions to (non-specified) environment resolutions. Councils feel it is important to invite guests to speak to issues of local concern.

General Input & Suggestions *(as per page Reporting -81 CWL Executive Handbook)*

The overall spirit of our Nova Scotia councils is excellent. There was however, some confusion and apprehensions noted. Uncertainty with the new online reporting format was expressed with what might be described as a nervous desire to revert to the prior practice with the view that a lower number of reports for this period being a direct result of this change. To allow for the reporting of special interest projects to be documented on the new online reporting process; it was suggested that the category 'Other' be added to each reporting field.

Concern was voiced about the inability to fill Legislation & Resolutions Chairs. When chairs are not filled, pertinent information often does not reach the membership. Councils in rural areas express concern about an elderly membership and the inability to participate more fully in CWL initiatives.

The advancement of technology, although a good resource tool for many, has, albeit not intended, created an uncertainty and fear that appears to be fostering a mood of reluctance at parish levels. Adding to the frustration is the feeling of too much, or the same, or similar subject matter, being received from many sources when for the most part, one source would clearly suffice.

Older members who are not computer literate, are resistant to take a chair or participate longing for a slower pace that would allow them to move more gracefully with the flow of advancement; quote, unquote, "The amount of information can be overwhelming and there are very few in our aging council that are competent in computer technologies." Younger and more physically capable members are either not stepping up to assume committee chair

positions, or are resigning due to what is perceived as a heavy and time-consuming workload for positions that are voluntary.

Suggestion

Perhaps a combined effort of brainstorming could assist with finding a balance that would serve to remove some of the reported apprehension.

Summation

I continue to be inspired by the spirituality, hard work, and dedication of the women of the CWL. The sharing and leadership of these women at all levels is a true witness to the love of Jesus and I feel blessed to be counted among them. The work of our sisters in the League in Nova Scotia speaks well to our newly chosen theme ***"Inspired by the Spirit, Women Respond to God's Call."***

This concludes my report.

Sandy Mellish, Provincial Chairperson